



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences  
Department of American Culture and Literature

**DESIRING MACHINES/BODIES WITHOUT ORGANS: THE  
CONCEPT OF BODY IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB*,  
*INVISIBLE MONSTERS AND CHOKE***

Emine ŞARKDEMİR

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2014



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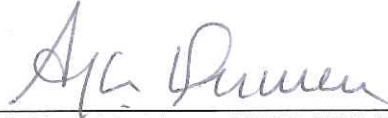
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## KABUL VE ONAY

Emine Şarkdemir tarafından hazırlanan “Desiring Machines/Body without Organs: The Concept of Body in Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* and *Choke*” başlıklı bu çalışma, 29 Aralık 2014 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



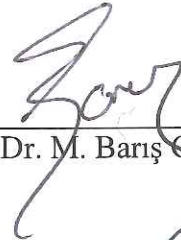
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Emine ŞARKDEMİR

To my dear mother and my beloved son...

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## ÖZET

ŞARKDEMİR, Emine. “Arzulayan Makineler, Organsız Bedenler: Chuck Palahniuk’ın *Dövüş Kulübü*, *Görünmez Canavarlar* ve *Tıkanma* Eserlerinde Beden Kavramı.” Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2014.

Bu tez Chuck Palahniuk’un *Fight Club* (*Dövüş Kulübü*) (1996), *Invisible Monsters* (*Görünmez Canavarlar*) (1999) ve *Choke* (*Tıkanma*) (2001) eserlerinde beden kavramını ve bu kavramın arzu ile bağlantısını incelemektedir. Bu romanlarda yer alan üç karakterden her biri, sırasıyla, Anlatıcı, Shannon ve Victor, Deleuze ve Guattari’nin ortaklaşa kaleme aldıkları *Anti-Oedipus* (*Kapitalizm ve Şizofreni*) ile *A Thousand Plateaus*’da [*Bin Yayla*] tanımlanan “şizo” özelliklerini göstermektedir. Psikanalizin karşısına şizoanalizi koyan Deleuze ve Guattari, şizo karakterini kendi arzusunu yönlendirmeyi amaçlayan ve denetlenmeyi reddeden kişi olarak tanımlamaktadır. Romanların ana karakterleri toplumun dayattığı kodları ihlal etmek amacıyla toplum düzeninden kaçış yolları, “kaçış çizgileri” arar ve şiddeti zincirleri kırmanın en iyi yolu olarak görür. Şizo karakterler tanıdık yörelerden uzaklaşarak bilinmeyen bölgelerde dolaşmak, hiyerarşinin ve düzenin bulunmadığı, herhangi bir kısıtlamanın söz konusu olmadığı bir yer olan “organsız beden” e varmak için yersizyurtsuzlaşır.

Bedenleri üzerindeki toplumsal kontrolü yok etmeyi arzulayan Anlatıcı, Shannon ve Victor şizofrenik, mazoşistik ve psikotik yollarla şiddeti kendi bedenlerine yöneltir, baskılanan bedenlerinin düzenini de bozar. Bu romanlardaki karakterlerden her biri toplumsal kurumların yaptırımlarını geride bırakarak, zihinsel ve fiziksel yolculuklara çıkmaktadır. Hepsinin ortak arzusu bedenlerinin kısıtlandığı ve kontrol edildiği bölgelerin ötesine geçmektir. Bedenlerinin denetimini bizzat kendi ellerine alarak organsız bedeninin sunduğu özgürlük içinde yaşamak istemektedir.

Şizo tipleri üreten kapitalist sistemin kendisi olmasına rağmen, Palahniuk’un üç karakteri sistemin uysal bedeni olmayı reddeder. Şizo tipler sadece toplumsal kuralları yıkarak ve yeni bölgelerde yeni uygulamalar deneyerek varolur. Bu tez, Palahniuk’un üç karakterinin, bedenin somut olmaktan çok soyut bir varlık olarak kabul edildiği bir



varoluřa, “organsız beden”e varmak için bedenlerinin denetimini kendi ellerine almayı arzulayan řizo tipler olduđunu kanıtlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

### **Anahtar Sözcükler**

Beden, Arzu, Arzulayan-Makineler, řizoanaliz, Kaçış Çizgileri, Organsız Beden, Yersizyurtsuzlaşma, Yenidenyerliyurtlulařma, Deleuze ve Guattari, Palahniuk.

## ABSTRACT

ŞARKDEMİR, Emine. “Desiring Machines/Bodies without Organs: The Concept of Body in Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* and *Choke*.” Master’s Thesis, Ankara, 2014.

This thesis analyzes the concept of body and its relation to “desire” in Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* (1996), *Invisible Monsters* (1999) and *Choke* (2001). The three characters, the Narrator, Shannon and Victor respectively display the characteristics of schizos defined by Deleuze and Guattari in their collaborative works, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari, who place schizoanalysis against psychoanalysis, define the schizo as someone who aims to direct his/her own desire and resist being under control. To violate the codes implemented by the society, these characters seek “lines of flight,” ways of escape from the social orders and choose violence as the best practice to break the chains. The schizos deterritorialize from their known territories to wander in unfamiliar ones aiming to attain the body without organs which is defined a non-restrictive place without hierarchy and organization.

The Narrator, Shannon, and Victor who desire to destroy the social control on their bodies direct violence to their own bodies in schizophrenic, masochistic and psychotic ways and destroy the organization of their bodies on which repression is exercised. Each of these characters sets out mental and physical journeys leaving behind the impositions of social institutions. Their mutual desire is to be beyond territories where their bodies will be limited and subjugated. They desire to lead lives in the freedom offered by the body without organs by directing their own bodies.

The three characters of Palahniuk resist being docile bodies of the capitalist system although it is capitalism that produces such schizos. They exist only by subverting the social norms and experimenting with new practices in new territories. This thesis aims to prove that the three characters of Palahniuk are schizos who desire to control their

own bodies to arrive at the body without organs, a state of being in which the body is regarded as an abstraction rather than a concrete entity.

**Key Words**

Body, Desire, Desiring-machines, Schizoanalysis, Line of Flight, Body without Organs, Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari, Palahniuk.

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relations. Foucault is the first to analyze the body/power relationship. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), he argues that there are systematic forms of discipline exercised on individuals by social and political power structures to keep their bodies under constant surveillance and control (136-7).

Deleuze and Guattari develop a theory similar to that of Foucault in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Attaching the concept of desire to Foucault's views, they claim that in the social field there are various forms of repression to "normalize" individuals, and that repression starts with the coding of individuals' desire because of the revolutionary power of desire (*Anti-Oedipus* 139). They consider social repression and psychic repression as the real forces of social structures which function by displacing individuals' desires (*Anti-Oedipus* 138). Compared to the notion of the obedient body, Deleuze and Guattari formulate the view of a more active body which resists subjugation and manipulation of his/her desire. They call this active body as the "schizo" and define him as "a free man, irresponsible, solitary and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name, without asking permission" (*Anti-Oedipus* 156).

Deleuze and Guattari derive the term schizo from their study of schizoanalysis. Defined as the only form of struggle against the effects of power, schizoanalysis is placed against psychoanalysis to attack its social and intellectual authority. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari draw attention to the fact that psychoanalysis considers schizophrenia as a malady and perceives the schizophrenic as an "autistic rag separated from the real and cut off from life," whereas schizoanalysis favors schizophrenia because of its liberating power as a *process* (32). In schizoanalysis, schizophrenics or the schizos are not outcasts or subjugated bodies; rather, they are revolutionary bodies who do not let their desires be displaced and held under control. Attributing a vital importance to departure as well as destination, the schizos aim to cross the limits and break the walls (388). For the schizos, what matters is the process of moving from one place to another either physically or mentally. The ultimate goal of the schizos is to attain the limit of "the body without organs." The body without organs, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, is "not a projection, not a body, or an image of the body," rather, it is a surface where no borders and limits exist (32). It can be said that in the body

without organs all the hierarchal structures are dismantled and any organization is obstructed from the outset so as not to form any pre-ordained body.

Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996), *Invisible Monsters* (1999) and *Choke* (2001) exhibit characters similar to those schizos. The three characters, the Narrator, Shannon, and Victor respectively are characters whose desire is different from what social institutions desire them to desire. To violate the codes implemented by the society, these characters detach themselves from social codes and create their own codes of desire. They choose violence as the apparatus of their revolutionary acts. Directing violence toward their own bodies, these characters aim to destroy the very structure on which power is exercised. The schizophrenic inclinations of Palahniuk's characters will be better comprehended through a detailed analysis of the concepts related to the body in Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative works, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) as well as Foucault's views on the subjugated body in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978).

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue against psychoanalysis and deconstruct its basic principle; the Oedipus complex.<sup>3</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, the Oedipus complex is a social construction implemented by capitalism to suppress individuals and their unconscious by using families as agents. They believe that social repression and psychic repression are linked to each other and that the latter is exercised on the individuals' unconscious through psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis treats schizophrenia as an illness, labels those who rebel against the system as schizophrenics and insists on the imposition of the Oedipus complex on the individuals. According to Deleuze and Guattari, not schizophrenia but the Oedipus complex itself is an illness as it creates a passive body whose flows of desire can be regulated and directed.

Deleuze and Guattari criticize Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan for destroying the real nature of desire by reducing it into sexual instincts and lack. Unlike Freud's and Lacan's definition of desire, which implies "lack," Deleuze and Guattari define desire as an active force which is "productive only in the real world and can produce only reality"

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<sup>3</sup> In *Anti-Oedipus*, the authors do not use the term Oedipus Complex but refer to it as "Oedipus." Translator's note, 13.



(*Anti-Oedipus* 39). In this definition, desire is not only beyond restriction but is also inextricably linked to terms such as “desiring machines” and “the body without organs.” Hence, it is necessary to explain the use of the term “desire” by Freud and Lacan to comprehend the function of productive desire in schizoanalysis and its relation to desiring machines and the body without organs.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1911), Sigmund Freud asserts the discovery he made concerning the psychology of early childhood, that is, the Oedipus complex which he defines as the sexual desire for the mother and hatred against the father in the minds of children. The Oedipus complex is named after the legend of King Oedipus who slays his father and sleeps with his mother unwittingly. Freud claims that the destiny of Oedipus still influences people because they empathize with his fate. Experienced in the early childhood, it is “the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish<sup>4</sup> against our father” (Freud 261).

Freud asserts that there are phases in a child’s psychosexual development and that after the oral and anal phases, the child enters the “phallic phase which is contemporaneous with the Oedipus complex” (*The Ego and the Id* 174). In the phallic phase, the male genital organ, that is, the penis, has a guiding position. As the father is seen as an obstacle on the way of the child’s incestuous desire for the mother, the worst threat posed in that phase is the castration of the penis. The only solution to eradicate that dire threat is to “desexualize” and “sublimate” the sexual desire for mother. Freud states that:

The libidinal trends belonging to the Oedipus complex are in part desexualized and sublimated and in part inhibited in their aim and changed into impulses of affection. The whole process has, on the one hand, preserved the genital organ—has averted the danger of its loss—and, on the other hand, has paralyzed it—has removed its function. (Freud 176)

The inconsolable despair of the fear of castration puts an end to the Oedipus complex. Freud indicates that in the clash of “his narcissistic interests” and “libidinal cathexis of his parental objects,” the child is compelled to choose the former for the sake of

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<sup>4</sup> Freud uses the term *Wunsch*, which is translated as ‘wish’ by Strachey in the *Standard Edition*. However, translators agree that ‘desire’ is a much better term than “wish” (Evans 36).

protecting his genital organ (*The Ego and the Id* 176). In other words, the child's ego deflects Oedipal desires and represses them into the eternal darkness of the unconscious. Freud defines the id as the dark and inaccessible part of the personality that "has no organization, no correspondence to the idea of time and no judgments of value" (*New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* 91-92). While the id is only described in contrast to the ego, the ego can be differentiated from the id and the superego in regard to its relation with the external world. Freud makes it clear that as a portion of the id, the ego "on the whole carr[ies] out the id's intentions, it fulfills its task by finding out the circumstances in which those intentions can best be achieved" in the external world (Freud 94). The superego, in Freud's terms, has intimate relations with the id and it is more remote than the ego from the perceptual system (Freud 97). The superego becomes a representative and an ardent defender of moral norms and authority. Setting definite norms, the superego tracks every step of the ego and punishes any failure of the ego with the feelings of guilt and inferiority. Freud explains,

. . . super-ego becomes over-severe, abuses the poor ego, humiliates it and ill-treats it, threatens it with the direst punishments . . . The super-ego applies the strictest moral standard to the helpless ego which is at its mercy; in general it represents the claims of reality, and we realize all at once that our moral sense of guilt is the expression of the tension between the ego and the super-ego. (Freud 76)

The superego comes out of this tension by taking over "the power, function and even the methods of parental agency" and picks up "the prohibiting and punitive function" of parental agents (*New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* 78). In the familial form, Freud suggests, this parental agent mostly becomes the father whose authority the child has to obey. Displaying the character of the father, the superego fortifies its dominance over the ego in parallel with the power of the Oedipus complex. In other words, the more power the Oedipus complex exercises on the ego, the more dominance the superego gains over the ego. Thus, the superego inculcates the degree and the plausibility of identification with the father in the ego. As a solution, the ego, "the heir of the Oedipus complex," has to abolish the Oedipus complex by forming the ego ideal and thus it "masters the Oedipus complex" (*The Ego and the Id* 36). However, although the Oedipus complex disappears, its effects continue throughout the child's life through different agents such as "teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and prohibition remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to

exercise the moral censorship” (37). Freud comments on the ego ideal’s task as follows:

the ego ideal had the task of repressing the Oedipus complex; indeed, it is to that revolutionary event that it owes its existence. Clearly the repression of the Oedipus complex was no easy task. The child’s parents, and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipus wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying out of the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself. (*The Ego and the Id* 34)

Freud dubs the ego’s abolition of the Oedipus complex “repression” and explains that its essence “lies simply in turning something away and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious” (*Complete Psychological Works* 147). He claims that repression is quite normal for the child’s sexual development; yet, he warns, it is a “borderline between the normal and the pathological” (*The Ego and the Id* 177). If the ego fails to repress the Oedipus complex plausibly, the latter perseveres its existence in the id just to manifest itself later as a pathological case. The child grows up and advances through different developmental stages but the authority of the father reflects itself throughout the child’s life and causes neurosis in his/her psychology (*The Ego and the Id* 37/177). Psychoanalysis, thus, gathers symptoms and seeks ways to cure these neurotic disorders.

Before analyzing Jacques Lacan’s ideas on the Oedipus complex and his theory on the concept of desire, it should be noted that both Lacan and Deleuze cite each other’s names in different texts with appreciation. Lacan biographer, Elisabeth Roudinesco claims that after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Lacan praises Deleuze and appraises their collaborative work, *Anti-Oedipus*, which is “based on his seminars, which already, according to him contained the idea of a ‘desiring machine’” (*Jacques Lacan* 347-8). In *Negotiations*, Deleuze explains his and Guattari’s gratitude for Lacan noting that they have made some necessary changes in his concepts (13). Deleuze says,

Lacan himself says “I’m not getting much help.” We thought we’d give him some schizophrenic help. And there’s no question that we’re all the more indebted to Lacan, once we’ve dropped notions like structure, the symbolic, or the signifier, which are thoroughly misguided, and which Lacan himself has always managed to turn on their head to bring out their limitations. (*Negotiations* 14)

In his first seminar, Jacques Lacan claims that the triangular system of the Oedipus complex explicated by Freud with the classic formula poses some problems and ambiguities (66). According to Lacan, there is a clear distinction between the child’s

relation to the mother and to the father. Lacan casts light on that distinction in his fifth seminar by dividing the Oedipus complex into three orders. The first order is a pre-Oedipal phase and is called “the imaginary order” which corresponds to “the mirror stage.” The relationship at this order is bounded to the one between the mother and the child and the father does not exist yet (*Seminar V* 159). The child does not conceive itself as a separate body and “confuses others with its own mirror reflections; and since the self is formed from a composite of introjections based on such misrecognitions, it can hardly constitute a unified personality” (Sarup 25). His/her reflection in the mirror gives the child a false assumption that s/he is a perfect unity, the Other. By drawing a triangle, Lacan adds a third agent to that dual relationship and announces it as the phallus. The child who does not have the ego yet perceives itself as a substitution of an imaginary phallus for the mother. This signifies in Lacanian terms that “what the subject desires is not simply the craving for her care, for her contact, even for presence, it is the craving for her desire”: the phallus (*Seminar V* 160). The second order takes place with the intervention of the symbolic father. The child enters into the symbolic order by accepting his name. Name-of-the-father is the first encounter with the Law; “the laws of language and society come to dwell within the child as he accepts the father’s name and the father’s ‘no’” (Sarup 25). As the father has the phallus, he can satisfy the mother’s desire and separates the child from the mother. Then, the child abandons his/her desire or stops desiring to be his/her mother’s desire and “reach[es] a degree of psychic normality” (Evans 24). The third order is the real order which “lies beyond language” (Sarup 26). For Lacan, the Real does not correspond to the reality; on the contrary, it is “the domain of whatever subsists outside symbolization” (*Ecrits* 388).

Lacan’s concept of desire mostly originates from the imaginary order. As mentioned above, in the imaginary order, the subject desires to be the mother’s desire. The mother who does not have a phallus yearns for a lacking object, thus the subject’s desire is nothing more than a lack. As Lacan puts it;

A man of desire, a desire he followed against his will down pathways where it is reflected in feeling, dominating, and knowing, but whose unparalleled signifier he and he alone succeeded in unveiling: the phallus, the receiving and giving of which are equally impossible for him, whether he knows that the Other does not have it, or that the Other does have it, because in both cases his desire is elsewhere—to be it. And whether male or female, man must accept to have and not have it, on the basis of the discovery that he isn’t it. (*Ecrits* 537)

In *Ecrits*, Lacan defines desire as “the Other’s desire” and extends that definition with many complementary explanations (525). “The desire for what the Other’s desire is” is one of them (*Ecrits* 662). Lacan clarifies that what makes an object desirable is strictly related to the Other’s desire. The subject does not desire an object because of its peculiar characteristic; s/he desires it because the Other desires it. Lacan specifies the essence of desire when he says, “man’s desire is a metonymy of the desire to want to be” (*Ecrits* 439) and “desire is desire for desire” (*Ecrits* 723). For Lacan, desire cannot be satisfied, and it is in a state of continuous suspense. In other words, whenever a desire is satisfied, it is instantly replaced by another. He also suggests that the subject desires to be recognized by the Other (*Ecrits* 222). If s/he desires the Other’s desire, “that’s to say, if one wants to be ‘desired’, or rather, ‘recognized’ in one human’s value,” his/her desire becomes human (Sarup 18). All these explanations suggest that the subject yearns for an object that is lacking in the Other. Into what does the object, called phallus in the imaginary order, turn afterwards then? Lacan comes up with a novel term as an answer. He defines that lacking object as ‘*objet petit a*’. It is the real cause of desire and it can be any object that sets desire in motion (Evans 128). Lacan clarifies that *objet petit a* is

the object of desire. This means that, while it is partial object, it is not merely a part, or a spare part of the device that depicts the body here, but an element of the structure from the outset. . . . Being selected as the index of desire from among the body’s appendages, *objet a* is already the exponent of a function, a function that sublimates it even before it exercises the function; this function is that of the index raised toward an absence about which the it has nothing to say . . . It also restored to the field of the Other, serving the function of desire’s exponent in the Other. (*Ecrits* 571)

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari utterly oppose this notion of lack on the one hand, but on the other hand, they adopt the notion of *objet petit a* and follow it in their study of schizoanalysis. They affirm that Lacan’s theory of desire has “two poles; one related to ‘*objet petit a*’ as a desiring machine which defines desire in terms of a real production, thus going beyond both any idea of need and any idea of fantasy”; and the other is related to the notion of lack (39). For Deleuze and Guattari, Lacan’s success lies in his detachment of the object of desire from all the totalizing symbols. In *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, Guattari maintains that ‘*objet petit a*’ “has permanently distanced itself from any individuated corporeity” (222). As for the notion of lack,

Deleuze and Guattari believe that it is not desire that explains a lack inside the subject; rather, it is the organization that makes the subject deprived of its objective being. According to Deleuze and Guattari, being “created, planned, and organized in and through social production,” lack has never had chief importance; but it has been created deliberately to make “all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one’s needs satisfied” (*Anti-Oedipus* 41). The aim is to make desire classified as the product of fantasy (41). For Deleuze and Guattari, it is the phallus that introduces lack into desire but it has never been a yearning object or “the cause of desire, but is itself the castrating apparatus, the machine for putting lack into desire” (*Anti-Oedipus* 405).

In lieu of psychoanalysis’ conception of desire as the production of fantasies, as the lack of the real object, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of desire is productive. They believe that desire cannot be productive anywhere except in the real world and thus it only produces reality (*Anti-Oedipus* 39). Desire is neither static nor inert; it is, rather, productive reacting with other elements such as bodies or flows. It makes a synthesis to set these elements in motion. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire does not lack its object, on the contrary, it has “the intrinsic power to create its own object” (*Anti-Oedipus* 38). Desire cannot be reduced to a certain object; it can be related to all objects. Thus, it is not the object that desire is devoid of; it is the “subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject” (39). Desire refuses to be bounded to a fixed subject and reacts to be categorized beforehand; for this reason a fixed subject is created only by the repression of desire. The rationale behind the repression is desire’s intrinsic power. Claiming that “desire is revolutionary in its essence,” Deleuze and Guattari suggest an explosive desire that is “capable of calling into question the established order of a society” (*Anti-Oedipus* 139). According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire threatens the society and its structures with its revolutionary potential; hence, the society’s primary task is to repress desire:

Desire does not threaten a society because it is a desire to sleep with the mother, but because it is revolutionary. And that does not at all mean that desire is something other than sexuality, but that sexuality and love do not live in the bedroom of Oedipus, they dream instead wide open spaces, and cause strange flows to circulate that do not let themselves be stocked within an established order. Desire does not “want” revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right . . . (*Anti-Oedipus* 139-140)

Deleuze and Guattari believe that the true nature of desire has been crushed with the establishment of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalysis. They denote that psychoanalysis gets stuck in “a bourgeois repression” by maintaining the Oedipus complex that is “restrained in the figure of the daddy-mommy-me triangle, the familial constellation” (*Anti-Oedipus* 67). With the Oedipus complex, desire, like the apple symbolizing Adam and Eve’s sin, has been transformed into an energy that calls the child into an incestuous relationship with the mother. Deleuze and Guattari criticize psychoanalysis of making a “strange sort of reasoning [that] leads one to conclude that since it (incest) is forbidden, that very thing was desired” (*Anti-Oedipus* 88). They believe that incest is not desired because of prohibition but rather prohibition displaces desire from the outset. It is the Law that places an incestuous desire into the individuals’ unconscious with the help of psychic repression. The Law commands us, Deleuze and Guattari explain, not to sleep with the mother and not to kill the father to take his position, and “we docile subjects say to ourselves: so that’s what I wanted” (*Anti-Oedipus* 137). In other words, sexual desire for the mother does not exist in the individuals’ unconscious; psychic repression has placed it there by displacing the function of desire. The aim is to form subjugated bodies. In this respect, Deleuze and Guattari reread the triangle as “the repressing representation which performs the repression,” that is, the family; “the repressed representative, on which the repression actually comes to bear,” that is, the child, and eventually “the displaced represented, which gives a falsified apparent image,” that is, the trapped desire (*Anti-Oedipus* 138). From this formulation of triangle, Oedipus comes out as a factitious production, “a sham image”:

Such is the nature of Oedipus-the sham image. Repression does not operate through Oedipus, nor is it directed at Oedipus. It is not a question of the return of the repressed. Oedipus is a factitious product of psychic repression. It is only the represented, insofar as it is induced by repression. Repression cannot act without displacing desire, without giving rise to a consequent desire. (*Anti-Oedipus* 138)

For Deleuze and Guattari psychoanalysts are as important as psychoanalysis in the employment of the Oedipus complex. While psychoanalysis functions as “dogma, or as the nuclear complex,” the psychoanalyst functions as a “theoretician, elevating himself to the conception of a generalized Oedipus” (*Anti-Oedipus* 67). However, they claim that psychoanalysts did not invent the Oedipus complex; they just let it reign over

individuals. Becoming the upholders of Oedipus, the psychoanalysts have “legislated a lot, reinforced a lot, injected a lot” (*Anti-Oedipus* 145). Reducing every problem of the patients to neurosis and the fear of castration, psychoanalysts ignore the desires of the patient and confine him/her into known territories of the family, or of any suppressive power. That causes individuals to become “oedipalized” which means internalizing the family triangle of psychoanalysis and accepting its yoke as Seem notes in the introduction of *Anti-Oedipus*:

Oedipus is the figure of power as such, just as neurosis is the result of power on individuals. Oedipus is everywhere. . . . Oedipus is belief injected into the unconscious, it is what gives us faith as it robs us of power, it is what teaches us to desire our own repression. Everybody has been oedipalized and neuroticized at home, at school, at work. Everybody wants to be a fascist. (Seem 7)

Deleuze and Guattari warn individuals against psychoanalysis’ “daddy-mommy-me” triangle noting that the individual is compelled to follow the lines of that triangle; otherwise s/he is threatened to “fall into the neurotic night of imaginary identifications” (*Anti-Oedipus* 98). The threat mostly comes from a psychoanalyst who is in charge of calling the asylum or the police (*Anti-Oedipus* 100). The only option for the individual is to internalize the familial triangle. Deleuze and Guattari argue that internalization of the Oedipus complex also means discovering it again and again to bequeath it to the next generations (*Anti-Oedipus* 98). In this sense, psychoanalysis offers a dead end for the individual for whom there is no way of getting out. In Deleuze and Guattari’s words,

we are oedipalized: if we don’t have Oedipus as a crisis, we have it as a structure. Then the crisis is passed on to others, and the whole movement starts all over again. . . . Oedipus is like the labyrinth, you only get out by re-entering it—or by making someone else enter it. Oedipus as either problem or solution is the two ends of a ligature that cuts off all desiring-production. . . . The unconscious has been crushed, triangulated, and confronted with a choice that’s not its own. With all of the exists now blocked, there is no longer any possible use for the inclusive, nonrestrictive disjunctions. Parents have been found for the orphan unconscious! (*Anti-Oedipus* 98-101)

Deleuze and Guattari indicate that Oedipus is not produced by the family despite taking shape in the familial form. The family figures are neither organizers nor the inductors of the Oedipus complex. They have been deployed as agents by the true organizer, which is “on the side of what is induced, not on that of the inductor” (*Anti-Oedipus* 112). In other words, the Oedipal triangulation revolves around the parental figures but these



figures are not the real organizers behind it. Deleuze and Guattari state that behind “oedipalization, triangulation, castration” lie other forces that are “a bit more powerful, a bit more subterranean than psychoanalysis, than family, than ideology” and define them as the forces of social production, reproduction and repression (*Anti-Oedipus* 145). Splitting into two to derive repression, these forces combine social repression and psychic repression that are specifically related to each other. For Deleuze and Guattari social repression necessitates psychic repression to “form docile subjects and to ensure the reproduction of the social formation, including its repressive function” (*Anti-Oedipus* 142). While social repression is immanent in social production, psychic repression is the reproduction part which uses families as agents. Deleuze and Guattari explain the difference between psychic repression and social repression as follows:

Psychic repression distinguishes itself from social repression by the unconscious nature of the operation and by its result, a distinction that expresses clearly the difference in nature between two repressions. But a real independence cannot be concluded from this. Psychic repression is such that social repression becomes desired; it induces a consequent desire, a faked image of its object, on which it bestows the appearance of independence. Strictly speaking, psychic repression is a means in the service of social repression. What it bears on is also the object of social repression: desiring-production. (*Anti-Oedipus* 143)

Social repression aims to control desiring-production in the social field and activates psychic repression to control desire. For Deleuze and Guattari, desiring-production stands for Freud’s unconscious. However, they call attention to the fact that they refer to the productive unconscious as Freud conceived it in the beginning, not to the one that was ruined by the sovereignty of the Oedipus complex (*Anti-Oedipus* 36). Deleuze and Guattari elaborate that with the Oedipus complex, “representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself-in myth, tragedy and dreams-was substituted for the productive unconscious” (*Anti-Oedipus* 36). In other words, the unconscious is productive like a factory but Oedipus transforms its true character and turns it to a theatre where “production is reduced to a mere fantasy production, production of expression” (*Anti-Oedipus* 71). Deleuze and Guattari believe that production cannot be restricted to fantasy production only because it is inclusive in nature as “everything is production: production of productions, of actions, of passions” (*Anti-Oedipus* 14). This kind of restriction which is exercised on production causes desiring-production to be

“personalized,” “imaginarized” and “structuralized” (71). As Deleuze and Guattari put it,

The whole of desiring production is crushed, subjected to the requirements of representation and to the dreary games of what is representative and represented in representation. And there is the essential thing: the reproduction of desire gives way to a simple representation, in the process as well as the theory of the cure. (*Anti-Oedipus* 70-71)

To overthrow the sovereignty of Oedipus and to terminate the oedipalization of the individuals, the transformation of the unconscious and the repression of desire, Deleuze and Guattari come up with a novel practice they call schizoanalysis. They argue that schizoanalysis does not aim to resolve Oedipus but to “de-oedipalize” the unconscious of both the individual and the society which is “always artificial, repressive and repressed” (*Anti-Oedipus* 101-120). Schizoanalysis, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, aims “to explore a transcendental unconscious, rather than a metaphysical one, an unconscious that is material rather than ideological; schizophrenic rather than Oedipal; non-figurative rather than imaginary; real rather than symbolic; mechanic rather than structural” (*Anti-Oedipus* 132). The unconscious of schizoanalysis is no more expressive, no more representative of any structure, of any symbol but “unaware of persons, aggregates, and laws,” it is an “anarchist” that rebels all the constructions of psychoanalysis (*Anti-Oedipus* 354). Hence, the primary task of schizoanalysis is to destroy what has been hierarchized till now; to make “a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage” by destroying “Oedipus, the illusion of the ego, the puppet of the superego, guilt, the law, castration” (*Anti-Oedipus* 355).

By releasing the unconscious from the psychoanalysis’s bondage, by de-oedipalizing the individuals’ unconscious, schizoanalysis leads the way for the individual, whom it calls the “schizo.” The schizo is not “oedipalizable” as he stopped believing in the “tripartite formula of daddy-mommy-me” (35). Deleuze and Guattari claim that the schizo “has his own system of co-ordinates for situating himself” and that is totally different from social codes (*Anti-Oedipus* 27). Deciphering the social codes, the schizo “continually detaches them, continually works them loose and carries them off in every direction in order to create a new polyvocality that is the code of desire” (54). The schizo neither limits him/herself to the known territorialities of the society nor complies with them; s/he constantly wanders to find new territorialities for him/herself. As the schizo

cannot situate him/herself into fixed and known territorialities, s/he is called “beyond territoriality”:

We already knew that the pervert [the schizo] resisted oedipalization: why should he surrender, since he has invented for himself other territorialities, more artificial still and more lunar than that of Oedipus? We knew the schizo was not oedipalizable, because he is beyond territoriality, because he has carried his flows right into the desert. But what remains, once we learn that “resistances” of a hysterical or an obsessional form bear witness to the anoedipal quality of the flows of desire on the very terrain of Oedipus? That is precisely what qualitative economy shows: flows ooze, they traverse the triangle, breaking apart its vertices. (*Anti-Oedipus* 84)

To define the individual’s relation to territory in schizoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari coin two terms, “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization,” both of which actualize in mental and physical life of the individual. They explain deterritorialization as “the movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 508). It is a process of an itinerary without plans, a state of being off-territory. Deterritorialization plays a significant role both in defining the character and the experience of the schizo and in grasping the aim of schizoanalysis. The process of deterritorialization makes a schizo a schizo because it is an active process inviting the schizo to revolt against being settled down, against being limited. During this process, the schizo is no more “banded with zones, localized with areas and field” (*Anti-Oedipus* 103). The deterritorialized schizo ignores all the codes, borders and limits aiming to be free of them. With the process of deterritorialization, the schizo multiplies in personality<sup>5</sup> and “become[s] everybody else; but this, precisely, is becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 197). As long as s/he detaches him/herself from the boundaries, and as long as s/he maintains his/her constant movement, the schizo becomes a free man/woman who “has crossed over the limit” (*Anti-Oedipus* 156). Deleuze and Guattari state that:

The schizo knows how to live: he has made departure into something as simple as being born or dying. But at the same time his journey is strangely stationary, in place. He does not speak of another world, he is not from another world: even

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that some parallels can be found between the characteristics of a schizo and the concept of the “Dionysian” in Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Gilles Deleuze notes “Dionysis . . . returns to primitive unity, he shatters the individual, drags him into the great shipwreck and absorbs him into original being. Thus he reproduces the contradiction as the pain of individuation but resolves them in a higher pleasure, by making us participate in the superabundance of unique or universal willing (12).

when he is displacing himself in space, his is a journey in intensity . . . But such a man produces himself a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name . . . (*Anti-Oedipus* 156)

For Deleuze and Guattari, it is “impossible to distinguish deterritorialization from reterritorialization, since they are mutually enmeshed, or like opposite faces of one and the same process” (*Anti-Oedipus* 296). While deterritorialization is an active process, reterritorialization is a stationary process that withdraws the individual (schizo) into familiar stations. It requires attachment to either known territories or new territories where social codes and limits prevail; thus reterritorialization is the opposite side of deterritorialization. Deterritorialization can be negative or positive depending on its relation to reterritorialization (*A Thousand Plateaus* 508). If the lines of flight,<sup>6</sup> which are acts of creation, are “obstructed” by reterritorialization, deterritorialization becomes negative; the latter becomes positive only when “it prevails over reterritorialization” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 508). If reterritorialization is blocked, then deterritorialization starts all over again (*A Thousand Plateaus* 508). In other words, reterritorialization and deterritorialization processes have different characteristics but one can be replaced by another depending on their relation to a territory. Deterritorialization turns into reterritorialization when it is attached to a territory, and it becomes negative. Deterritorialization becomes positive only when it detaches itself from any border of reterritorialization.

Deleuze and Guattari match the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization with psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis through their relation to desire. They argue that while psychoanalysis traps desire with Oedipus, schizoanalysis seeks ways to free it, by decoding flows of desire through deterritorialization. In their respect, “psychoanalysis settles on the imaginary and structural representatives of reterritorialization, while schizoanalysis follows the machinic indices of deterritorialization” (*Anti-Oedipus* 361). In other words, failing to understand the essence of desire, psychoanalysis complies with the recognized, imposed codes of higher structures by blocking flows of desire. Employing the Oedipus complex, it favors reterritorialization to make the individual situated into the tripartite formula of daddy-mommy-me. However, schizoanalysis

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<sup>6</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari prefer to use “lines of flight”; but in *Anti-Oedipus* they use “lines of escape.”

grasps the true identity of desire and aims to undo the codes and deterritorialize the flows of desire. According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is impossible to separate desire from deterritorialization because the latter “discovers the interplay of machines” and the machines “function as indices of deterritorialization” (*Anti-Oedipus* 341-360).

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that desire is composed of machines that are strictly linked to each other. Desire, to use Deleuze and Guattari’s wording, “is a machine, a synthesis of machines, a machinic arrangement—desiring machines (*Anti-Oedipus* 337). It will be illuminating to note, however, that the notion of “machine” has a literal meaning, not a metaphorical one (*Anti-Oedipus* 12). In *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, Deleuze defines machine “as any system that interrupts flows” adding that “desiring consists in interruptions, letting certain flows through, making withdrawals from those flows, cutting the chains that become attached to other flows” (219-232). The process should not be reduced to a mechanism though, as Deleuze states emphatically,

Mechanism serves to designate specific process in certain technological machines, or else a specific organization of a living being. But *machinism* is totally different: again, it is any system that interrupts flows, and it goes beyond both the mechanism of the technology and the organization of the living being, whether in nature, society, human beings. A desiring-machine is a non-organic system of the body, and this is what we talk about machines. (*Desert Islands and Other Texts* 219)

In simplistic terms, a desiring machine can be described as a constituent of flows and interruptions working everywhere, “functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts” (*Anti-Oedipus* 11). For Deleuze and Guattari, from social institutions to each part and organ of human body, a mouth, a breast, a stomach, everything is called a machine. Each machine is in a reciprocal relation with one another to drive other machines, to be driven by other machines, “with all the necessary couplings and connections” (*Anti-Oedipus* 11). Deleuze and Guattari argue that desiring machines are “binary machines” that are ruled by “a binary law or a set of rules governing associations” as each machine produces a flow in itself to interrupt or to break others (*Anti-Oedipus* 16). It is desire that maintains the continuity among flows to connect them with other flows and established connection among machines. According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire is “the set of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects, flows and bodies, and that function as units of production” (*Anti-Oedipus* 39).

In this sense, when connected to another machine that has its own flux or its own experience of the world, a machine does not maintain its fixed character but turns into a different machine to produce new flows and connections. What is important is the *process* of production as Deleuze and Guattari explain:

The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it. The mouth of the anorexic wavers between several functions: its possessor is uncertain as to whether it is an eating-machine, an anal machine, a talking-machine, or a breaking-machine (asthma attacks). Hence we are all handymen: each with his little machine. For every organ-machine, an energy-machine: all the time, flows and interruption. (*Anti-Oedipus* 11)

Desiring machines are always in interaction with “social technical” machines; they are the same machines but they differ in their regimes. The primary and the most important distinction is their form of work. Social technical machines work properly if they are in use; “they ordinarily stop working not because they break down but because they wear out” (*Anti-Oedipus* 45). As for desiring machines, they do not function properly unless they break down; they “continually break down as they run” (*Anti-Oedipus* 45). In other words, what matters for desiring machines is dysfunction rather than function. The dysfunction of desiring machines helps to grasp the logic behind the interaction among machines as it suggests cutting or breaking the flows.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the nature of partial objects and flows is fragmentary. It was Melaine Klein who first discovered the partial objects but according to Deleuze and Guattari, Klein failed to grasp the nature of these objects (*Anti-Oedipus* 59). They claim that Klein “conceives of them as fantasies and judges them from the point of view of consumption rather than regarding them as genuine production” (59). Partial objects, Deleuze and Guattari explain, are related to the process of production. They are parts of desiring machines “having to do with a process and with relations of production that are both irreducible and prior to anything (*Anti-Oedipus* 61). They are units of the unconscious but not representative of anything (neither Oedipus nor family). As parts of desiring machines, partial objects “do not refer in the least to an organism,” rather, they designate “the working machine or working parts, but in a state of dispersion such that one part is continually referring to a part from an entirely different machine” (*Anti-Oedipus* 368-69).

Desiring machines and partial objects are inextricably linked to the *body without organs*

which is a term derived from Antonin Artaud (*Anti-Oedipus* 19). Artaud defines a body that has “no need of organs, no shape or form” (19). It is not “an empty body stripped of organs or a dead body” though; it is a “living body populated by multiplicities” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 3). Deleuze and Guattari’s depiction of the concept of the body without organs in *Anti-Oedipus* differs from the depiction in *A Thousand Plateaus*. While it is depicted as the unproductive entity which is “the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable” in *Anti-Oedipus*, it is defined as a productive, dynamic and practical force in *A Thousand Plateaus* (19/150). For the destiny of the schizo, the depiction in the second volume is favorable because it offers the schizo an experimental practice. Defined as an “inevitable exercise or experimentation” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the body without organs provides the schizo with the possibility of “a set of practices” (150). However, Deleuze and Guattari warn that the body without organs is unreachable as it is a process of endless becoming:

You never reach the Body without Organs, you can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit. People ask, So what is this BwO? – But you’re already on it, scurrying like a vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic . . . On it we sleep, live our waking lives, fight–fight and are fought–seek our place, experience untold happiness and fabulous defeats; on it we penetrate and are penetrated; on it we love. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 150)

Both in *Anti-Oedipus* and in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari state that the body without organs runs counter to “the organization of the organs called the organism” (375, 158). Organism can be any entity that propagates hierarchy and organization such as family, social institutions or politics. It is the real enemy for the body without organs and “organs-partial objects” as it suggests organization and unity. In Deleuze and Guattari’s words, the body without organs is “produced as a whole, but a whole alongside the parts—a whole that does not unify or totalize them, but that is added to them like a new, really distinct part” (*Anti-Oedipus* 371). To get rid of the organization of organism, the body without organs seeks ways to “dismantle” it. This “has never meant killing yourself but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits and territories and deterritorializations” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 160). Deleuze and Guattari describe the process of dismantling as follows:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements

of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO. Connect, conjugate, continue . . . It is only there that the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of flows. You have constructed your own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 161).

For Deleuze and Guattari, the body without organs exists as the limit of the “deterritorialized socius” which acts “as a full body to form a surface where all production is recorded” (*Anti-Oedipus* 21-47). The socius can be said to be an imaginary terrain or body of society as a whole where all social codes and functions are coded and decoded. The primary task of the socius is “to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly damned up, channeled, regulated (*Anti-Oedipus* 47). The socius works on the social machines to implement its rules. The “primitive territorial machine,” the “despotic machine” and the “capitalist machine” are the three forms of the socius. Among these social formations, only the capitalist machine has the “task of decoding and deterritorializing the flows” (*Anti-Oedipus* 47). By decoding the flows of desire, the capitalist machines make the socius deterritorialized and bring it at the edge of the body without organs. In this respect, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that schizophrenia can be regarded as “the product of the capitalist machines” because it learns from capitalism that codes are decipherable (*Anti-Oedipus* 47). However, it will be wrong to suppose that capitalism favors schizophrenia because both use the same method for different purposes. Capitalism aims to subjugate the flows of desires for its own purposes, whereas schizophrenia (as a process) aims to liberate them to break the boundaries.

The only task of capitalism, which is its only privilege as well, is its inclination to decode the flows and deterritorialize the socius (*Anti-Oedipus* 48). With this inclination, capitalism drags the socius to its limits and “tends, with all strength at its command, to produce the schizo as the subject of the decoded flows on the body without organs (*Anti-Oedipus* 48). The schizo is the most precious product of capitalism because s/he stands “at the very limit of the social codes” (*Anti-Oedipus* 54). Deleuze and Guattari explain the relationship between capitalism, the schizo and the codes as follows:



As for the schizo, continually wandering about migrating here, there and everywhere as best he can, he plunges further and further into the realm of deterritorialization, reaching the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius on the surface of his own body without organs. It may well be that these peregrinations are the schizo's own particular way of rediscovering the earth. The schizophrenic deliberately seeks out the very limit of capitalism; he is its inherent tendency brought to fulfillment . . . He scrambles all the codes and is the transmitter of the decoded flows of desire. (*Anti-Oedipus* 49)

In *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* and *Choke*, all the protagonists can be considered as schizos resisting the subjugation of their bodies. Their ultimate purpose is to repel social codes and go beyond what is imposed on them. They deterritorialize both mentally and physically and resist being reterritorialized. The Narrator, Shannon and Victor conceive their bodies as their lines of flight, acts of creation. They act counter to all the hierarchical structures including capitalism although schizophrenia is a product of capitalist machines. They aim to break the flows of capitalism and codes of society with their dismantled bodies. Their desire is to attain the body without organs where their bodies will not suffer from being organized by other social structures.

To better comprehend the struggle of Palahniuk's characters through their bodies, it will be helpful to make a brief analysis of the Foucauldian approach to body because Foucault formulates the subjugation of the body by forms of power. In *The History of Sexuality* (1978) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault draws attention to social control over the body in social spaces and argues that power and body are inextricably intertwined. Rejecting the historical conceptualization of the body as "the seat of needs and appetite," Foucault works on the body's involvement in a social field suggesting that "power relations have an immediate hold upon it, they invest it, mark it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies and to emit signs" (*Discipline and Punish* 25). Foucault argues that in order to be useful, a body has to be not only a productive body but a subjected body as well (*Discipline and Punish* 26). For Foucault, violence is not the only force to be implemented to subjugate the body; there are more organized and neatly calculated apparatuses<sup>7</sup> to be chosen. Foucault categorizes types of

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<sup>7</sup> It was Louis Althusser who first added the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses into Marxist theory of the State. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Althusser notes while "the State Apparatus (SA) contains: the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons etc.," Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) includes institutions such as churches, schools, families (143). Althusser also notes the difference between the two, "the Repressive State Apparatus function by 'violence,' whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses' function by 'ideology' (145).

institutions and power apparatuses under different headings such as “political technology of powers,” “micro-physics of power,” “bio-power,” “disciplinary power” and so on. In his view, the political technology of powers is “often made up of bits and pieces and implements a disparate set of tools and methods” (*Discipline and Punish* 26). In other words, political technology of powers has multiple instruments and cannot be reduced to a specific form of institution or a particular state apparatus. Situated differently with “its mechanisms and its effects,” political technology of power operates as “a micro-physics of power” (*Discipline and Punish* 26). Micro-physics of power necessitates that “the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy that its effects of domination are not attributed to ‘appropriation,’ but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings” (*Discipline and Punish* 26). In this respect, Foucault’s analysis of power is not a hegemonic power to be possessed; but a productive power to be exercised on the bodies to form and control them. Foucault argues that power is omnipresent because it is not bounded to a single structure; instead, it functions everywhere as a strategy:

not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "Power," insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (*The History of Sexuality* 93)

To the dominant idea that explains power as a negative and coercive force presupposing repression, Foucault develops an alternative and calls it “bio-power.” In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rainbow define bio-power as “our modern form of power” and state that it is “characterized by increasing organization of population and welfare for the sake of increased force and productivity” (7/8). According to Foucault, bio-power emerged in the seventeenth century as a combinatory power of “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” in the field of social and political practices (*The History of Sexuality* 140). Foucault clarifies that until the beginning of the nineteenth century, bio-power existed as having two separate poles such as “an

*anatomo-politics of the human body*” and “*a bio-politics of the population*” (*The History of Sexuality* 139). While the first pole deals with “the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility,” the other centers on “the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” (*The History of Sexuality* 139). In other words, while *the bio-politics of the population* dwells on the organization of human population; the *anatomo-politics of the human body* places more emphasis on human body as an object to be formed and manipulated.

Foucault argues that the body was discovered as an object and target of power in the seventeenth century. There had always been coercion, constraints and punishments; but with the classical period, there emerged new methods such as “the scale of the control” which treated the body “individually”; “the object of the control” which necessitated mobility, and “the modality” which cared for “the process of activity” (*Discipline and Punish* 137). Foucault calls these new methods “disciplines,” or disciplinary power, and explains the primary aim of the disciplinary power as creating a “manipulated, shaped, trained body which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces” (*Discipline and Punish* 136). Foucault dubs this form of body as a “docile body”:

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics of power’, was being born; it defined 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. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. (*Discipline and Punish* 138)

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault links bio-power and the creation of docile bodies to the development of capitalism. He emphasizes that it was impossible for capitalism to come out “without the insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic process” (*The History of Sexuality* 141). In this sense, to hold on to disciplinary techniques of body so as to perpetuate its docility and, productivity had a vital importance for the growth and the

spread of capitalism. For Foucault, discipline is not an institution but a technique (*The History of Sexuality* 93). Despite the possibility of its deployment in hospitals, schools, armies etc, it can never be reduced to these institutions or it can never replace other forms of power. Discipline “infiltrates the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them” (*Discipline and Punish* 216). Foucault believes that discipline acts on the body to create “subjected, used, transformed and improved” individuals “both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (*Discipline and Punish* 136-170).

Foucault claims that power acts not on individuals but on their actions in “The Subject and the Power.” He argues that power does not exist unless it is put into action because it is “an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future” (“The Subject and the Power” 220). Therefore, Foucault suggests, there had always been, and still is, a potential to resist these forms of power. He states that there are three types of struggle. The first type emerged in “the feudal societies” as a struggle “against forms of ethnic and social domination;” the second type emerged “in the nineteenth century” as a struggle “against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce” and the third type is dominant “nowadays” as a struggle against “the forms of subjection” (“The Subject and the Power” 212-213). Foucault emphasizes that although the last type of struggle is the dominant form at present, the other forms have not vanished totally because all types of struggles are related to the concept of subject either as the subject or the subjected object.

Foucault defines the two meanings of the word subject as “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (212). Favoring the second definition, Foucault states that “both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to” (212). In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to these definitions as “a subjugated group” and “a subject group” (81). Both Foucault’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s definitions comply with each other. While a subjugated group bears a resemblance to the first, a subject group corresponds to the second. To use Deleuze and Guattari’s wording, while a subjugated group’s power “refers to a form of force that continues to enslave and crush desiring-production,” a subject group’s power refers to a “revolutionary” power as it

“mobilizes desire and always cuts its flows again further on, overcoming the limit” (*Anti-Oedipus* 397). Like Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari favor the subject group to which the schizos belong. With these definitions, it can be said that both Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari herald an individual who can resist being turned into a docile, subordinate body by going beyond from what is dictated on him/her. They suggest that the subject groups do not have to surrender to power relations. Resistance and insubordination have the inevitable potential of power to encourage the subject groups to follow the revolutionary lines of escape, to break the walls and the limits of power. As Foucault puts it:

at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight. Every power relationship implies, at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal. . . . And in return the strategy of struggle also constitutes a frontier for the relationship of power, the line at which, instead of manipulating and inducing actions in a calculated manner, one must be content with reacting to them after the event. It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape. Accordingly, every intensification, every extension of power relations to make the insubordinate submit can only result in the limits of power. (“The Subject and the Power” 225)

Within this theoretical framework, this thesis attempts to prove that the three characters of Palahniuk; the Narrator, Shannon and Victor, respectively, are schizo characters who desire to attain the body without organs through violence directed to their bodies. One of the most popular authors of contemporary American literature, Chuck Palahniuk began his writing career when he moved to Portland after his graduation from the department of journalism in the University of Oregon (Chuck Palahniuk Net). In Portland, Palahniuk attended writers’ workshop held by Tom Spanbauer and joined Cacophony Society “which is a randomly gathered network of free-spirits seeking new adventures beyond the pale of mainstream society” (cacophony.org). In Spanbauer’s classes, Palahniuk learned the techniques of transgressional fiction and minimalist writing. As a genre, transgressional fiction favors using a simple style with short sentences and deals with subjects that are considered to be taboo. Rene Chun defines transgressional fiction as follows:

A literary genre that graphically explores such topics as incest and other aberrant sexual practices, mutilation, the sprouting of sexual organs in various places on the human body, urban violence and violence against women, drug use, and highly dysfunctional family relationships, and that is based on the premise that knowledge is to be found at the edge of experience and that the body is the site for gaining knowledge (*New York Times*).

At the beginning of his writing career, transgressional fiction functions as the only genre for Palahniuk, through which he can subvert the mainstream literature and write freely on anti-heroes, the characters that are considered to be “marginal.” Similarly, Palahniuk’s early works, *Fight Club* (1996), *Invisible Monsters* (1999) and *Choke* (2001) are considered to be examples of transgressional fiction with their portrayal of such characters who aim to break free of the social constraints. With his early works, especially with his debut novel *Fight Club*, Palahniuk gained a worldwide popularity. But for Palahniuk, after September 11, 2001 “transgressive fiction died. . . . Because any eco-terrorism, political terrorism, societal pranking, anything like that, suddenly was going to look like big, blanket terrorism” (“Postcards from the Future”). After *Choke*, Palahniuk changed his writing style and began writing horror stories:

I have switched to writing horror novels, because in America today, you just can’t do transgressive fiction. Nobody wants to hear that message, and certainly nobody wants to laugh about it. Americans don’t want to be criticized right now. They just won’t hear it. The day of 9/11, I realized this was happening. You could not have published *Fight Club* on September 12 or since. The American public is not going to have any sympathy or understanding for subversive art or arguments for a long, long time. (“Chuck Palahniuk Predicts Destruction”)

Palahniuk published *Lullaby* (2002), *Diary* (2003) and *Haunted* (2005) as his horror trilogy novels. As a highly productive author, Palahniuk came up with a new novel in each year. In 2007, he published *Rant* and announced it to be the first volume of his “three-book package” (“Pine Magazine”). *Snuff* (2008) and *Haunted* (2009) are the next two volumes of the trilogy. His most recent novels are *Tell-All* (2010), *Damned* (2011), *Invisible Monsters Remix* (2012), *Doomed* (2013), *Beautiful You* (2014). *Making Something Up* and *Fight Club* (comics) are expected to be released in 2015.

In this thesis, *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* and *Choke* will be analyzed as each of them focus on characters who desire to detach themselves from the constraints of social impositions. As mentioned before, the main focus of Palahniuk’s novels after September 11 is not on taboo subjects and marginal characters but related to horror

stories. *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* and *Choke* are early novels of Palahniuk and have been analyzed before in academic articles, scholarly dissertations or master theses from various perspectives such as gender, identity and psychoanalysis. However, this thesis analyzes the novels from the perspective of schizoanalysis, defined by Deleuze and Guattari. The first chapter of this thesis analyzes *Fight Club* which portrays the Narrator's journey in the way of being a schizo. It will be argued that the Narrator goes beyond the norms and restrictive boundaries of society which systematizes his life against his own will and deterritorializes both mentally and physically. It will also be argued he challenges all the impositions on his body and individuality and wishes to attain the body without organs through fighting.

The second chapter focuses on Shannon's resistance to the subjugation of her body through masochistic acts in *Invisible Monsters*. It will be argued that for Shannon the only way to be free of social constraints is to break the unity of her body and that her journey. It will also be suggested that she desires to attain the body without organs with her 'monstrous face' by setting out a journey without destination.

The final chapter analyzes *Choke* which portrays Victor as schizo who indulges himself into psychotic performances. Victor begins his life as schizo who experiences a mental deterritorialization through creating alternative realities for himself. His addiction to sex will be regarded as a way of escape, a line of flight from the constraints of society; through which he aims to attain the body without organs.

In conclusion it will be argued that though schizophrenia, masochism and psychosis are considered as severe mental illness in psychoanalytic framework, in terms of schizoanalysis they are creative processes that pave the schizo's way into the body without organs where the schizo will no longer suffer from any form of subjugation. In this sense, the main characters of *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* and *Choke* prove to be perfect examples of the "schizo" who react against subjugation of their bodies through schizophrenic, masochistic and psychotic acts. In other words, schizos are not the docile bodies to be subjugated but the subject groups to resist subordination.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE SCHIZOPHRENIC BODY IN *FIGHT CLUB*

*The first schizophrenic evidence is that the surface has split open. Things and propositions have no longer any frontier between them, precisely because bodies have no surface . . . As there is no surface, the inside and the outside, the container and the contained, no longer have a precise limit; they plunge into a universal depth or turn in the circle of a present which gets to be more contracted as it is filled. Hence the schizophrenic manner of living the contradiction: either in the deep fissure which traverses the body, or in the fragmented parts which encase one another and spin about. Body-sieve,<sup>8</sup> fragmented body and dissociated body—these are three primary dimensions of the schizophrenic body.*

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*

*Fight Club* is the debut novel of Chuck Palahniuk though it is not the first novel written by the author. After *Invisible Monsters* was rejected for its “dark and risky” content, Palahniuk came up with an “even darker and riskier and more offensive” novel which he thought the publishers would reject again (“Chuck Palahniuk Net”). Contrary to his expectations, the novel attracted publishers’ attention and was released in paperback in 1996. *Fight Club* received the Oregon Book Award for fiction and the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award in 1997. What brought a worldwide popularity to the novel was its film adaptation released by David Fincher in 1999.<sup>9</sup>

*Fight Club* tells the story of a schizophrenic man who remains unnamed throughout the novel. The Narrator is a white heterosexual white-collar man who works as a recall campaign coordinator. He travels around the country to investigate car accidents for an auto company in order to figure out the most profitable strategy for his corporation to follow in case of an accident. The Narrator’s personal life is bounded to his condominium; he has no friends, no relatives, no intimate relationship. Tormented by the emptiness of his personal life and the dull routine of his job, the Narrator suffers

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<sup>8</sup> Body-sieve is a metaphor used to describe the disunity of the body. Deleuze explains that body-sieve is “punctured by an infinite number of little holes” as the whole body is nothing more than “depth” (87). The body is always in interaction with other bodies to affect and be affected by them, thus “everything is a mixture of bodies” (87).

<sup>9</sup> In the official website of Palahniuk, the process of the publication of the book is explained.



from insomnia. On his physician's advice, he attends support groups. The Narrator's one-night therapies are challenged when a woman named Marla suddenly appears in his support groups. Marla is a marginal woman preferring to stay on the brink of life rather than getting integrated into it. On a business trip, the Narrator meets a charismatic man named Tyler Durden. After this encounter, the Narrator returns to his condominium just to find it in flames. Tyler offers the Narrator to live with him but in return the Narrator has to hit Tyler "as hard as he can." When fighting in the parking lot turns to a habit for the Narrator and Tyler, several passer-by men want to participate in their brutal engagement. Thus, in the basement of a bar Tyler organizes a Fight Club, an alternative society held sacred only to the male, which after a while gains a nationwide popularity and spreads across the whole country. Tyler comes up with a new organization called Project Mayhem, which aims at the total destruction of all civilization. When Project Mayhem evolves into a terrorist group and the Narrator proposes to dismantle it, he learns that Tyler is his schizophrenic alter ego. The dualism between Tyler and the Narrator ends up when the Narrator puts a gun in his own mouth aiming to kill Tyler.

Having reached a cult status, both the novel and its film adaptation have been exposed to various analyses by critics, academicians and newspaper columnists. Blended with the criticism of late capitalist American society, most of the critical analyses tend to emphasize how the representations of gender and the ethics of masculinity are challenged, reversed and reinscribed in the novel. Henry Giroux, for instance, reads *Fight Club* as "symptomatic of a wider symbolic and institutional culture of cynicism" as it relates the crisis of capitalism to the crises of masculinity and encourages white heterosexual men to revolt and act violently (6). Omar Lizardo argues that *Fight Club* is a "counter-myth" that challenges both social and cultural contradictions of late capitalism or a "crypto-reactionary response" against the emasculation of modern men in post-industrial American society (221). While J. Michael Clark sees consumerism as the cause of the emasculation of men (65), Eduardo Mendieta argues that as a result of "consumerism, in tandem with de-industrialization and its concomitant "MacDonalization" of American economy," the American man suffers from a blurred identity and a crisis of masculinity (395). Mendieta also notes that *Fight Club* (and other works of fiction by Palahniuk) is the "*Bildungsroman* of an American hero but told in reverse" because throughout the novel the Narrator goes through many stages

resisting any constraining power; this experience, however, does not result in growing mature (395). What is more important for the Narrator is the process of “unmaking, uncoupling, and disentangling” his self from the socialized and organized self (395). In other words, the process is a voyage from the interior to exterior life; it does not offer a steady growth but new alternatives for the self by disengaging it from any bonds and constraints.

This chapter will analyze the subjugation of the Narrator’s body by the capitalist American ideologies such as consumerism, commodification and the crisis of masculinity. Through a detailed analysis of the Narrator’s struggle against the subjugation of his body, the chapter will focus on the Narrator’s evolution to a schizo by means of mental and physical deterritorializations. The chapter will end with the analysis of the Narrator’s dissociation in his schizo personality and his reterritorialization process.

### **1.1 From Commodification to the Crisis of Masculinity: Subjugation of the Body**

The Narrator of *Fight Club* has the sterile and organized life that corporate America has measured for any member of middle class American people. By pursuing the systematic cycle of capitalism, he survives without a cause. His life is restricted to a nicely decorated condo and to constant business travels that bring him a “tiny life” composed of tiny soaps, tiny shampoos and single-use toothbrush (*Fight Club* 28). In this tiny life, the Narrator feels himself encapsulated to a wonderland where he is too big for anything. Calling it “a throw-away life,” James R. Gilles claims that the Narrator feels that “his existence has been miniaturized and destabilized, that everything surrounding him is designed to be thrown away” (29). He is not the only one who suffers from the prosaic life; this is the fate of all middle and working class of America living a similar regulated life. To release himself from that regulated order and fractured existence, the Narrator fantasizes about his own death in a plane saying that “Every takeoff or landing, when the plane banked too much to one side I prayed for a crash” (25). For the

Narrator, a plane crash will be a proper suicide, as he feels too feeble to make vital decisions that will release him from the monotony of his life.

Obsessed with commodities, the Narrator's only personal interest is to find the best furniture that defines him. He calls himself "a slave to the IKEA nesting instinct," and he is not alone; "the people I know who used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit in the bathroom with their IKEA furniture catalogue (*Fight Club* 43). Having the same "Johanneshov armchair in Strinne green stripe pattern" or the same "Rislampa/Har paper lamps made from wire and environmentally friendly unbleached paper" become the purpose of middle class moderate people who fit in a stereotype (43). In "the Cultural Contradictions of Late Capitalism," Omar Lizardo adroitly comments that the Narrator "seems not to garner any enjoyment from the consumption act; it is as if some other unseen force is pulling the strings, and he is just following along" (229). As a puppet who follows the consumerist urges, the Narrator represents "Everyman" in corporate America, whose desires are directed; and whose self is moulded by capitalistic virtues. Surrounding people with symbols, images and simulacra, capitalism stimulates commodification by promising the individual "the possibility that class aspirations are achievable through the possession of material things" (Henderson 148). In other words, capitalism spreads the message that the more the individual consumes, the better life s/he will pursue. Thus, the Narrator seeks pleasure in consumption to actualize his own self.

Surrounding himself with such objects, the Narrator turns into the "organizational man" as Jean Baudrillard defined in *The System of Objects* (37). Analyzing how the objects and the functions of objects are experienced in the contemporary world, Baudrillard claims that the late capitalist social formations create a desire for consumption to motivate the individuals to spend money on their excessive needs. He argues that by manipulating the needs psychologically, capitalism creates "a class of normal consumers who, paradoxically, wish to feel unique while resembling everyone else in their possessions" (183). In that sense, it is the commodity that defines the identity of consumers by giving a false perception that they are unique complete individuals. This is a trap set by capitalism because it "has haunted all forms of society, but it haunts them as their terrifying nightmare" (*Anti-Oedipus* 140). Through coding the potential

desires, capitalism organizes, rationalizes and hierarchizes individuals' desires systematically with the purpose of normalizing them. The Narrator suffers from that entrapment and desires to free himself from that fake freedom and fulfillment promised through goods. By releasing himself from "a complete eroticization of buying and purchasing," he will also end his integration to the society that demands an "unlimited renewal of needs" (Baudrillard 188). Defining himself "complete and perfect" with the furniture surrounding him, he complains about how his accumulated goods seize him (46):

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple of years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. (*Fight Club* 44)

Along with consumption, capitalism works on the individual body by forming codes on gender. In *Manhood in America*, Michael Kimmel indicates that in America manhood is "socially constructed" and it is "largely a homosocial enactment" (5). For Kimmel, American manhood is not an inner manifestation; it comes out only in interaction with other men (7). In *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man*, however, Susan Faludi opposes Kimmel's definition about American manhood. She emphasizes that America is an "ornamental" society that reshapes manhood by telling men that "masculinity is something to drape over the body, not draw from inner resources; that it is personal, not societal; that manhood is displayed, not demonstrated" (35). On the other hand, Faludi agrees with Kimmel when she claims that fathers have a significant role in shaping sons' masculinities. She argues that after the Second World War and women's liberation movements gender roles changed. While women were integrating into marketplace, men were retrieving from household chores and leaving their children to mothers' care. For Faludi, single parent caring affected sons mostly as they were left without a role model to teach them traditional manhood (36). Abandoned sons had to follow the image-based media to learn particular roles, but eventually they gained either feminine images or clichés as Tyler criticizes in the novel: "We are the middle children of history, raised by television to believe that someday we'll be millionaires and movie stars and rock stars, but we won't. And we're just learning this fact" (*Fight Club* 166). As a member of the ornamental society, the Narrator describes his poor relationship

with his father and adds that he is not the only man who suffers from the absence of a father figure; other members of Fight Club, too, belong to “a generation of men raised by women” (50).

Me, I knew my dad for about six years, but I don't remember anything. My dad, he starts a new family in a new town about every six years. This isn't so much like a family as it's like he sets up a franchise. . . . My father never went to college so it was really important I go to college. After college, I called him long distance and said, now what? My dad didn't know. When I got a job and turned twenty-five, long distance, I said, now what? My dad didn't know . . . (*Fight Club* 50-1)

Stuck between late capitalistic ideologies such as consumerism and commodification and their reflections on patriarchal society that code masculinity and individuality in the beginning of the novel, the Narrator later evolves to the perfect example of a schizo. Aside from his clinical diagnosis as a schizophrenic at the end of the novel, the Narrator turns into a schizo in the Deleuze-Guattarian sense who resists being a subjugated body. Deciphering the social codes, he aims to deconstruct the systematic order in his life and on his body. His desire to be free from codes sets his body into motion and guides him to revolt against being a docile body.

## **1.2 The Schizophrenic Body Resisting Subjugation**

As Foucault suggested, there is always a potential resistance against power. In *Fight Club*, the Narrator creates two alternatives for himself to break the imposed limits of his life. His first alternative is support groups. When “everything becomes an out-of-body experience” because of insomnia, the Narrator consults a doctor for a diagnosis (*Fight Club* 19). The doctor advises him to listen to his body as insomnia can be a symptom of an important illness and to attend to support groups to “see real pain” (19). Introducing himself with fake identities, the Narrator attends every night to different disease groups varying from leukemia to melanoma; from brain parasites to blood parasites; from tuberculosis to cancer. Feigning as a patient, the Narrator strips off all his titles and deserts his identity for one night. In support groups, he becomes somebody else, a patient with brain parasites for instance, who experiences himself “nothing, not even nothing, oblivion” (17/20).

The Narrator thinks that his real “resurrection” happens in *Remaining Men Together*, which serves for men who are afflicted with testicular cancer (22). Here the Narrator meets Bob, a man whose testicles were removed because of his excessive use of steroids. Bob makes the Narrator cry for the first time in support groups. As crying has a therapeutic effect on him, the Narrator sleeps and stops taking soothing drugs. Every night, until he returns to his settled nest, to his known territory, he becomes “the little warm center that the life of the world crowded around” (22). In other words, in *Remaining Men Together* he is no longer encapsulated in his tiny life even for a short while; rather, the whole world is encapsulated in his body and that is “better than the real life”:

This was all I remember because then Bob was closing in around me with his arms, and his head was folding down to cover me. Then I was lost inside oblivion, dark and silent and complete, and when I finally stepped away from his soft chest, the front of Bob’s was a wet mask of how I looked crying . . . This was freedom. Losing all hope was freedom. If I didn’t say anything, people in a group assumed the worst. They cried harder. I cried harder. . . . Every evening, I died, and every evening, I was born. Resurrected. (*Fight Club* 22)

Some critics read the relationship between the Narrator and Bob from the Oedipal perspective. In “the Fiction of Self Destruction: Chuck Palahniuk, Closet Moralist,” Jesse Kavadlo suggests that acting as a surrogate mother with his huge breasts, which grew because of high testosterone level, and castrated male genital, Bob gives “maternal and feminine care” to the Narrator (9). However, Kavadlo ignores the fact that Bob is another victim of late capitalism. Once he was a body-builder, he used steroids in order to pursue ideal masculine image. Through various apparatuses of capitalism, it is indoctrinated that having a perfect muscular body will be an indication of one’s masculinity. But that false image of manhood has deprived Bob of his own masculinity and he fell victim to his urges coded by capitalism. Bob loves the Narrator because he thinks that the Narrator has lost his testicles, too. In that sense, both Bob and the Narrator represent emasculated men of the corporate America whose virility is alleviated either physically or psychologically. Like Kavadlo, Lynn M. Ta claims in “Hurt So Good: *Fight Club*, Masculine Violence, and the Crisis of Capitalism” that Bob is a mother figure who “allows the Narrator to return to an Oedipal state where he can reconstitute his masculinity and regain phallic signification” (270). However, the Narrator cannot be oedipalized because he does not yearn for a mother figure to fill a

void, on the contrary, he aims to detach himself from any bond that imposes repression on his psyche. He resists being limited to the familial and social borders. As Deleuze and Guattari suggested, oedipalization requires the individual to stay inside the tripartite formula of Oedipus; however the schizo (the Narrator) desires to desert any regulation that has been set for him/her either by family or social body. Far from being limited to the familial territory, the Narrator has been deserted by his father and raised by his mother about whom there is no detail in the novel. Similarly, in “*Fight Club* and the Dangers of Oedipal Obsession,” Paul Kennett argues that the biggest threat for the Narrator is not his schizophrenic alter ego but the narrative of the Oedipal complex. Kennett claims that Oedipal patriarchy is portrayed “as a dangerous, fascist throwback” and thus the Narrator has to release himself from the repressive lines of Oedipal triangle to be free of social and familial authority (48-9).

The therapeutic effect of *Remaining Men Together* vanishes when Marla suddenly appears in *Remaining Men Together*. For the Narrator, Marla’s role changes as the novel progresses. At the beginning of *Fight Club*, Marla functions as a threat for the Narrator. Although it is a group for men afflicted with testicular cancer, Marla visits the group and feigns as a patient. Disturbed by Marla’s presence in the groups, the Narrator fears that her existence will reveal his lie. The Narrator calls her a “faker” and tells that what disturbs him about Marla is not her phoniness, but her gaze controlling his actions. Marla’s gaze “transforms the Narrator into a faker who is all too aware of the distance between her perception and his reality” (Mathews 98). In other words, the Narrator has to face his own phoniness in the group and has to turn back to his real life. For his brief escapes to a virtual life that seems better than the real life, the Narrator needs Marla “to get out” as she ruins “the one real thing” in his life (24).

Unlike the Narrator, Marla is not integrated to the mainstream conventions of corporate America as she performs none of the roles that are attributed to women in the society. In “‘I am Marla’s Monstrous Wound’: *Fight Club* and the Gothic,” Cynthia Kuhn examines Marla’s marginal personality and argues that “Othered” as a female, “Marla refuses to fit neatly into conceptions of ‘the feminine’; she continually perplexes such scripts” (44). Marla performs neither maternal nor domestic roles attributed to a woman in a traditional society; for instance, unlike traditional clichés in melodramas, she wants

“to have Tyler’s abortion” not his child (*Fight Club* 59). Marla does not have an ordinary life; a home monotonously decorated with stereotypical furniture; a common job following eight to five routine; instead, she lives in a hotel room and steals jeans from laundries to sell. Rebelling against being restricted to known territories, Marla displays the characteristics of a schizo. She disregards the roles such as a beautiful lover/wife or an affectionate mother and desires to transcend the established borders. However, despite acting as a suicidal rebel, Marla is more aware of her burdens such as the fear of aging and death, and she is “emotionally stronger than the narrator” because unlike the Narrator, Marla has the courage to get into action (Kuhn 42). For instance, the Narrator has an ideation of a plane crash as a suicide, whereas Marla does attempt to commit suicide by taking pills. Marla is not a “normal” woman but not an outcast either; she knows how to act between the two characters by manipulating the imposed limits. In that sense, Marla perfectly fits into Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of a good schizo who is on the edge, “fully a part of the crowd and at the same time completely outside it; removed from it” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 29).

The Narrator’s second alternative is to deterritorialize both mentally and physically. To resist the subjugation of his body, he aims to defy all the codes that systematize his life. The Narrator breaks the imposed limits by detaching himself from known territorialities and he develops “his own system of co-ordinates for situating himself at his disposal” (*Anti-Oedipus* 27). The Narrator’s first deterritorialization happens mentally when he meets Tyler Durden on an airplane. Both physically and personally, Tyler is the anti-thesis of the Narrator and represents everything that the Narrator wishes to have: a charismatic and audacious personality, a perfect muscular body to fulfill the ideal masculine identity, an indifferent nature to “feminine” spheres such as decoration and shopping.

Tyler is not a victim of corporate America, but a “no-holds-barred charismatic rebel” who works in part-time jobs to perform little acts of rebellion (Giroux 8). For instance, as a movie projectionist, he splices the frames of erect penises or yawning vaginas into family movies to make families irritated. Although the frame appears on the screen for a short moment and nobody catches it then, it makes people feel sick and cry without knowing the reason at that night. As a waiter, Tyler either urinates or ejaculates into



soups and then serves them to “titans and their gigantic wives wearing diamonds bigger than I [the Narrator] feel” (80). Calling himself “a service industry terrorist, a guerrilla waiter, minimum-wage despoiler,” Tyler takes revenge from upper class people with his lower body and with its abject fluids (84). As a soap salesperson, he makes high-priced soaps from stolen liposuction fat. Selling rich women their own excessive fat is not only an ironic strategy but also a clever manipulation of consumer society as Tyler inverts the logic behind capitalism. As Kavadlo indicates, “soap is no longer a product of consumer capitalism but a way to subvert it while ironically profiting; soap, symbol of American hygiene, now undermines rather than strengthens the culture” (111). When these acts of rebellion are analyzed, it becomes obvious that Tyler is the new body created to transcend the limits and provide an escape for the Narrator. For Burgess, this new body fits into the “grotesque doubling of the body” Mikhail Bakhtin explains in *Rabelais and His World*:

. . . a grotesque body, in which there are “two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born.” From this “pregnant and begetting” body, “a new body always emerges in some other form” (26). The double/new body signifies difference and possibility, and indicates the individual’s wish for the death of the civilized body and the birth of the liberated self. [Marianne and] the Narrator beget their doubles at the height of their longing to escape their social prisons, and [these] doubles then act as liaisons between what society restricts and what the human body craves, and, most importantly, between the *actual* bodies of [Marianne] and the Narrator and the potentialities of their *utopian* bodies. (italics in the original, Burgess 77)

Deleuze and Guattari define deterritorialization as to become or to evolve into something else (*A Thousand Plateaus* 174-91). The Narrator evolves to Tyler by splitting his identity. Within this mental deterritorialization, he also deterritorializes physically. After his encounter with Tyler on the plane, the Narrator finds that a suspicious explosion has blown up his condo. What is left from his neatly decorated nest is a “concrete shell. The floor-to-ceiling windows in their aluminum frames went out and the sofas and the lamps and dishes and sheet sets in flames, and the high school annuals and the diplomas and telephone” (*Fight Club* 45). The Narrator is no longer the organizational man of capitalism who seeks his identity in consumption. He releases himself from his furniture, from being complete, content and “perfect” (*Fight Club* 46).

As stated earlier, Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism has the power to decode and decipher the flows of desire to “produce the schizo as the subject of decoded flows”

(*Anti-Oedipus* 34). As a product of capitalism, the schizo learns that coded norms and structures can be deciphered and scrambled. The schizo's aim is to "create a new polyvocality that is the code of desire" by setting his/her desiring machines into motion and allowing desire to flow (40). In *Fight Club*, Tyler and the Narrator organize an alternative authentic society, that is, Fight Club, where the coded desires of the individuals will be deciphered to decode from the outset. Here, the Narrator and Tyler can abolish all the impositions on their bodies because they do not need to perform their measured roles in the society.

Apart from some simple rules, there are no limits to restrict the members in Fight Club. The rules are definite and the first two rules are about its secrecy. However, in a short time groups of men attend Fight Club to fight and enjoy their virility. What fascinates men in Fight Club is its creative potential offering freedom to escape from all the disfranchising and emasculating effects of capitalism. When men are in Fight Club, they are no more subjugated by hierarchical powers and limited by the codes of individuality and masculinity. In the Deleuze-Guattarian sense, through Fight Club men aim to attain body without organs where they will be free of any constraints implemented by capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari indicate that in the body without organs there is "no longer a Self [*Moi*] that feels, acts and recalls" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 162). Here self is not a unified complete, finished entity but an unformed subjectivity in the process of becoming.

Fight Club is not a performance to be watched on television; it is a place where men perform real fight and have a real life experience. The Narrator explains the effect of the experience with an example, saying that "after you've been to fight club, watching football on television is watching pornography when you could be having great sex" (*Fight Club* 50). It is a secluded spot for men to gather and perform their instinctual masculinity through fist fighting and male bonding. In that sense, it can be said that Fight Club is a direct embodiment of mythopoetic men's movement's principles. In 1990, Robert Bly published *Iron John: A Book About Man* to retrieve the lost masculine soul ("Men's Work"). Thinking that myths and fairy tales emphasize "stages of growth and meaning of initiation," Bly uses Jungian archetypes and Grimm's *Fairy Tales* to tell the story of a maturing young boy with the help of a wise man who teaches him

atavistic and instinctual manhood. The echoes of the book became much more than expected as it not only became a bestseller but also brought “the notion of a ‘men’s movement’ on the national agenda” (Messner 8).

The movement spreads the idea that modernization and the disenfranchising effects of capitalism led to the feminization of men “by severing the ritual ties between the generations of men and replacing them with alienating, competitive and bureaucratic bond, thus cutting them off from each other and ultimately from their own deep masculine natures” (Messner 17). The movement attracts most of white, middle-class, college-educated men’s attention because it not only stresses the difference between male and female natures but also promises exclusion from women’s sphere. But more importantly, the movement aims to enhance male bonding as it criticizes capitalism for undermining “the structural basis of middle-class men’s emotional bonds with each other” and for creating loose relationships with male figures either as a mentor or a father or a brother (Messner 19). As a solution, the movement suggests male gatherings in which they will perform homosocial rituals for spiritual transformation. These rituals resemble the performances of tribal societies which comprise “the use of myth and poetry as teaching tools, drumming, dancing, mask making, chanting, psychodrama, talking circles and guided imagery” (Schwalbe 6). Thus, in these gatherings the members ranging from middle-aged men to young adults experience self-knowledge, self-actualization and substantial relationship.

The procedure in *Fight Club* differs from the male rituals in mythopetic movement in practice. In *Fight Club*, fists talk and the only chant that can be heard is the chant of the watchers. Fist fighting is not a new practice in rituals as it has been performed for centuries “to settle disputes” keeping the limits and control of fighting (Wood). In “Real Men,” Wood states that “the harplings of the *incensés* might lead us to think that pugilism is something that *Fight Club* invented all by itself, in fact, bare-fisted fighting was a central tenet of Victorian society” and it became the part of English culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The ritualized fight of those centuries had some rules similar to those in *Fight Club*. For instance in *Fight Club* “when someone says ‘stop,’ goes limp, even if he’s just faking it; the fight is over. Only two guys to a fight. One fight at a time. They fight without shirts and shoes” (*Fight Club* 49). Similarly, in

the eighteenth century only two men used to fight while others were cheering them; one fighter could not “hit his opponent while he was down and strikes below the belt were considered foul” (“The Voice of the Turtle”). At the end of the both rituals, men leave the arena with scars and wounds but anger and hostility never comes out. In *Fight Club*, men undergo a spiritual transformation after each fight:

You saw the kid who works in the copy center, a month ago you saw this kid who can't remember to three-hole-punch an order or put colored slip sheets between the copy packets, but this kid was a god for ten minutes when you saw him kick the air out of an account representative twice his size then land on the man and pound him limp until the kid had to stop. . . . Every time you see this kid, you can't tell him what a great fight he had. . . . Even if you told the kid in the copy center that he had a good fight, you wouldn't be talking to the same man. (*Fight Club* 48-9)

*Fight Club* functions as a better alternative than sport centers for men because the body becomes the site of struggle against forces that impose constraints on the individuals. Michael Kimmel states that millions of men test their manhood in gym centers because “men’s bodies have long been symbols of masculinity in America” (224). Men have been trying to discover the limits of their bodies in sports centers by excessive exercises; also they have been showing great importance to their diet.<sup>10</sup> The body turns into a vehicle for men to express themselves, sell their identities and reclaim their masculinities. By turning their bodies into idealized entities, men aim to look pleasant to others. However, in *Fight Club* what matters is not a muscular shaped body because looking like a man does not “mean looking the way a sculptor or an art director says”; rather, wounds, scars, swollen eyes, bleeding noses and fractured jaws are the remarks of masculinity (*Fight Club* 50). Rather than the whole body, its fragmented and mutilated parts serve as a reminder of masculinity. Marked with bruises, gaping holes, stitches etc., male bodies function as an identity card through which members of *Fight Club* recognize each other outside. Revolting against being sites on which hierarchical forces act, they form new relations and meanings; a reassertion that one’s body is one’s possession. In *Fight Club*, the issue is going far beyond the limits of what a body can do for only then can men attain the body without organs:

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<sup>10</sup> In “Body and the Consumer Culture,” Mike Featherstone explains the relationship between body and bodily-preservation strategies. According to Featherstone, because of the insurmountable importance of “appearance” and “look” in late capitalist American society, individuals are encouraged to adopt several strategies from jogging to making diet to preserve their bodies from aging and decomposition (170).

The question works by staking out an area of what a body actually can do. This area is restricted by obvious physical constraints which must be respected. But this does not mean that there is no beyond, or that a beyond cannot be desired. And it is just this beyond—beyond the physical limits of the physical—that the concept of the body without organs articulates . . . It is the body's limits that define the BwO, not the other way around. (qtd. in Fox 355)

For the Narrator, “going beyond” is possible only through violence because words do not work in *Fight Club*. Violence functions as a line of flight, a movement of deterritorialization through which the Narrator discovers a way out and creates an idiosyncratic self. It makes men turn into stiff guys who “look like carved out of wood” (Palahniuk 51). But violence is not an instrument of aggression, it is “serving as a cathartic release from all of the pent-up frustration that accrues from the countless everyday humiliations and subsequent requirement to engage in socio-emotional self-control” (qtd. in Lizardo 235). For the Narrator, or more correctly for Tyler, the pleasure of the body lies in pain and destruction. To re-conquer life, to attain the body without organs, the Narrator has to dismantle the unity in his body. But first he has to “hit the bottom”:

Tyler says I'm nowhere near hitting the bottom, yet. And if I don't fall all the way, I can't be saved. Jesus did it with his crucifixion thing. I shouldn't just abandon money and property and knowledge. This isn't just a weekend retreat. I should run from self-improvement, and I should be running toward disaster. I can't just play it safe any more. . . . Only after disaster can we be resurrected. “It's only after you've lost everything,” Tyler says, “that you're free to do anything.” What I'm feeling is premature enlightenment. (*Fight Club* 70)

In *The Logic of Sense* (1969), Deleuze states that a schizophrenic body has three dimensions such as body-sieve, fragmented body and dissociated body (87). These dimensions emphasize that a schizo does not conceive his/her body as a unified entity all the time. To disregard the pre-ordained unity, the schizo sometimes refers himself/herself as body parts by giving one organ's function to another. In *Fight Club*, the Narrator sees everything as an extension of his body when he finds out the intimate relationship between Marla and Tyler. Getting really irritated, the Narrator speaks of his anger by referring to himself as a single body part such as “I'm Joe's Raging Bile Duct. I am totally Joe's Gallbladder” (58-9). For some time being, he cannot conceive his body as a whole but considers the parts of the body as his whole body. Only when he transcends from biological unity to psychological disunity, the Narrator accepts the involution of reality and hallucination. In other words, the Narrator compromises the

hallucination of Tyler with the reality of Marla only in his disfigured psyche. On other occasions, it is impossible to see Tyler and Marla together: “The second Marla opens the screen door, Tyler is gone, vanished, run out of the room, disappeared” (70).<sup>11</sup> In that sense, Marla does not function as a threat for the Narrator any more but as a rival to be competed for Tyler’s attention.

As stated by Deleuze and Guattari, the schizo’s act of deterritorialization reaches “the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius” on his/her body without organs (*Anti-Oedipus* 49). As long as the schizo keeps on deterritorializing, all forms of capitalism, which is a form of socius, are haunted, experimented and decoded in the body without organs. However, the act of deterritorialization is obstructed when the schizo stops experimenting with the codes. When limits are reproduced to bring back the familiar relations to known territorialities, the schizo reterritorializes to accept boundaries and obligation. In *Fight Club*, the Narrator reterritorializes when his schizophrenic alter ego comes up with a new organization called Project Mayhem that turns out to be a negative experimentation.

### 1.3 The Schizophrenic Body in Dissociation

Project Mayhem obstructs the Narrator’s spiritual nourishment and bodily transformation. When compared to *Fight Club*, Project Mayhem seems more dangerous as it directs violence to the entire civilization and aims at total destruction. As the Narrator notes, “like fight club does with clerks and box boys, Project Mayhem will break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world” (*Fight Club* 124). In that sense, this new organization has the chaotic ideal of sweeping away the

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<sup>11</sup> As a counter-argument, Joshua Gunn and Thomas Frenzt read this scene from an Oedipal perspective, claiming that Marla functions as a mother and Tyler as a father: “In true Oedipal spirit, Marla mothers the Narrator most centrally by having sex with the alter ego Tyler. Obviously, the Narrator is attracted to Marla, but cannot bring himself to act on that directly. So, he enlists his father fantasy projection, Tyler, to do the job for him. . . . In this scene Marla is thus both a mother and her substitute, the Narrator’s mirror and his –that is, Tyler’s –non-mother lover. Marla is thus consistently unstable and ambiguous, both a subject (that is, a mirror of the Narrator) and an object” (“Fighting for Father: *Fight Club* as Cinematic Psychosis” 285).

capitalist society from the outset and turning it into its primitive roots so that there will be no more nuclear waste, no trash and waste. The world will turn into a jungle where people will hide in cages and all the traces of civilization such as museums, skyscrapers, malls and residences will be eradicated:

You'll hunt elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center, and dig clams next to the skeleton of the Space Needle leaning at a forty-five-degree angle. We'll paint the skyscrapers with huge totem faces and goblin tikis, any every evening what's left of mankind will retreat to empty zoos and lock itself in cages as protection against bears and big cats and wolves that pace and watch us from outside the cage bars at night. . . . It's Project Mayhem that's going to save the world. A cultural ice age. A prematurely induced dark age. Project Mayhem will force humanity to go dormant or into remission long enough for the Earth to recover. (*Fight Club* 125)

Although the aim seems sublime, the tactics to be used are quite terroristic because in Project Mayhem there is no place for a mutual bonding; instead, it signals a total annihilation. It uses the very techniques of the society which it criticizes, such as subjugation, oppression and even enslavement. What Tyler announces is not freedom but the hegemony of hopelessness and fear: “we have to show these men and women freedom by enslaving them, and show them courage by frightening them” (149). Centered around Tyler, Project Mayhem turns into an organization having stricter rules and commanding others to obey. In that sense, Project Mayhem serves as a state-like institution that obstructs the Narrator's revolutionary escape. In other words, through Project Mayhem the Narrator has to face what he has escaped from or even worse. As mentioned above, Project Mayhem is the reterritorialization of the Narrator as a schizo because it compels him to return to an old and coded territory. When its systems and tactics are analyzed, Project Mayhem completely fits into corporate America. By setting borders and limits once again, it excludes the possibilities and alternatives that are introduced by *Fight Club*. There is no place for freedom; the only rule is to obey as docile bodies. In Project Mayhem, the Narrator's schizophrenic character is aimed to be codified again to re-settle in this new organization because, as Deleuze and Guattari indicate, reterritorialization suspends “crossing the wall, getting out of the black holes, but instead of connecting with other lines [,] . . . turning to destruction, abolition, the passion for abolition” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 229).

Acting as a monarch, Tyler leads Project Mayhem and does not allow the information to

be spread amongst the members. It is not an easy job to be recruited into the community because the members have to undergo a challenging test. Preparing a bunch of clothes all black from top to toe, the applicants have to wait three days without food and water, all the while they are exposed to a bombardment of insults and physical abuse. It is a test applied in “Buddhist temples” Tyler says, “you tell the applicant to go away, and if his resolve is so strong that he waits at the entrance without food or shelter or encouragement for three days, then and only then he can enter and begin training” (*Fight Club* 129). The applicants also have a sum of money inserted into their shoes to be used for funeral expenses if they die in mission. When recruited, the members are all assigned with homework inside or outside the house, and each member is “indoctrinated into Tyler’s way of thinking and trained to function as an army of subversives” (Gold 28). The first homework is to start a fight with a stranger and let him win to taste the power residing in his body. Tyler tells the reason: “what we have to do is remind these guys what kind of power they still have” (120). However, upcoming assignments are not that much heroic; what follows is either vandalism or terrorism. For the next assignment, Tyler commands the members to buy a gun and promote chaos, damage and even death:

“Don’t get any bullets,” Tyler told the Assault Committee. “And just so you don’t worry about it, yes, you’re going to have to kill someone.” Arson. Assault. Mischief and Misinformation. No questions. No questions. No excuses and no lies. The fifth rule about Project Mayhem is you have to trust Tyler. (*Fight Club* 125)

Calling the members Space Monkeys, Tyler refers to actual Space Monkeys that Mission Control directs at NASA (Schultz 597). He dehumanizes the members by stripping their identities off as “the Self (*Moi*) is now nothing more than a character whose actions and emotions are desubjectified, perhaps even to the point of death” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 356). For Tyler, they have no individuality, no self-worth and personal value; they are just “an assembly line of unquestioning drones to orchestrate his apocalypse” (Burgess 100). In that sense, he subverts the late-capitalist society’s strategy that spreads a false hope in people’s mind and makes them believe that they are special entities and their lives are worth everything in the world. That false hope leads people to pursue a set of scripted interactions and a stereotypical life which is merely an extension of dehumanization and depersonalization. By writing a note to the members, Tyler seems as though he aims to wake them up from that false dream, from



desubjectification, however, his real aim lies in desensitizing the members with the propaganda of uniqueness and creating docile bodies to fulfill his purpose.

When I come home, one space monkey is reading to the assembled space monkeys who sit covering the whole first floor. “You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake. You are the same decaying matter as everyone else, and we are all part of the same compost pile.” The space monkey continues, “Our culture has made us all the same. No one is truly white or black or rich, anymore. We all want the same. Individually, we are nothing. . . . “You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake.” (*Fight Club* 134)

Tyler’s purpose is to annihilate the whole civilization with its financial and historical institutions. He aims to eradicate not only the credit card system but also all history because for Tyler the latter perpetually enhances the materialistic-capitalistic society and the consumer ethic. Thus, leaving the members of Project Mayhem “in a constant state of brainwashing and indoctrination, in constant liminality with no hope of reincorporation,” Tyler talks of how history has discarded them so far and favored those in power (Kılıçarslan 61). For Tyler, his generation has experienced neither a war nor a depression period; in turn their lives have become battlefields where they struggle with their own depression. By drawing that extremely dark scenario, Tyler does not spread a therapeutic relief but an apocalyptic stimulation to create a war to end all the wars, both spiritual and physical:

We are God’s middle children, according to Tyler Durden, with no special place in history and no special attention . . . “We don’t have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we do, we have a great war of spirit. We have a great revolution against the culture. The great depression is our lives. We have a spiritual depression.” (*Fight Club* 149)

The Narrator cannot situate himself in Project Mayhem as he feels the further dissociation in his schizophrenic personality. The split between Tyler and himself widens. Although schizophrenia paves his way for being a schizo, the Narrator loses his center and is dragged to experience “the deep fissure which traverses the body” (Deleuze 87). He lets his schizophrenic alter ego detain himself from the schizophrenic process and make him return to what he has deserted. In other words, through Project Mayhem the Narrator deserts the schizophrenic process and indulges in the depths of his schizophrenia as the identity of Tyler starts overriding and vitiating him. Thus, the Narrator desires Project Mayhem to be terminated. His desire augments when his former friend from Remaining Men Together, Robert Paulson, was killed in a mission.

The Narrator demands that the organization be canceled as it “served the purpose” (*Fight Club* 178). His demand originates from neither the male bond between Bob and the Narrator nor from the cathartic feeling that Bob gave to support groups; it is the proximity of the irreversible terror and murder. The Narrator fears that Bob will not be the first and the last victim of Project Mayhem because it “has evolved into a fascist para-military group more dangerous than the social order it has set out to destroy” (Giroux 14).

Project Mayhem uses the same punishment as the Oedipus complex of psychoanalysis. When the authority of the father is broken, the Law demands the castration of the child. Similarly, those who propose to shut down Project Mayhem are threatened with castration. The Narrator faces the threat when he finds out that his office building is blown out and his boss becomes the next victim of Project Mayhem. The members who are assigned to castrate anyone wishing to terminate the organization catch him. However, that moment is quite unreliable as it is solved when the Narrator wakes up in his condo dressed and “whole” (193).

What is left from that traumatic moment of the fear of castration is the dissociation about his subjective reality. Detaching himself from the outside, the Narrator “turn[s] in the circle of a present which gets to be more contracted as it is filled” (Deleuze 87). He flies from one country to another to find out who Tyler is and in all the places he visits he has the feeling of having been there before. In spite of all the confirmations that he is Tyler, the Narrator rejects the reality because he is dragged into a circle that detains him from reality. The moment of epiphany dawns on him when Tyler suddenly appears in the middle of his nap. In their heated-up conversation, Tyler confesses that he is the Narrator’s schizophrenic alter ego rising as an alternative because of his desire to change his sterile life:

“There isn’t a me and a you, anymore,” Tyler says, and he pinches the end of my nose. “I think you’ve figured that out.” We both use the same body, but at different times. . . . “We’re not two separate men. Long story short, when you’re awake, you have the control, and you can call yourself anything you want, but the second you fall asleep, I take over, and you become Tyler. . . . Oh, this is bullshit. This is a dream. Tyler is projection. He’s a dissociative personality disorder. A psychogenic fugu state. Tyler is my hallucination. (*Fight Club* 164-68)

After his confrontation with his schizophrenic alter ego, the Narrator returns his home

on Paper Street to find Marla who turns to the only reality in the Narrator's life. As Marla likes to be on the limits of the society and loves everything that is on the limit, she finds the Narrator's schizophrenia quite normal. When the Narrator tells him "Tyler Durden is a separate personality I've created, and now he's threatening to take over my life," Marla says "Just like Tony Perkins' mother in *Psycho*. This is so cool" (173). While he is desperately looking for a way out to be released from the clamps of his dissociation, Marla just parodies the issue. For her, being different from the society is not a subversion as "these peregrinations are the schizo's own particular way of rediscovering the Earth" (*Anti-Oedipus* 35). In that sense, Marla serves as a catalyst to sever the ties between the Narrator's character as a schizo and his schizophrenic alter ego. She helps the Narrator to fix the deep fissure in which he struggles. To strengthen his character as a schizo, the Narrator has to get away from his dissociation which introduces "a rupture, an eruption, a break-through which smashes the continuity of [his schizo] personality" (Deleuze 27). To deterritorialize and return to his character as a schizo, the Narrator decides to kill Tyler who starts to detain him from what is revolutionary: that is, the schizophrenic process.

As Deleuze and Guattari indicated, for the schizo "the beginning always begins in-between, in intermezzo," which is a constant movement of deterritorialization (*A Thousand Plateaus* 329). After his murder/suicide attempt, the Narrator thinks to be dead and in heaven but he is alive as the bullet only tore out his cheek. He appears to be incarcerated in an insane asylum to be treated. He imagines that Marla is writing to him from the Earth and telling him that he will turn back to Earth someday (207). Marla leads the Narrator to freedom by inspiring him to live in the "intermezzo" because the only way "to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 277). For the Narrator, this asylum serves as an intermezzo through which he will restart being a "healthy" schizo. He will accept neither the subjugation of his body at the pawns of capitalism nor the dissociation of his personality. He prefers "a mediation between the two where he accepts himself as an individual person rather than a mere cog in the social machine" (Burgess 101). Thus, his process of reterritorialization which started with Project Mayhem turns into a positive movement of deterritorialization as he takes a route to create an idiosyncratic self who will direct his own flows of desire.

At the beginning of his voyage, the Narrator is a proper man indulging in the capitalist patriarchal American society's codes and letting himself flow in a world where desires of hierarchical powers' suppress the individuals' desires. However, the subjugation of his own body and control of his own desires through patriarchal and capitalist codes create a problem that he cannot name. When his discontent reveals itself through insomnia, he desires to hold the strings, to channel his own flow of desire and manifest his masculinity in his own way. By setting his desiring machines in motion, he aims to connect to other flows and uses violence as an apparatus. For the Narrator, violence is not a way that leads him to self-destruction; instead, it is a way out, or more correctly, a line of flight that will carry him to the body without organs which is nonrestrictive as "the body does not represent anything at all" (*Anti-Oedipus* 105). Releasing himself from the life pre-ordained by the society, the Narrator deterritorializes both mentally and physically to wander in unknown territories. He not only breaks from the society but also performs all that the latter would condemn because what is "the health of the individual is the illness of society" (Mendieta 408). Although he experiences dissociation in his schizo personality, he chooses to be in the intermezzo in the end and pursue the characteristics of a schizo.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE MASOCHISTIC BODY IN *INVISIBLE MONSTERS*

*The masochist body: it is poorly understood in terms of pain; it is fundamentally a question of the BwO. It has its sadist or whore sew it up . . . It has itself strung up to stop the organs from working; flayed, as if the organs clung to the skin; sodomized, smothered, to make sure everything is sealed tight.*

Deleuze-Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

*Rip yourself open. Tell me my life story before I die. Sew yourself shut.*

Chuck Palahniuk, *Invisible Monsters*

*Invisible Monsters* was released in paperback in 1999 after the worldwide success of *Fight Club*. Although written and intended to be published before *Fight Club*, *Invisible Monsters* was rejected for its content and non-linear structure that makes readers jump from one chapter to another. Monica Drake, one of Palahniuk's friends, warned Palahniuk that it would be troublesome to read the novel as "following the plot would mean paging backward and forward" (*Invisible Monsters Remix* 11). On her warning, Palahniuk changed the original structure of the novel by putting it into a linear narrative, which he thought "threw out the magic" (*Invisible Monsters Remix* 13). After twelve years, however, he published the original structure in hardcover under the title of *Invisible Monsters Remix*. For Palahniuk, the original novel is "packed with jumps" that make readers get lost to find the "buried treasure" (13).

*Invisible Monsters* is about Shannon who is a beautiful fashion model at the age of twenty-three. Shannon has an accident that mutilates her face by leaving her jawless. Eating baby food and learning how to speak, she starts a new life in the hospital. In speech therapist's office, she meets a drag queen named Brandy Alexander. Having an exquisite beauty and an audacious personality, Brandy represents everything Shannon has lost. With her mutilated face and damaged identity, Shannon asks Brandy's help to form a new life where she will get rid of her artificial past filled with traps of American society's constructions about beauty and haunting memories of her brother Shane who is supposed to be dead because of AIDS. When discharged from hospital, Shannon

moves in to her best friend, Evie Cottrell's house. On learning that Evie has a relationship with Shannon's ex-fiancé, Manus, Shannon sets Evie's house on fire and kidnaps Manus to take revenge. Locking him in the trunk of a car, Shannon finds Brandy and they set out a journey together. Throughout their journey around the country, Brandy attributes both Manus and Shannon several identities. In each place, they become someone else with a different personality. Their journey ends in Evie's house, on her wedding day. Evie's mother tells Shannon and Brandy that Evie is a transgendered female. Shannon burns her house again and Evie shoots Brandy thinking that it was Brandy who burnt her house. When Brandy is bleeding to death, Shannon confesses that she shot herself in the face and Brandy is her dead brother Shane.

When *Invisible Monsters* was published a second time, the critics and scholars highly appraised the novel for its authentic plot through which all codes of gender and identity formation are rewritten. Andrew Slade, for instance, claims that the novel is about characters who "wish to put an end to the need to search for an identity and to draw to a close the end and urge to represent themselves to others" (81). For Slade, the main characters (Shannon and Brandy) desire to be free from limitations and labels; thus, they look for new possibilities to manifest their authentic identities. While Eduardo Mendieta draws attention to "the burden of imposed beauty" (400), Andrew Ng states the "cultural interpellation" on the main characters that leads them "to perform violence upon their on bodies as a desperate resort to experience aliveness" (24). Similarly, Sherry R. Truffin argues that Shannon and Brandy engage in masochistic performances because of "their desperate bids for freedom and control in a suffocating, dehumanizing commodity culture" (73). In that sense, violence becomes the main characters' response to their preordained lives where their bodies are regulated through systematic codes of identity and gender. By deconstructing the form of their bodies and redesigning them from the outset, Shannon and Brandy resist social and cultural impositions and create bodies to challenge traditional norms and ideological formations.

This chapter analyzes how Shannon's (and also Brandy's) body is subjugated by capitalist American society's constructions on beauty and gender issues. Stuck in their social and physical boundaries, Shannon (and Brandy) struggle(s) to overcome the constraints on their bodies by engaging in masochistic acts. After a study of Shannon's

(also Brandy) struggle with the subjugation of her body by deterritorializing from the known limits to recreate a new body with a new identity, the chapter focuses on Shannon's rebirth as a masochistic body who has restructured her life from the ashes of her prior identity.

## **2.1 Constructions on Beauty and Gender: Subjugation of the Body**

Shannon in *Invisible Monsters* lives in capitalist American society where individuals are lured with the promise of freedom and success if they follow the systematic codes of society. Following the urges of the mainstream culture, Shannon decorates her life with beauty products, luxurious clothes and jewelry as she believes that individuals in post-modern world are "all products anyway" (*Invisible Monsters* 12). For Shannon, just like the products, the consumers are produced through magazines, TV commercials and billboard ads. It is a world of production where "everything is reducible to glossy construction" (Slade 86). As a beautiful model, Shannon has nothing more than a female body with no distinct personality. She reifies herself as "walking sex furniture to wear tight evening dresses all afternoon and entice the television audience into buying" (*Invisible Monsters* 39). The reification of her body turns her into a commodity that has no personal depth and no peculiar character.

Similar to the Narrator who is obsessed with consumption in *Fight Club*, Shannon is obsessed with her beauty. For Shannon, being beautiful is an overwhelming compulsion approved both by her parents and post-modern capitalist American society. As Ng points out, "in the postmodern West, it seems that beauty now falls within the domains of the 'popular' which is perpetuated through film and television productions, glossy lifestyle magazines, and the world of fashion" (25). Beauty is more than appearance and aesthetics as it guarantees certain labels. In Mendieta's terms, beauty functions "as fiat" as it is a "performance, the script not of the visual and surface, but of doing" (400). In that sense, Shannon performs her beauty to have a label in society, to fit into the stereotype of a beautiful woman. Applying beauty products on her body, wearing make up and luxurious clothes, she sells her appearance to perform her standard individuality.

However, it is impossible to remain beautiful forever as images about beauty are perpetually renewed in capitalist American society. While fashion magazines and TV commercials give a new beauty product alert everyday, the advances in cosmetic and plastic surgery change the standards of attractiveness regularly. Shannon is not the only victim of that cultural interpellation; every woman in American society suffers from that imposition. In *The Body and Social Theory*, Chris Shilling explains that because of the notion of the body as an “unfinished project,” women are conditioned to think that it is possible to re-shape their bodies through various applications of beauty culture (173). However, that notion of body ends up with standardization or invisibility of distinct appearances as Shannon states: “most women know this feeling of being more and more invisible everyday” (32).

Similar to the Narrator’s job and nicely decorated house that give him a sterile life and stable identity, Shannon’s job as a fashion model plays a considerable role in constructing her fixed individuality. Being a model, Shannon has to be addicted to her appearance and the public gaze as the latter will confirm her superficial existence. She needs others’ gazes on her body to feel significant. Public gaze is a means of pleasure for Shannon. To be watched by the public makes her alive, it is a way of manifesting her existence. Just as Shannon who is lured by the feeling of “a million spotlights picking you out of the crowd” (36), her model friend Evie apparently actualizes her existence through public gaze for she says: “I don’t feel real enough unless people are watching” (*Invisible Monsters* 69).

Shannon’s desire to be seen mostly originates from the propaganda of entertainment culture in post-modern capitalist America. Like any middle class American people, Shannon believes that TV shows and film industry represent a new lifestyle for individuals to perform and the only way to attain that life is to copy it. In that sense, individuals, be they spectators or those who are on television, are subjected to the control of television as “there’s a different life on every channel, and almost every hour the lives change” (*Invisible Monsters* 80). Television offers people the chance to be anything or anyone they desired, even a god but “in the real world, that is not the case” (114). In the real world, it turns out to be a trap set by capitalism to eliminate distinctions among individuals and lead them to pursue artificial lives. As Baudrillard



points out in *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1987), “all that matters now is to resemble oneself, to find oneself everywhere, multiplied but loyal to one’s formula” (qtd. in Chin-Yi 34). Eventually, Shannon desires to free herself from that standardization and artificiality and create an alternative life where she will be more than being “a product of a product of a product” (*Invisible Monsters* 217).

Within her constructed identity, Shannon is also captivated by her gender. She feels trapped in her femininity and the conventional limits of it. Similar to the Narrator who has to display masculinity, Shannon has to display her feminine gender by obeying its dictates. She has to be attractive, obedient and fragile, letting herself be treated like “a piece of meat” (*Invisible Monsters* 124). Shannon is not the only victim of gender entrapment however; all women in capitalist American society suffer from those codes of femininity as Shannon notes:

Fuck me. I’m so tired of being me. Me beautiful. Me ugly. Blonde. Brunette. A million fucking fashion makeovers that only leave me trapped being me . . . Everything before now, before now, before now, is just a story I carry around. I guess that would apply to anybody in the world. What I need is a new story about who I am. What I need to do is fuck up so bad I can’t save myself. (*Invisible Monsters* 224)

Shannon is not the only prisoner of her feminine gender. Her brother Shane who transforms himself to Brandy Alexander also struggles with gender entrapment throughout the novel. Born with male genitals and raised as a son, Shane is surrounded by the expectations of the patriarchal society that dictates the characteristics of masculinity. He is also assigned the role of the elder son who is expected to carry on the family name. Shane first aims to get rid of the unbearable burden on his body when he turns fifteen. He mutilates his face by making a hairspray can explode as he “wanted something to save [him] . . . the opposite of a miracle” (*Invisible Monsters* 282). His first performance of self-mutilation results in extra attention received from his parents. As the only male child of his family, he is treated with more affectionate care. The attention turns out to be a disavowal only when he is diagnosed with gonorrhea. Because of his illness, Shane’s parents assume that their son is a gay and reject him. The patriarchal society and family that once labeled him as a beloved son, now calls him a rejected gay person. Shane’s illness turns out to be an advantage as he desires to transgress the limits of his gender by revolting “against a society built on categories and

labels in order to function but which only ultimately works to separate and not unite, which did indeed separate him physically and emotionally from his family” (Jacobsen 54). Shane’s desire is to go beyond his assumed identity, beyond labels and limitations, as he notes “I’m not straight, and I’m not gay . . . I’m not bisexual. I want out of the labels. I don’t want my whole life crammed into a single word. A story. I want to find something else, unknowable, some place to be that’s not on the map” (*Invisible Monsters* 261). To get rid of the impositions of his constructed gender, Shane acts between two genders by remaking “him/herself beyond male passing as female, beyond female impersonating male, beyond drag as performance” (Mendieta 400).

Stuck between post-modern capitalistic constructions of identity and gender and their reflections on patriarchal society that code femininity and individuality, Shannon is the perfect example of a schizo who engages in masochistic acts. With Brandy (Shane), Shannon aims to escape from the familiar territories to unknown places where both will reclaim their idiosyncratic identities with their mutilated and transformed bodies. They set out a journey to the unknown and resist the subjugation of their bodies. However, their journey does not have a dark end, on the contrary, it is a “real adventure” promising to transform them into schizos in the Deleuze-Guattarian sense (*Invisible Monsters* 261). Both Shannon and Brandy will be reborn as idiosyncratic selves, as schizos who are free from the systemic codifications of the society.

## **2.2 The Masochistic Bodies’ Resistance to Subjugation**

Shannon’s story is closely related to the story of Brandy not only because they share a common past but also because they resist the same mechanizations with similar techniques. In their struggle against the regulation and standardization of their lives, Brandy and Shannon first sever all ties with the family, and then they dismantle the order of their bodies. As siblings, they have similar childhood experiences though they view these experiences through the lenses of different sexes. Defining their childhood as “traumatic,” Richard Viskovic and Eluned Summers-Bremner state that “Brandy and Shannon seek to make trauma central in order to recast and rescript their lives, but this

is in part a response to the incidental or ordinary kinds of suffering they have experienced in the past” (100). As a daughter, Shannon suffers from the lack of attention and yearns for parental affection. She believes that her parents “abused” her not physically or sexually but by neglecting her (*Invisible Monsters* 72). For Shannon, after the spray accident her parents cared about their son so much that they “totally forgot they even had a second child” (73). Shannon’s parents’ negligence of a female child manifests itself in her perpetual demands of love from her family, for which she has to keep “working harder and harder” (73).

While Shannon is afflicted with the lack of attention, her brother Shane suffers from the impositions of being a son in his family. Feeling trapped in the tripartite formula of the Oedipus complex that introduces the Father’s Law, Shane “constructs the father as giving a command that he never gave in order to institute a new law over and against which the uncompromising father will persist as if actually present and powerful” (Slade 89). With his constructed and assumed gender, he is expected to perform his prescribed roles in a patriarchal society. Shane indicates how individuals are trapped in this vicious cycle as follows:

“You’re a product of our language,”<sup>12</sup> [Brandy] says, “how our laws are and how we believe our God want us. Every bitty molecule about you has already been thought out by some million people before you,” she says. “Anything you can do is boring and old and perfectly okay. You’re safe because you’re so trapped inside your culture. Anything you can conceive of is fine *because you can conceive of it*. You can’t imagine any way to escape. There’s no way you can get out,” [Brandy] says. “The world is your cradle and your trap.” (italics in original, *Invisible Monsters* 219)

Both Shannon and Shane first resist subjugation by getting away from the familial boundaries as the family enforces limitations and regulations on their lives. They resist oedipalization as they refuse to stay in the familial triangle. As indicated by Deleuze and Guattari, oedipalization requires the schizo to be formulated both by social and familial borders. As schizos, both Shannon and Shane/Brandy dismantle their relations with their parents. While Shane sever all ties with his parents, Shannon leaves her parents just to visit them on special days which does not signify a return to known territory. Shannon’s reunions with her parents turn to strange gatherings without

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<sup>12</sup> Brandy’s statement “You’re a product of your language” might also be interpreted from a post-structuralist perspective in which “self” is regarded as a fictional construction.

emotional attachment. The only occasion they unite in the novel is on Thanksgiving Day when they talk about the color of tablecloth which her parents chose with a great care to hide Shane's "homosexuality." Even after Shane's departure and his death, the family is still concerned with others' idea about Shane's masculinity. They refrain from using objects such as pink triangles which are "the Nazi symbol for homosexuals" or black triangles that "would mean Shane was a lesbian" (*Invisible Monsters* 91).

On leaving her parents and her family house behind, Shannon deterritorializes herself from restricting boundaries. As a deterritorialized schizo, Shannon changes her life by using her beauty as an instrument of attention. Her new life as a fashion model promises her the desired attention and care. In time, her career in beauty culture begins to lay the same problems as the familial borders. Rather than attaining the desired process of deterritorialization, Shannon returns to where she has started. She has to face impositions, restrictions and limitations both on her body and individuality. Defining this stationary process as reterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari state that deterritorialization and reterritorialization follow each other and act complementary because they are "not relative, always connected, not caught up in one another" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 10). When Shannon is halted by the codifications of beauty culture, she reterritorializes in her restricting life.

Reterritorializing on the territory of beauty culture, Shannon lets her body be regulated through various instruments of capitalism. In Kjersti Jacobsen's terms, Shannon resettles "in an endless loop of self-worshipping, a state without individuality or the ability to obtain personal growth, but with a growing sense of loneliness" (48). Her senses and affections are directed by photographic flashes. Throughout the novel, Shannon's feelings are dictated by an unknown fashion photographer who tells her how to feel: "Give me empathy. Then the flash of the strobe. Give me sympathy. Flash. Give me brutal honest. Flash" (*Invisible Monsters* 17). For Shannon, this is not a new territory to reclaim her idiosyncratic identity. Getting bored of the impositions on her body and on her feelings, she seeks ways to deterritorialize again, to be "on the periphery" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 34). The new process of deterritorialization has to be permanent to let her go beyond the limitations. Now that her beauty traps her, Shannon desires to eradicate that beauty completely. She plans to go bald or put on weight;

however, all these acts would be temporary and may result in a possible return to her former beauty. Shannon feels that she has to find a way of ruining her beauty irreversibly. In a beauty culture where she struggles to satisfy the unsatisfied demands of being beautiful, Shannon, like any modern woman, dreads anything that will qualify her as ugly. Thus, facing what she fears most, she transforms herself from a beautiful woman to an ugly one. For Shannon, her beauty vitiates and covers her idiosyncratic identity, which can become discernible only through ugliness. Andrew Ng notes that Shannon's notion of beauty resembles to Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory in which Adorno associates beauty with ugliness:

Adorno argues that "Beauty is not that platonically pure beginning but rather something that originated in the renunciation of what was once feared, which only as a result of this renunciation—retrospectively so to speak, according to its own telos—became the ugly. Beauty is the spell over spell, which devolves upon it" (47). Hence, like the return of the repressed, for beauty to be revealed for its fantastic quality—for the spell of beauty to be broken—ugliness must be reinstated as the original place of the self. (Ng 28)

Shannon mutilates her face with a gunshot and rips her jaw off. Similar to the Narrator who has to "hit the bottom" to arrive at the body without organs, Shannon does what she fears the most by dismantling the unity of her body. As indicated by Deleuze and Guattari, any authoritative entity that imposes unity or systematic organization can be called organism and the body without organs seeks ways to dismantle the impositions of organism. The purpose of the body without organs is to dismember parts from the pieces and create the perfect chaos of disunity. Similarly, a body has its whole unity from the outset; every piece of the organs is united intimately to make the perfect organization. By dismantling its unity with a gunshot, Shannon transcends the limits of her own body, her known boundaries.

Dismantling the face is no mean affair. Madness is a definite danger: Is it by chance that schizos lose their sense of the face, their own and others', their sense of the landscape, and the sense of language and its dominant significations all at the same time? The organization of the face is a strong one. We could say that the face holds within its rectangle or circle a whole set of traits, *faciality traits*, which it subsumes and places at the service of signification and subjectification . . . If the face is a politics, dismantling the face is also a politics involving real becomings, an entire becoming-clandestine. Dismantling the face is the same as breaking through the wall of the signifier and getting out of the black hole of subjectivity. Here, the program, the slogan, of schizoanalysis is: Find your black holes and white walls, know them, know your faces; it is the only way you will be able to dismantle them and draw your lines of flight. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 188)

With her new face without a jaw, she turns from an ordinary woman to a limitless body that turns her “black holes” to “white walls” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 188). For Shannon, while her “black holes” are her beauty, her “white wall” is her disfigured face. As for Shane, he not only deserts his family totally but also deserts his constructed identity as a beloved son. A short time after his departure, his family receives a phone call that announces his death. Without questioning the reliability of the call, Shane’s parents believe that their gay son has died of AIDS because of the generalizations in the society. They believe that if one is gay, s/he is afflicted with AIDS or if one is afflicted with AIDS, s/he is gay without a doubt. Shane’s family is a failure not because of their cruelty or discipline but because of their impotence about creating authentic lives: “Your parents, they give you your life, but then they try to give you their life” (*Invisible Monsters* 210). Thus, Shane leaves the familial territory for an idiosyncratic life where he will be free of labels and definitions.

Unlike Shannon, whose physical deterritorialization of familial territory is obstructed in a beauty culture, Shane’s physical deterritorialization follows an active route. It is a constant movement through which he goes “from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new center to the new periphery, falling back to the old center and launching forth to the new” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 53). Shane refuses to be trapped by the capitalist society again as he believes that “we’re so trapped that any way we could imagine to escape would be just another part of trap. Anything we want we’re trained to want” (*Invisible Monsters* 259). In a society where desires are held under control to be coded against his own will, the best solution for Shane is to go beyond his body’s limits. Only when he performs the undesired, can Shane “break out and live a real life” (*Invisible Monsters* 258). Thus, just like the Narrator who deterritorializes mentally and creates his anti-thesis, Tyler, Shane turns himself to someone else, to Brandy Alexander, a transsexual body.

Like Tyler, Brandy Alexander is not a victim of capitalist America; neither her identity nor her gender is constructed. To resist the subjugation of her body, Brandy “escapes coding, scramble[s] the codes and flee[s] in all directions” (Seem 7). Brandy reconstructs her body from the outset under the auspices of the Rhea sisters, the three drag queens: “Her hair, her figure, her hippy, hippy forward Brandy Alexander walk,

the Rhea sisters invented all that” (*Invisible Monsters* 169). The Rhea sisters become rich with the production of a doll called “Katty Kathy” through which they subvert the rationale behind American beauty culture (170). These dolls are not expensive but their dresses are quite costly. Deciphering the codes of capitalist society’s ideology of consumption, the Rhea sisters design several clothes for these dolls and sell them in high costs. In a society where women are bombarded with the images of classy women decorated with expensive clothes, Katty Kathy dolls sell the idea of how to look. Having the proportions of a real woman, “Katty Kathy could buy a total of nothing off the rack” (170).

Brandy Alexander is redesigned according to the human size of Katty Kathy. In that sense, the Rhea sisters turn “their plastic creations into a living product” (Viskovic and Summers-Bremmer 109). By promising women to erase their “defects,” plastic surgery creates women beyond social and biological definitions. However, in the recreation of Brandy, the Rhea sisters took social impositions on beauty into consideration. For instance, “she had her scalp advanced three centimeters to give her the right look” (*Invisible Monsters* 177). Moreover, two ribs of Brandy have to be taken out to give her a thin waist to fit into the standards of beauty. The surgery of removing ribs out of her body evokes a Biblical reference for Brandy: “The doctors, they took out the bottom rib on each side of my chest,” says Brandy. “There’s something in the Bible about taking out your ribs. The creation of Eve” (196). In the Bible, God creates Eve from the ribs of Adam. Brandy’s story perfectly fits into that reference. Just like Eve who is created from a male, Brandy is recreated from her male body, Shane. Jacobsen notes the same reference and adds, “this scene depicts the process of removing something natural, creating something fabricated, in order to be more womanly” (53). However for Brandy, beauty lies in artificiality. Analyzing plastic surgery brochures, he compares natural female genitals with the artificial ones and decides that those fabricated ones are better than the originals. Brandy carries a book in her pocket, which he reads obsessively. The book tells the biography of “*Miss Rona*” who starts her life as a fat girl with a muscle disease but then recreates herself into a beautiful blonde celebrity. For Brandy, Miss Rona stands as an inspirational “new Supreme Being” (83) who paves her way in restructuring the body. Brandy quotes Rona who says “the only way to find true happiness is to risk being completely cut open” (86).

As indicated by Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialization is a process where the schizo evolves to something other than him/herself (*A Thousand Plateaus* 174). Both Shannon and Brandy use self-mutilation when evolving to someone else. For Shannon and Brandy, violence directed to their own bodies is a line of flight through which they can reclaim their idiosyncratic identities. For their masochistic bodies, violence signifies neither pain nor pleasure but an instrument of the body without organs. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that:

. . . it is claimed that the masochist, like everybody else, is after pleasure but can only get it through pain and phantasied humiliations whose function is to allay or ward off deep anxiety. This is inaccurate; the masochist's suffering is the price he must pay, not to achieve pleasure, but to untie the pseudobond between desire and pleasure as an extrinsic measure. Pleasure is in no way something that can be attained only by a detour through suffering; it is something that must be delayed as long as possible because it interrupts the continuous process of positive desire. In short, the masochist uses suffering as a way of constituting a body without organs and bringing forth a plane of consistency of desire. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 155)

Through self-mutilation, Shannon and Brandy choose to turn themselves into “monsters.” In a culture that needs definitions, they believe that being a monster is better than being a stereotype. Especially for Shannon, monstrosity bestows a spiritual strength. For instance, when she steals a turkey from a grocery store, other people in the store try to turn their gaze away from her until one boy shouts “look Mom, look over there! That monster’s stealing food!” (*Invisible Monsters* 55). When the boy labels her as a monster, every one feels ashamed and they let Shannon leave the market with the turkey she stole. Evolving to a monster, Shannon thinks that she can walk the line to violate all the restricting rules and laws of the society.<sup>13</sup>

Andrew Ng claims that Brandy’s monstrosity is quite different from that of Shannon. While Shannon’s monstrosity is “premised on refusing beauty,” Brandy’s monstrosity is her becoming-woman, which is “both declaration and camouflaging of her confrontation with pain of transition and transformation” (33). In that sense, Brandy is challenging the norms of beauty culture both by creating herself after the society’s beauty standards and by displaying an alternative gender. Brandy appears as a woman, acts as a woman but she still has male genitals. Her femininity is an imitation, a

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<sup>13</sup> In her book *The Monstrous-Feminine*, Barbara Creed notes, “[a]ll human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (1).



performance. The drag performance, as indicated by Judith Butler, is the best example of challenging the constructed status of gender because it “fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity” (137).

Brandy functions as a role model for Shannon in her femininity performance. As a disfigured woman, Shannon closely examines a woman in the making. While Shannon is learning how to fix her broken speech in a speech therapist’s office, Brandy learns how to speak in a feminine way. The speech therapist teaches Brandy how to use her vocal chords more femininely or to stress modifiers instead of adjectives “[M]en, the therapist says, stress the adjective when they speak” whereas a women would “stress the modifier, not the adjective” (*Invisible Monsters* 57). Despite her perfect performance of femininity, Brandy is unable to hide her big hands. For Shannon, Brandy’s hands are the only remaining parts of her former body that “the surgeons couldn’t change” (23). However, Brandy uses her hands in such a feminine way that she challenges all the nitpicking norms of beauty culture. For Brandy, if one turns her/his defects into mystery, people will be eager to know the truth. In that sense, Brandy advises Shannon to wear veils to make herself mysterious, saying, “behind a veil you’re the great unknown” (111). Through veils, Shannon will not be invisible but an object of wonder:

A good veil is the same as staying indoors, Brandy tells me. Cloistered. Private . . . In the way our world is, everybody shoulder to shoulder, people knowing everything about you at first glance, a good veil is your tinted limousine window. The unlisted number for your face. Behind a good veil, you could be anyone. A movie star. A saint. A good veil say: *We Have Not Been Properly Introduced*. (italics in the original, *Invisible Monsters* 108)

With her audacious personality, Brandy is the only person who has the courage to ask what really happened to Shannon’s face, and put an end to her invisibility. In the speech therapist’s office, Shannon tells Brandy that she has been shot with a rifle while driving and that the accident left her without a face, a career, a home and a fiancé. Like a confessor giving a spiritual counsel, Brandy listens to Shannon and advises her to forget her past as well as present and focus on her “future” (*Invisible Monsters* 61). Similar to the Narrator, who asks Tyler to deliver him from his “perfect and complete” life, Shannon asks Brandy to “save” her from her past (61). Thus Brandy and Shannon plan to set out a journey where they can create new lives with different identities.

Brandy and Shannon are not alone in their journey. Shannon, who desires to free herself from all of her burdens, does not want to leave a haunting memory behind. Paying heed to her inner voice and with the new strength rising in her body, Shannon plans to take revenge on all the people who cheat her. After learning that Manus and Evie are having an affair, Shannon burns Evie's house and kidnaps Manus. Shannon seeks to take revenge; "Me with nothing left to lose, plotting my big revenge in the spotlight. Give me violent revenge fantasies as a coping mechanism" (*Invisible Monsters* 181).

Shannon and Brandy's journey is a physical one having a rhizomatic<sup>14</sup> character. Shannon and Brandy do not follow "a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 25). Shannon and Brandy's aimless journey around the country renders them nomadic subjects. Both in *Anti-Oedipus* and in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari define the nomad as a schizo who is out for a walk in a deterritorialized territory. Like the schizo, the nomad "follows the flows, exhausts them in place, and moves on with them to another place" (*Anti-Oedipus* 173). The nomad's aim is not to arrive a certain place but wander in unknown territories. In that sense, it may be argued that both Shannon and Brandy are nomadic subjects with their schizo characteristics.

Unlike the Narrator's deterritorialization process which is obstructed by a reterritorialization movement which appears as Project Mayhem in *Fight Club*, Shannon and Brandy's deterritorializations continue throughout their journey around the country. In the Deleuze-Guattarian sense, a permanent deterritorialization paves the schizo's way for the body without organs. As long as the schizo keeps on deterritorializing, s/he can decode and experiment with all forms of capitalism in the body without organs which is an inaccessible territory. As indicated by Deleuze and Guattari, one can "never reach body without organs" but "forever attain it" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 150). Both Brandy

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<sup>14</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe rhizome as a system that is made of multiplicities and heterogeneity. Borrowing the term from biology, from the roots of a plant, Deleuze and Guattari state "a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (7). A rhizome has neither a center nor an organization; what is important is the circulation. "A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on lines" (9).

and Shannon aim to remain in that process of endless becoming which is full of constructive potential. Their journey not only makes them mobile nomadic subjects but also frees them from the impositions of a fixed territory. Throughout their journey, Shannon and Brandy reclaim their schizo characters by engaging in a set of practices such as constructing multiple identities, forming alternative histories and playing with norms of gender. In the body without organs they reach “the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius” to dismantle its hierarchy with their disfigured and redesigned bodies (*Anti-Oedipus* 49).

### **2.3 The Masochist Bodies’ Reclamation of Idiosyncratic Identities**

Throughout the journey, Brandy changes Shannon’s and Manus’ identities repeatedly. Similar to the Rheas who give Brandy a constructed name, Brandy Alexander assigns various roles and background to Shannon and Manus. Critics have different interpretations about Brandy’s constructed name. While Viskovic and Summers-Bremner claim that Brandy has a “cocktail-inspired name” that highlights her artificiality (107), Jacobsen states that Brandy is “the reincarnation of Alexander the Great, conquering new borders of experiencing and assigning, or lack of assigning, gender” (54). Brandy aims to be beyond labels and act in a borderless territory; for this aim she subverts the society’s expectations and transcends her body’s borders. Throughout the journey she always remains as Princess Brandy Alexander to preserve her constructed identity as she is “thoroughly conscious of her own ephemeral, fictive quality, and this awareness necessitates a perpetual reenactment of selves to sustain her identity” (Ng 31).

Shannon starts the journey under the name of Daisy St. Patience. According to the alternative historical background, she is “the lost heiress to the House of St. Patience, the very haute couture fashion showroom” (*Invisible Monsters* 107). She has “French aristocrat blood” and “grew up in Paris” (107). Shannon then becomes Bubba-Joan who is Brandy’s daughter; Miss Kay MacIsaac, “the personal secretary to the Princess Brandy Alexander” (24); Miss Arden Scotia, “of the Denver River Logging and Paper

Scotias (187). For Shannon sometimes it becomes too hard to keep all these names and familial background in her mind as she says that “Some days, I hate it when Brandy changes our lives without warning. Sometimes, twice in one day, you have to live up to a new identity. A new name. New relationships. Handicaps. It is hard to remember who I started this road trip being” (*Invisible Monsters* 64).

As for Manus, he starts the journey under the name of Seth Thomas and his identities change more often than Shannon’s. He becomes Eberhard Faber, Wells Fargo, Nash Rambler, Chase Manhattan, Lance Corporal, Dow Corning, Herald Tribune, Morris Code, Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Hewlett Packard, Harper Collins, Addison Wesley, Christian Dior, Alfa Romeo and Ellis Island (*Invisible Monsters* 64/139). Brandy introduces Alfa as her husband, Seth Thomas as her son-in-law. Ellis Island is introduced as a noble man but he is “mentally and emotionally disturbed” (187). When the identities are examined, it can be seen that most of them copy “the multinational corporations, brand names, and popular culture references” (Baelo-Allue 133). There is no authenticity anymore because in the age of corporate capitalism “older bourgeoisie individual subject no longer exists,” thus, what is left for people is to imitate the ideas and stereotypes in popular culture (Jameson 17).

While traveling around the country and changing identities like a chameleon, Shannon gets a chance to see the reflections of her life in Brandy’s memories. When their memories are told from two different perspectives, they become more meaningful for Shannon. Brandy cannot bring the pieces together as easily as Shannon who remembers the details. Brandy retells a memory about her father that implies an incestuous relationship: “my father used to sit on my bed some nights and wake me up” (*Invisible Monsters* 247). The memory is complemented by Shannon who says that their father sneaks into their room to wake them up to go to a train wreck where they would collect whatever they would find (248). Similarly, Shannon remembers the time when she meets Manus, a young police detective searching for Shane after he ran away. For Shannon, Manus was a “great-looking guy” who had “a glorious smile” (253). Shannon’s memory is complemented by Brandy for whom Manus was the police detective inspecting his hair spray accident, the man who harassed him sexually and infected him with a sexual disease:

“The police guy,” Brandy says, and every wire is rising out of her tight yellow silk, “he puts his hand on me, right up the leg of my short, and he says we don’t have to re-open the case. We don’t have to cause my family any more problems.” Brandy says, “This detective says the police want to arrest my father for suspicion. He can stop them, he says. He says, it’s all up to me.” . . . “The police guy,” Brandy says, “he was young, twenty-one or twenty-two. He wasn’t some dirty old man. It wasn’t horrible,” she says, “but it wasn’t love.” (*Invisible Monsters* 251-52)

As Shannon and Brandy keep on revealing their mutual past, it becomes obvious that Manus has had a devastating effect on their lives. To eradicate these negative effects and to take revenge, Shannon feeds Manus with female hormones. Shannon says, “I’ll hide any amount of conjugated estrogen in his food. So much I’ll do anything to destroy him” (*Invisible Monsters* 140). Similar to the Rhea sisters who created a supreme queen out of a man, Shannon aims to emasculate Manus and alleviate his virility. However Shannon’s hideous plan turns of benefit to Manus as he is already inclined to act between genders. Reading “guy-on-guy porno magazines” and lured by the “glossy pictures of guys self-sucking,” Manus prefers to stay in closet and acts as a heterosexual man until Shannon drugs him. After being drugged for eight months, Manus comes out of closet and performs his homosexuality. He develops strategies and goes to gay clubs to have sex with men. In that sense, Manus’ gender performance complies with the idea that “gender is neither the casual result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex” (Butler 6). For Judith Butler, sex and gender are two separate categories that do not reflect each other, and what constitutes the true gender of the body is the act s/he performs, his/her “performativity,” which is “not a singular ‘act,’ for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms” (12).

When the genders of the characters are analyzed, it can be said that *Invisible Monsters* is a novel about the manipulation of gender. The characters’ reclamations of their genders demonstrate that sex and gender do not always correlate each other. As Butler indicates, when it is formulated as “independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one” (6). Similarly, Shane who is constructed as a male turns out to be a transsexual woman, Manus who is constructed as a male turns out to be homosexual and lastly Evie who is constructed as a male turns out to be a transgendered female. Evie who was Evan before (just like Brandy who was Shane before) wanted to be a

beautiful fashion model when she turned sixteen and made her parents pay for her sexual reassignment surgery. However, Evie differs from Brandy in that she wanted to be a woman but being a woman was “the last thing” Brandy desired. Brandy tells that her plan was to mutilate her body so as to be free from all the constructions and regulatory practices:

She says, “Not that it’s bad being a woman. This might be wonderful, *if I wanted to be a woman*. The point is,” Brandy says, “being woman is the last thing I want. It’s just the biggest mistake I could think to make.” . . . “My first idea was to have one arm and one leg amputated, the left ones, or the right ones,” she looks at me and shrugs, “but no surgeon would agree to help me.” She says, “I considered AIDS, for the experience, but then everybody had AIDS and it looked so mainstream and trendy.” . . . “Then I thought, a sex change,” she says, “a sexual reassignment surgery. The Rheas,” she says, “they think they’re using me, but really I’m using their money, for their thinking they were in control of me and this was all their idea.” . . . “It was just the biggest mistake I could make. The biggest challenge I could give myself.” (italics in the original, *Invisible Monsters* 260)

*Invisible Monster’s* last secret is Shannon’s confession that she shot herself. When she learns in Evie’s house that Evie is a transgendered female, she thinks that she is deceived twice. The fashion photographer in her mind commands her “Give me anything in this whole fucking world that is exactly what it looks like! Flash!” (*Invisible Monsters* 269). Shannon burns Evie’s house again; but this time Evie’s house is full of people who come to celebrate Evie’s wedding. Evie in her wedding gown shoots Brandy thinking that Brandy is Shannon who sets her house on fire twice. While Brandy is bleeding, Shannon confesses all:

The truth is I drove out away from the city on the day of the accident. With my driver’s side window rolled halfway up, I got out and I shot through the glass. . . . I wanted the everyday reassurance of being mutilated. The way a crippled deformed birth-defected disfigured girl can drive her car with the windows open and not care how the wind makes her hair look, that’s the kind of freedom I was after . . . In this way, Shane, we are very much brother and sister. This is the biggest mistake I could think would save me. I wanted to give up the idea I had any control. Shake things up. To be saved by chaos. To see if I could cope, I wanted to force myself to grow again. To explode my comfort zone. . . . What I thought last was, at last I’ll be growing again, mutating adapting, evolving. I’ll be physically challenged. (*Invisible Monsters* 286-87)

Similar to the Narrator who wants to be in the intermezzo, both Shannon and Brandy prefer to remain in the in-between which “has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 380). They desire to enjoy the freedom of being in the middle and free of the constraints of capitalist and

patriarchal society. Although shot in her chest, Brandy is saved by *Miss Rona's* biography in her pocket which slows down the bullet making the silicone in her breasts explode. Brandy has decided to reject vaginoplasty. She aims to remain in between and get away from a specific definition.

What happens to Shannon and whether she moves on the deterritorialized territory after Shane has been shot and hospitalized are not made clear in *Invisible Monsters*. She just bequeaths her identity and her name to her brother as she wishes that “the whole world would embrace what it hates” (*Invisible Monsters* 294). Although Viskovic and Summers-Bremner interpret Shannon’s act of bequeathing her identity as a “selfless altruistic act” promising sibling connection (115), Truffin comments on the act that it is “a highly ambiguous gesture” as Shannon “took drastic and painful measures to escape that identity and career herself” (83). However, Shannon’s act signifies neither reconciliation nor ambiguity; rather, it implies her encouragement of Brandy to move on her schizo personality. Although her decision to go on her life as a schizo in *Invisible Monsters* is not clear, Shannon supports Brandy’s decision to be in the middle. For Shannon, “if the world is made up of copies of copies without an original model, if our identities function in the same way, there is no reason for us to fret about who or what we are” (Slade 95). Shannon’s decision becomes clear in *Invisible Monsters Remix*. Refusing to have a plastic surgery to fix her jaw, Shannon chooses her identity as Daisy St. Patience. Her aim is to be away from regulation and standardization. After her parents’ natural death, Shannon sells their house and buys a territory named “Spitefield Park” (*Invisible Monsters Remix* 242). Spitefield Park is different from conventional cemeteries. Here one cannot find eulogies for their beloved ones, instead they find words full of hatred or animosity: “I was a shitty husband and a father. I couldn’t die fast enough” (108). Spitefield has no visitors, people pay large sums of money to express their anger and hatred but then they never come back with flowers in memoriam for their “beloved” ones. Spitefield Park gives a fortune to Daisy and with this money Daisy organizes a small group called “The Elephant Woman” where she gathers all the women who desire to go into hiding because of their appearance. Daisy brings them out of closet and gives them a chance to taste the freedom of being a challenge to the society. Similar to Marla who serves as a catalyst for the Narrator in his way to be a good schizo, Daisy paves the way for these women to enjoy the disunity of their bodies:

“Those twisted, shambling gals with faces like torched Halloween masks. Their smiles like lumpy, red, knobby pomegranates turned inside out. The Born-That-Way girls. The In-a-Terrible-Accident girls, and the There-But-for-the-Grace-of-God girls. Like no one you’d want to meet in a dark alley late at night. Those horror movie ladies with heartbreaking names like “Fern” and “Penny,” Daisy sought them out and mentored them. These young cripples who crawled toward her on legs like boneless tentacles, and looked at her with their blue eyes set in faces like blood-red cauliflower, for them Lady Daisy lifted the hem of her own veil like a stage curtain. (*Invisible Monsters Remix* 110)

Brandy and Shannon are two schizos who challenge the whole constructions of capitalist patriarchal American society through their bodies. Desiring to resist the subjugation of their bodies by various codifications and impositions, they set their desiring machines in motion and use desire’s revolutionary power. For Shannon and Brandy, the only way to be free from hierarchical organizations and regulatory practices is violence directed to the body in the form of self-mutilation. By engaging in masochistic performances, Shannon and Brandy aim to dismantle the unity in their bodies because they suffer “from being organized in this way, from not having some other sort of organization, or no organization at all” (*Anti-Oedipus* 19). They seek neither organization nor pleasure but to attain the body without organs where they will be beyond regulation, labels and definitions. Only in the body without organs their bodies will be free of representing what is formulated. Setting out on a journey, they deterritorialize from the known territories to unfamiliar places where one of them switches from one identity to another and the other reclaims her true identity. Throughout the journey, Shannon and Brandy break from the society and indulge in performing their idiosyncratic selves to attain the body without organs. They defy being reterritorialized in the familiar social or familial boundaries; rather they choose to wander in unrestricted territories. For them, being monsters is better than being docile bodies.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE PSYCHOTIC BODY IN *CHOKE*

*I believe that the psychotic experience originates from a desperate perception of powerlessness, which from infancy on tends to impel the patient towards the subversion of the organizing of thoughts and affects. I postulate that the psychotic solution is a successful attempt at destruction of the mental apparatus by means of an acquired ability to alter the organs of perception and thought, thus compromising the sense of reality and transforming personal identity. In this way, psychosis annihilates human relations and destroys the sense of awareness of self, of the body and of the mind.*

Franco de Masi, *Vulnerability to Psychosis*

*The first task of the revolutionary . . . is to learn from the psychotic how to shake off the Oedipal yoke and the effects of power, in order to initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs. Such a politics dissolves the mystifications of power through the kindling, on all levels, of anti-oedipal forces—the schizzes-flows—forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions: orphans (no daddy-mommy-me), atheists (no beliefs), and nomads (no habits, no territories).*

Mark Seem, from the “Introduction” of *Anti-Oedipus*

Chuck Palahniuk’s third novel *Choke* was published in 2001. Contrary to the success of *Fight Club* in theatres and on bookshelves, and the popularity of *Invisible Monsters*’ among critics who compared Palahniuk’s wit to that of the writers before him,<sup>15</sup> *Choke* was not well-acclaimed either by readers or critics. Moreover, it was counted among the books that need profanity warning labels because of its sexual content, and was considered among the “challenged” books in the Fayetteville High School library in 2005.<sup>16</sup> *Choke*’s film adaptation shared the same fate with the novel and was considered as “bawdy, scattershot satire” by critics when broadcast in 2008 (*The Guardian*). In *Invisible Monsters Remix*, Palahniuk writes a chapter about the film version of *Choke*

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<sup>15</sup> In *New York Newsday*, the critic praises Palahniuk of rearranging “Vonnegut’s sly humor, DeLilo’s mordant social analysis, and Pynchon’s antic surrealism.” Another critic from *San Francisco Examiner* claims that with *Invisible Monsters*, Palahniuk “displays a Swiftian gift for satire.” <http://www.powells.com/biblio/9780393319293>

<sup>16</sup> In the official website of Marshall University Libraries, *Choke* is announced to be among the challenged books. <http://www.marshall.edu/library/bannedbooks/books/choke.asp>

and draws attention to the coincidence between his own life and the plot of the novel which aims at creating “a real life tragedy” (435).

*Choke* tells the story of Victor Mancini with recurrent flashbacks to his childhood years. Victor does not know his father, and his mother, Ida Mancini, is not capable of raising a child because of her eccentric personality. Rebelling hierarchy, governmental order and systematic organization, Ida is sentenced to prison several times. Devoid of a mother, Victor spends his early years moving from one foster family to another. His relation to foster parents is often obstructed by Ida who kidnaps him whenever she is released. Victor has to drop out of medical school in his second year to earn enough money to pay the bills of St. Anthony, where Ida is kept as a patient. He works as an Irish indentured servant in Colonial Dunsboro, a re-enactment theme park set in eighteenth century. Victor applies to Dunsboro with his best friend Denny who is a recovering sex addict obsessed with masturbation. To earn money, he feigns as if he is choking in restaurants and waits for someone to save him from dying. Keeping detailed notes about the people who have saved him, he sends them postcards telling how he suffers from poverty. Victor’s dysfunctional life is challenged when Ida’s doctor, Paige Marshall, reads Ida’s diary. Paige claims that Victor can be the son of Jesus Christ as his mother is impregnated with the foreskin of Jesus in an experimental research. At first, Victor does not accept Paige’s claim but in time he decides to serve for the welfare of humanity. After he kills his mother unintentionally, it becomes evident that Paige is not a doctor but another patient of St. Anthony, and Victor is not Ida’s son but she stole him from a baby stroller in Iowa.

*Choke* has thematic similarities to both *Fight Club* and *Invisible Monsters* in that it displays a psychologically unstable character who suffers from “the disturbing results of a fatherless infancy; the notion that the human body is constantly exposed to disease and corruption; life as a constant traumatic experience” (Collado-Rodriguez 137). However, much of the critical analyses about *Choke* tend to emphasize how the representations of real world are simulated in the novel and how the conventions of capitalist America are replaced with addictions that are considered to be illicit. Eduardo Mendieta, for instance, claims that addiction is a part of American culture which “flourishes and thrives by promoting and instigating addiction” (401). For Mendieta, in

capitalist America, individuals feel obliged to be addicted to something while at the same time they struggle to get rid of that addiction. First, the individuals are bombarded with the images or advertisements that entice them to consume, drink, and smoke with the promise of “acceleration, desire, motion, vitality” (402). Then, they are persuaded to quit their dependencies. In that sense, addiction turns to an instrument to regulate individuals’ lives and create dependent docile bodies with the false hope of independency. According to Alex E. Blazer, Victor tries to detach himself from that dependent world because it “is comprised of nothing but hollow spectacles” (143). Victor disengages himself from all the imposed constraints of the society and tastes the freedom of having an idiosyncratic self by escaping to a hyper-real world where anything that has a meaning in mainstream American culture is nullified. In his hyper-real world, his addiction is not the cause of a problem, rather, it is the manifestation of a free self.

While the former two chapters have first analyzed how the bodies of the protagonists’ are subjugated by capitalistic regulatory systems, this chapter follows a different route. Contrary to the Narrator and Shannon in *Fight Club* and *Invisible Monsters* respectively, whose bodies are restricted by hierarchical powers, Victor does not let his body be held under control. The Narrator and Shannon find themselves entrapped by the capitalist world first and then they seek ways to dismantle it, but Victor starts his life as a rebel, as a schizo who uses his body on his own will by creating a fantasy world where he is free from all the restrictive codes. Thus, this chapter follows the mixed order of the prior two chapters by analyzing how Victor uses his psychotic body to challenge the conventional norms of the capitalist society. Then, it analyzes Victor’s dissociation and submission as a psychotic body.

### **3.1 The Challenge of the Psychotic Body Against a Subjugating Society**

Victor is a schizo as he has no relation to the familial territory. His childhood resembles the Narrator’s in that both were raised by single mothers and without father figures.

While the existence of the Narrator's mother is not clear in *Fight Club*, Victor's mother has a leading role in directing his life in *Choke*. Ida does not fit into the category of a traditional mother when her care and upbringing of Victor are considered. Ida teaches Victor to violate the norms of society rather than to fit into them. For Ida, in capitalist American society, "parenthood is the opium of the masses" (*Choke* 112). The child is moulded first in his/her family to meet the expectations of the society. As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, psychic repression first starts in the family to mediate social reality to the children. In other words, as the smallest part of social nucleus, the family applies the constraints and impositions of the society to the child and introduces the authority to him/her.

Victor does not grow up in the familial triangle of "daddy-mommy-me," as he is "somewhere else, beyond or behind or below these problems, rather than immersed in them" (*Anti-Oedipus* 35). Moving from one foster family to another, Victor is away from a settled life. Whenever Ida is released from prison, she finds Victor and kidnaps him by using different strategies which she taught him earlier. Ida either steals Victor's school bus and acts as a school bus driver or gives secret signals to Victor to find her. When they get united, they move from one city to another in stolen cars and spend their nights at filthy motels. Victor has neither a definite home nor a stable relation to a parental figure. Free from social and geographical boundaries, he enjoys "the double stroll of the schizo" by wandering both physically and mentally (*Anti-Oedipus* 107).

Unlike normal children, Victor is raised with conspiracy theories that Ida frequently tells him. For Ida, the individuals in America are teaching their children "to be helpless" and "raising a generation of slaves" (*Choke* 16/61). The education is wrong from the outset as it is designed to create simulated and fabricated docile identities. It teaches what to think rather than how to think: "I want you to know more than just what people think is safe to tell you" (*Choke* 97). For Ida, in contemporary American society, individual bodies are not free to think, even their ideas are held under control. In that sense, she teaches Victor to change his way of thinking and create alternative visions. Similar to Tyler, who engages in various acts of rebellion, Ida performs petty crimes to show Victor how to subvert the systematic order in society. For instance, she devises a plan which she calls "Beauty Industry Terrorism" in which she switches the colors of

hair dyes in the containers or sets the animals in the zoo free for which she will later be accused of “Reckless Abuse of City Property”(66/197). For Ida, these acts aim to defy the authority and organization of the society because every individual body is under the strict control of this social order. The only way to get rid of that regulation is to bring chaos into life:

People had been working for so many years to make the world a safe, organized place. Nobody realized how boring it would become. With the whole world property-lined and speed-limited and zoned and taxed and regulated, with everyone tested and registered and dressed and recorded. Nobody had left much room for adventure, except maybe the kind you could buy. On a roller coaster. At a movie. Still, it would be that kind of faux excitement. . . . And because there’s no possibility of real disaster, real risk, we’re left with no chance for real salvation. Real elation. Real excitement. Joy. Discovery. Invention. The laws that keep us safe, these same laws condemn us to boredom. Without access to true chaos, we’ll never have true peace. Unless everything can get worse, it won’t get any better. (*Choke* 159)

Integrating chaos into life becomes Victor’s philosophy. He believes that being different from others does not make one an outcast but rather helps him/her to detach from the known territories and act as a free person. He is lured by a childhood memory that becomes a milestone in reclaiming his authority on his life and challenging the burdens on his body. In a pornographic website, Victor sees a series of photographs of a “dumpy guy what looked like Tarzan with a goofy orangutan trained to poke what looked like roasted chestnuts up the guy’s ass” (*Choke* 36). Victor admires that scene not because it is pornography but because the man challenges a world where “image” is considered more important than anything else. He expresses his admiration of the man who turns a cold shoulder to social norms when he says that “I really don’t care how I look. Or what you think. So deal with it. He was assaulting the world by assaulting himself” (*Choke* 37). Thus, whenever Victor feels trapped, he reminds himself of that man and finds relief as he believes that it is always possible to claim control over one’s own body even in the most chaotic conditions. It seems as if the man has lost all his power but “his acceptance of powerlessness which, in his [Victor’s] mind, is his very access to power, his form of empowerment” (Pascual 179).

As Deleuze and Guattari note, the schizo “has his own system of co-ordinates for situating himself at his disposal, because, first of all, he has at his disposal his very own recording code, which does not coincide with the social code, or coincides with it only

in order to parody it” (*Anti-Oedipus* 27). As a schizo, Victor uses that man’s powerlessness to subvert a childhood memory to a real-life parody in which he himself holds the strings. In expensive restaurants, he feigns as if he is choking and looks for someone to save him from his fake death. For Victor, choking is not a kind of phoniness but a manipulation of people’s perceptions. By playing the weak, he gains strength over others: “You gain power by pretending to be weak. By contrast you make people feel so strong. You save people by letting them save you” (*Choke* 50). As Kavadlo notes, choking “helps Victor, and his would-be saviors, to create a necessary fiction about their heroism, a new identity, and a better story” (143). While people who save Victor from choking turn to alternative doctors or parents giving life, Victor is born again directing his own delivery:

Somebody will pound you on the back the way a doctor pounds a newborn baby, and you’ll let fly with your mouthful of chewed steak. In the next second, you’ll be both be collapsed on the floor. You’ll be sobbing while someone tells you how everything is all right. You’re alive. They saved you. You almost died. They’ll hold your head to their chest, saying, “Everybody get back. Make some room, here. The show’s over.” Already, you’re their child. You belong to them. (*Choke* 51)

Choking in restaurants is Victor’s alternative job. Keeping detailed records about the people who saved him and the names of the restaurants where he performed choking, Victor announces himself as a professional “performance artist doing dinner theater, doing three shows at a night” (*Choke* 80). He has no boss to command him and no strict working-hours to obey. Creating fictitious stories, Victor demands money from people who send him greeting cards. They feel responsible for Victor and act as “symbolic surrogate parents” (Kavadlo 142). However, Victor is not in search of parents; he neither aims to return to a familial territory nor looks for paternal affection. On the contrary, he seeks ways to dismantle the pre-ordained bonds in the familial territory. He manipulates the idea behind being a child and a parent.

For Victor, his relationship to Ida is also problematic. Together with Ida, he rewrites the Oedipus story from the beginning by saying that “[I]n modern Oedipus story, it is the mother who kills the father and then takes the son” (*Choke* 16). For Victor, single mothers of postmodern American culture claim every right to possess their children. Keeping all rights reserved, single mothers transform their children into commodities to be owned. Although Ida does not act as a conventional mother, Victor aims to dismantle

the authority of the familial territory. Rather than being a son who is emotionally attached to his mother, he disengages from her. He cuts himself off from the reality to survive in a fantasy world where he creates alternatives of himself. In his frequent visits to Ida who is kept in St. Anthony because of her deteriorated mental and physical health, Victor strips his identity off and creates better versions of himself for his mother. His loss of reality is not the result of a “desperate perception of powerlessness” (Masi 26) but of “a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs” (Seem 12).

As indicated by Deleuze and Guattari, “the schizo has no principles; he is something only by being something else” (*Anti-Oedipus* 87). Similar to the Narrator who evolves to Tyler, and Shane who evolves to Brandy Alexander, Victor evolves into Fred Hastings. However, Victor neither splits his identity to create another man as the Narrator in *Fight Club* does nor redesigns his body as Shane does in *Invisible Monsters*. He borrows an identity from Ida’s past and reforms it. Fred Hastings is Ida’s one-time public defender. Victor changes Fred’s life on Ida’s suggestions. For instance, on one of his visits to Ida, Fred is single but Ida tells him to get married. On the next visit, Fred gets married and has three children. Victor keeps notes about his borrowed identity; where he lives, how many children he has and what color they are painting their dining room etc. so as not to forget who he is supposed to be (*Choke* 43). Within Fred Hastings, Victor impersonates other people from his mother’s past but he does not build on their lives. With each identity, Victor gets away from his real personality to perform his impersonations:

The next week, I’m Mr. Benning, who defended her on the little charge of kidnapping after the school bus incident. The week after, I’m public defender Thomas Welton, who plea-bargained her sentence down to six months after she was charged with assaulting the animals in the zoo. After him, I’m the American civil liberties attorney who went to bat with her on the malicious mischief charge stemming from the disturbance at the ballet. . . . At this point, how my life starts to feel is like I’m acting in a soap opera being watched by people on a soap opera being watched by people on a soap opera being watched by people on a soap opera being watched by real people, somewhere. . . . More and more, it feels like I’m doing a really bad impersonation of myself. (*Choke* 68/9)

Deleuze and Guattari note that the psychotic reacts to impositions of society with a loss of reality because “reality has ceased to be a principle” (*Anti-Oedipus* 107). In that sense, Victor’s identities are simulacra as none of these identities has “relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard 6). Simulacrum does not

prove that it is a copy of the real because in the contemporary world the real is “no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore” (Baudrillard 2). According to Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, the process of simulation is not limited to copying but has creative dynamics that can produce the real and sometimes the more real. The simulacrum has the capacity to create new worlds where one can reconstruct his/her own reality by going beyond the originality of the copied life. It allows the schizo to experiment with new possible formations by leaving the known territories behind. In that sense, by deterritorializing, the schizo not only changes the structure of the reality but also transcends the reality in new lands. Deleuze and Guattari note that in this new land, the schizo “cross[es] the threshold of deterritorialization and produce[s] the new land—not at all a hope, but a simple ‘finding,’ a ‘finished design,’ where the person who escapes causes other escapes, and marks out the land while deterritorializing himself” (*Anti-Oedipus* 367).

Raised with the idea that individuals do not “live in the real world anymore” but “in a world of symbols,” Victor believes that it is possible to move from one reality to another, from one identity to another as there is no stable meaning in the contemporary society any more (*Choke* 151). He escapes from the mediated reality of the mainstream culture in order to restructure his own simulated realities. With those identities he assumes when he is visiting Ida, Victor also impersonates the identity of other individuals. In the hospital, some of the patients accuse him of crimes which he has not committed. For instance, one of the patients accuses Victor of killing her dog; another accuses him of beating her sister, still another accuses him of stealing her toothpaste invention etc. Victor accepts all the crimes, he becomes a dog killer, a child beater or a thief. He believes that deterritorializing from his own self and disguising as others do not change the truth about himself but enable him to help these patients find relief before they die. As Fawver notes, Victor’s “simulated identities are not even close to approximating the identities of the original people he stimulates, but they do not have to be; they function on their own, for their own purpose, as signifiers of reconciliation” (15).

Victor’s alternative reality is not limited to his simulated identities only. His job in Colonial Dunsboro also functions as an escape from the reality. Dunsboro is a theme



park where the eighteenth century of America is recreated. Everything is rearranged according to the standards of the 1730s and any violation of historical accuracy is punished. For instance, if a colonial village worker grows a goatee beard or chews gum or wears earrings or cologne, s/he will end up in jail. Dunsboro has a council, a governor, blacksmiths, cow milkers and butter churners but there are no whores, pickpockets or hangmen. For Victor, “this is the worst problem with living history museums. They always leave the best parts out” (*Choke* 29). In that sense, in Colonial Dunsboro, history is copied to create a better version of it. In “The Phony ‘Martyrdom of Saint Me,’” Alex E. Blazer explains that the two Baudrillardian terms “Disneyfication” and “museumification” apply to Colonial Dunsboro. As a theme park, Dunsboro functions as Disneyland as it presents the “digest of the American way of life, panegyric of American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality” (Baudrillard 13). However, the world presented in Disneyland, and in Dunsboro, is not real; it is simulation of a reality that no longer exists. Blazer comments on the museumification as follows:

Colonial Dunsboro represents the museumification of America: the nostalgic desire to resurrect and preserve in image a world that never existed; it symbolizes the mastery of the virtual over the real and engenders Victor’s fantasy to “establish [his own] alternate reality” (Palahniuk, C 32) to the real psychotic convictions with which he was raised. In Dunsboro, Victor drifts from the maternal imaginary to the national artifice. . . . Victor does not despair over such feigning but instead praises the American dream of constructing alternate or virtual realities. Victor as representative postmodern subject is essential to the pseudo-life typified by Dunsboro existence. (Blazer 147)

Creating alternative realities is Victor’s line of flight, his own way of escaping from the mediated reality. Like the Narrator and Shannon who direct violence on their bodies to escape from the reality of subjugating societies, Victor uses his body by indulging in excessive sex. Victor performs sex not to enjoy its pleasure but to experience the freedom it offers. While he is having sex, he feels that he is walking the lines as “sexuality has merely served as the symbol of anagogical ‘beyond’” (*Anti-Oedipus* 61). Similar to the men who experience their manhood only in fights clubs, Victor testifies his existence as a human being through sex: “These are the only few minutes I can be human” (*Choke* 20). His addiction saves him from the problems of life and paves his way to the body without organs where he will be “the unformed, unorganized, nonstratified, or destratified body and all of its flows” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 43). While

having sex, he is not the whole body organized in a systematic order but body parts participating in a flow.

Victor's addiction starts when he meets Tracy who likes performing casual sex in the restrooms of airplanes. Tracy believes that most American people have sexual fantasies related to airplanes such as leaving the door open while masturbating or having sex with the hostesses but they just fantasize it without bothering to try. Tracy desires to experience its "danger and risk" because she thinks, "It's a different kind of space exploration. You're mapping a different kind of wilderness. Your own vast interior landscape" (*Choke* 251). Flying over Los Angeles or Seattle, from north coast to east, Tracy and Victor perform sex but on board they do not come close. Tracy teaches Victor to walk the lines "because once you've crossed some lines, you just keep crossing them" (*Choke* 257).

Once he crosses the lines with Tracy, Victor keeps crossing them by attending sexual addiction support groups where various sex addicts come together in church rooms or in conference halls. For Victor, all the people who turn to "urban legends" because of their strange sexual fantasies are in these groups: "Complete with names and faces. Jobs and families. College degrees and arrest records" (*Choke* 12). Unlike the Narrator who attends support groups to cope with his insomnia, Victor attends sexaholics meetings to find new partners and new techniques: "For me, it's a terrific how-to seminar. Tips. Techniques. Strategies for getting laid you never dreamed of" (16). Each therapy day is reserved for a different woman to satisfy their mutual addiction. Some of the girls attend the group from prison with the three-hour recovery program; however, they do not desire recovery but further dependence on their addictions: "The problem with sex is the same as with any addiction. You're always recovering. You're always backsliding. Acting out. Until you find something to fight for, you settle for something to fight against (19).

Victor implies that in America, individuals are perpetually exposed to the idea that they need to be dependent on something. As the opium of the individuals, addiction turns individuals to masses to be directed through the manipulation of their desires. As Mendieta notes, being addicted to something and then quitting it is a vicious cycle as "we are addicted to our addictions" (402). The images that are spread through visual

media or entertainment culture first desire to include every individual into mainstream, then aim to disentangle them from their dependencies. Mendieta claims that American society controls both addictions and the recovery from addictions:

Our culture is perpetually turning us into junkies. Still, it is telling that we seek to escape our addictions by taking refuge in the culture of the step programs that have become so prevalent in American Society. It is telling because what we find there is the pursuit of ritual, community, a confessional, a reprieve from our invasive and pervasive culture. This twelve-step is in fact an ersatz religion. In it we find ritual, rhythm, and solace from the uncertainty of an overwhelming world turned strange by the monotony of its endless changing. . . . The irony is double. The culture sickens and makes us sick, and the very medicine it prescribes becomes part of its poison, its very means of perpetuating its hold on us by sustaining dependency. (Mendieta 402)

Victor is not a junky of American culture. His addiction is not imposed on him, rather, he uses it as an escape, a line of flight. By being addicted to sex, Victor claims the control over his body: “. . . the addict has the comfort of knowing what will most likely wait for him down the road. He’s taken some control over his ultimate fate, and his addiction keeps the cause of his death from being a total surprise” (*Choke* 186). Lingered on the four-step recovery program, Victor does not desire to be recovered from his addiction to replace it with new ones. He is a conscious addict who uses his addiction for his own benefit to direct his revolutionary desire. While having sex, Victor is setting his desiring machines in motion and composing flux with other machines because “if man is connected to the machine of universe, if he is in tune with his desires, if he is ‘anchored,’ he ceases to worry about the fitness of things, about the behavior of his fellow-men, about right or wrong and justice and injustice” (qtd. in Seem 21). His sexual performance helps him to direct his own desires, to disperse the chaotic reality of the social world.

In addition to his performance in the restrooms of planes with Tracy and in the ladies rooms of churches with various women from prison, Victor engages in sexual activity with a woman called Gwen. Like Victor, Gwen possesses the characteristics of a schizo who desires to direct her own desires. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, being “at the very limit of the social codes,” the schizo “continually detaches them, continually works them loose and carries them off in every direction to create a new polyvocality that is the code of desire” (*Anti-Oedipus* 54). Deconstructing the method of rape, Gwen rewrites

the rules of her own rape and restructures her alternative reality. She gives every detail of her rape to her “rapists” and asks them to obey every principle of the planned act. Leaving her bedroom’s window open for Victor-her rapist-to break in, Gwen desires him to rape her on Monday night, at nine and by threatening her with a cold knife. She asks Victor to be naked with sunglasses and pantyhose over his head. Controlling every moment of her alternative rape, Gwen aims to hold the strings because “*Rape is always power. It is not romantic. Do not fall in love with me. Do not kiss me on the mouth. Do not expect to linger after the act*” (*Choke* 173). Contrary to conventional norms of patriarchal society, it is the woman who takes the lead in this affair and holds the power. In other words, rather than performing the role of the victimized woman, Gwen desires to have the authority to subvert the role of the other sex.

Similar to Gwen who restructures the act of rape, Ida used to restructure prostitution in her former profession. Hypnotizing the men who used fake identities such as “Mr. Jones, Mr. Smiths,” Ida earns money from her clients’ hallucinatory sexual performances: “She was a whore that fucked with your mind” (*Choke* 130). She was directing the men’s sexual fantasies most of which are related to historically famous women such as Cleopatra, Marilyn Monroe, Emily Dickinson etc. Ida claims that she was working in “the theater of the mind. The bordello of the subconscious” as she was controlling the men’s bodies by directing their sexual desires (*Choke* 131). Fawver notes that Ida’s profession is “based entirely on simulation” because neither the act of sex nor its participants are real; they only mediate a sexual experience without performing it (21):

Sure, what she did was hypnosis, but it wasn’t real past-life regression. It was more a kind of guided mediation. She’d tell Mr. Jones to focus on the tension in his chest and let it recede. Let it flow down to his waist, his hips, his legs. . . . All she really did was set the stage. She just introduced men to their ideal. She set them up on a date with their subconscious because nothing is as good as you can imagine it. No one is as beautiful as she is in your head. Nothing is as exciting as your fantasy. Here you’d have the sex you’d only dreamt about. (*Choke* 131)

As Deleuze and Guattari note, the psychotic can be defined “in terms of modern territorialities” (*Anti-Oedipus* 49). Dismantling all his/her relations to societal territories such as family, law and state, the psychotic experiences the loss of reality in an affirmative way. Victor gets away from the impositions of society by deterritorializing

and creating alternative realities away from the social reality. He never lets himself flow in the order of the society but acts as a free man who is "continually wandering about, migrating here, there, and everywhere as best he can . . . [who] plunges further and further into the realm of deterritorialization" (*Anti-Oedipus* 49). However, similar to the Narrator in *Fight Club* who reaches "the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius on the surface of his own the body without organs," Victor experiences a halt in his deterritorialization (*Anti-Oedipus* 49). He has to face the familiar relations to known territorialities and live in dissociation, "a rupture, an eruption, a break-through which smashes the continuity of a [schizo] personality" (Deleuze 27).

### 3.2 The Psychotic Body in Dissociation

Victor's deterritorialization from his social reality is obstructed when he meets Dr. Paige Marshall who introduces herself as Ida's doctor. Paige is an eccentric woman who comes up with a theoretical treatment for Ida whose brain refuses to eat. As implanting stomach tube is quite expensive, Victor asks for an alternative cure and Paige suggests restoring Ida's mind completely to "make her the intelligent, strong, vibrant woman she used to be" (*Choke* 42). The cure that has the potential to make his mother healthy again frightens Victor because he desires to be free of the familial territory permanently.

According to Paige's theoretical treatment, Victor should impregnate Paige and they should replace Ida's brain with the fetus' brain. Paige summons Victor to a chapel and tries to seduce him with a religious pun by saying "I need you to put faith in me" (*Choke* 91). Though he is a sex addict, Victor could not have sex with Paige because the idea of rescuing his mother from dying terrifies him as much as the idea of losing her. Having repressed the familial attachments, Victor does not desire "the return of the repressed" (*Anti-Oedipus* 29). However, that does not mean that Victor desires his mother to be dead; he wants to have someone who is addicted to him:

I just want one person I can rescue. I want one person who needs me. Who can't live without me. I want to be a hero, but not just one time. Even if it means keeping her crippled, I want to be someone's constant savior. . . . "But I don't want her saved all the way," I say. I'm terrified of losing her, but if I don't, I may lose

myself. . . . I just want to keep control,” I say. “For a change, I want to be the adult.” (*Choke* 119)

As a psychotic man who has a revolutionary desire to be free of labels and definitions, Victor starts to reterritorialize on his desire to be an adult who is willing to take the responsibility of other people. Rather than being a son who walks the lines and passes the borders, he now desires to be a father who is stuck in a familial territoriality. In addition to this adult figure, Victor also asks for a savior role. In “Chuck Palahniuk’s Edible Complex,” Jesse Kavadlo notes that Victor “inadvertently but not unhappily, has already taken on savior status with Ida’s fellow St. Anthony’s residents” (146). Kavadlo implies that while impersonating the identities of other patients’ past and taking on their crimes, Victor was acting as a scapegoat, or more correctly, as a Christ-like figure. Having stripped his identity off like a chameleon, Victor now decides to stick into one, the figure of a savior: “The martyrdom of Saint Me. The sins of every man in history landing square on my back” (*Choke* 61). In the introduction part of *Anti-Oedipus*, Mark Seem notes that Church or any institution that imposes hierarchy on individuals is considered as an “oedipalized territoriality” (3). Deciding to play the role of Jesus, Victor reterritorializes in the familiar territoriality of religion.

Deleuze and Guattari indicate, “it may be all but impossible to distinguish deterritorialization from reterritorialization since they are mutually enmeshed” (*Anti-Oedipus* 296). Just when Victor reterritorializes on the familiar territoriality of religion, he looks for ways to deterritorialize again. For Victor, his return to his psychotic personality is possible only when he learns the truth about his identity. He suspects that Ida is hiding something from him and her diary is the key to access that hidden knowledge. As Victor does not know Italian, he could not decipher the diary and looks for somebody to help him. Victor takes Denny to his mother and introduces him as himself. He asks Denny to make his mother confess the hidden truth. After his meeting with Ida, Denny comes with alternative stories about Victor’s identity that are far away from reality. Denny blurs Victor’s mind with sci-fi stories implying that Victor can be a cyborg, “an artificial humanoid created with a limited life span” or a robot loaded with “an artificiality intelligent program” (*Choke* 125).

Denny’s strange stories about Victor’s identity are followed by those of Paige who translates Ida’s diary. Paige tells Victor that according to the diary there are two

options: either his mother has been a delusional woman since her late thirties, or Victor “is the second coming of Christ” (*Choke* 146). She claims that in the diary Ida revealed her involvement in an experimental research about fertility that has a Biblical reference. In the Bible, Mary is a virgin who is impregnated by the Holy Spirit to conceive her son Jesus miraculously. In the like manner, Ida “was not married, she didn’t want a husband, but somebody had promised her a miracle” (*Choke* 152). Ida was impregnated by the foreskin of Jesus that comes out of a shoe box stolen from a priest: “This was a religious relic, the kind of bait used to draw crowds into churches during Middle Ages. This is only one of several famous penises still around” (153). While confusing Victor’s mind with that shocking story, Paige also reminds him of the other option, that is, her mother can be a lunatic woman who made up the entire story:

“You have to give your mother credit for originality,” she said. According to the Catholic Church, Jesus was reunited with the foreskin at his resurrection and ascension. According to the story of Saint Teresa of Avila, when Jesus appeared to her and took her as his bride, he used the foreskin as her wedding ring. . . . She said, “Even if your mother’s story is true, there’s no proof the genetic material came from the actual historical figure. It’s more likely your father was just some poor Jewish nobody.” (*Choke* 153)

Throughout his life, Victor has desired to have a dysfunctional personality. His addiction to sex and his phoniness in restaurants all serve to that desire. However, with Paige’s shocking story, everything turns upside down. The rationale behind his dysfunction is subverted and misinterpreted against his own will. For instance, a woman called Mrs. Tsunimitsu recognizes Victor and reminds him of how her son saved Victor from choking. The woman was aware at that moment that Victor was faking it but she did not warn others. “I knew you were faking. Everybody else saw what they wanted to see. . . . You have an enormous capacity for love in you” (*Choke* 155). On the praise of the old woman who diverts his true aim in choking, Victor gets puzzled and furious. He aims to prove that he is not Jesus Christ but “a dirty, filthy, helpless sexaholic” who cannot turn into a normal man (156). As a solution, Victor drags Paige to the chapel to rape her in a place sacred for Christians.

Victor’s second attempt at a sexual intercourse with Paige results in failure again. As he cannot prove that he is the messiah with the lower part of his body, Victor aims to indulge in abominable actions. He keeps asking, “*what would Jesus NOT do?*” (*Choke*

169). He teaches terms related to sex to school kids who come to visit Colonial Dunsboro. Instead of teaching simple actions such as setting fire or making ink out of walnuts, Victor tells the children about the plague of 1665, how it spread and what effect it had on peoples' bodies or how little boys' naked bodies were abused to death. He tells them about Santa Claus who climbs up the chimneys naked or the scientific experiments, shaved mice or circumcised horses. Victor's aim is to scare the children because he thinks that Jesus would not try to poison the innocent souls of the children in that way.

As Kavadlo notes Victor's repeated question about Jesus "function[s] as another negation, an action that is inaction" (150). He cannot decide whether his mother is a lunatic or he is the son of Jesus. He can neither simply accept that it is his mother who made up the whole story nor reject the idea that he can be Jesus. He seeks guidance from Denny as his best and the only friend. Victor expects Denny to confirm that he is a useless, promiscuous man devoid of moral and religious values. Victor asks Denny to "tell the truth" about him:

And I say, "Please, dude. Tell me truth." I'm not good and kind and caring or any of that happy horseshit. I'm nothing but a thoughtless, brain-dead, loser dude. That I can live with. This is who I am. Just a puss-pounding, seam-reaming, dog-driving, fucking helpless sex addict asshole, and I can't ever, ever let myself forget that. I say, "Tell me again I'm an insensitive asshole." (*Choke* 168)

Like the Narrator who feels dissociated from his subjective reality when he is involved in the actions in Project Mayhem, Victor feels dissociated from his psychotic personality that cuts off all his ties to reality. There has become a sudden rupture in his dysfunction: "This is me trying to put things back the way they were before Paige Marshall. Period revival. Me trying to reconstruct how my life worked until just a few weeks ago. How my dysfunction used to function so beautifully" (*Choke* 210). Victor struggles to find a chance to turn back to his former personality as he thinks that he can be free only when he is crossing the norms of the society. If he fits into them, if he becomes the person that the society desires him to be, he will have no chance to manifest his own self. He goes on performing both his sexual activities with various women and his choking event in restaurants but all the while he keeps the idea that he can be Jesus in his mind. In that sense, Victor tries to be in the middle, in the intermezzo. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest "the only way to get outside the dualisms



is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 277). Victor’s intermezzo ends when Paige tells him that she has made a research about the fertility clinics and the doctors and “they all seem to be legitimate” (*Choke* 223). On hearing this, Victor stops doubting about his identity and intends to normalize himself to fit into the standards of the society.

Contrary to the Narrator and Shannon who first experience the subjugation of their bodies under hierarchical powers, and then resist against this subjugation, Victor first acts as a revolutionary body who has dismantled all the impositions of the society and capitalism, then he transforms into a body who performs the conventions of society. Victor’s progress in *Choke* follows a backward movement when compared to the heroes of former novels. As the novel progresses to the end, Victor turns to the point where the Narrator and Shannon have started. Victor becomes a “normal” man whose desires are held under control, who can be shaped and moulded by society. Only at the end of the novel he promises the hope of returning to his schizo character by choosing to be in the intermezzo again.

### **3.3 Submission of the Psychotic Body**

Victor’s “normalization” process starts when Paige gives him details about the notes in the diary: “Everything else checks out, she says. The dates, the clinics, the specialists. Even the church people she talked to have insisted the material stolen, the tissue the clinic cultured, was the only authenticated foreskin” (*Choke* 229). For Paige, these are clear evidences and when Victor’s ability to soothe the patients in St. Anthony is considered, he can “really” be “the beautiful and divine son of God” (229). Paige suggests that she can see the light in Victor’s heart and he should be true to his inner strength to face the truth. Thus, Victor decides to desert his former life and replace it with a standard one. He moves from a free life where he can transcend the walls of the society and be a psychotic body towards a restricted life where he has to obey all the dictated norms and rules. Believing that he is the second coming of Christ, he chooses to fit into the stereotype: “From now on, I want to try and be better person. Choking

restaurants, fooling people, I'm not going to do that kind of shit anymore. Sleeping around, casual sex, that kind of shit" (239).

Having made the decision, he first aims to quit his addiction. When he goes to church meeting, he meets Nico, another girl from prison who used to have sex with Victor on Monday nights. Instead of having sex with her in the ladies room, Victor rushes into Room 234 to confess how he is stuck in the fourth step of his recovery. Nico tries to prevent him from being one of "those losers" but Victor takes the floor and tells how his addiction has started. Victor explains that what he feels at that moment "is less like an ending than just another starting point" (*Choke* 243).

His second attempt on the way of becoming a good person is to save his mother from dying. Rather than desiring Ida to need him, Victor decides to cure her and perform the role of the affectionate son. He should be benevolent, fair and honest because "[b]eing Jesus means being honest" (*Choke* 263). Calling it a "miracle," Victor collects packages of puddings and visits Ida as Victor Mancini. He intends to make his mother eat the pudding and save her from dying of hunger. While tucking pudding in Ida's mouth, he tells her that he finally finds the truth about himself: "That I was born a good person. A manifestation of perfect love. That I can be good, again, but I have to start small" (267). However, just when Victor tells that he believes in the Jesus story, Ida confesses him that she stole Victor from a baby stroller to have the United States citizenship. But Victor thinks that she is raving and goes on giving more pudding that would result in choking her to death:

And I say, "I know that I'm Jesus Christ." Her eyes fall open wide, and I spoon in more pudding. "I know you came from Italy already impregnated with the sacred foreskin." More pudding into her mouth. "I know you wrote this all in Italian in your diary so I wouldn't read it." More pudding into her mouth. And I say, "Now I know my true nature. That I'm a loving caring person." More pudding goes into her mouth. "And I know I can save you," I say. My mom, she just looks at me. Her eyes filled with total infinite understanding and compassion, she says, "What the fuck are you getting at?" She says, "I stole you out of a stroller in Waterloo, Iowa. I wanted to save you from the kind of life you'd get." . . . She says, "I kidnapped you." The poor deluded, demented thing, she doesn't know what she's saying. I spoon in another fifty calories. . . Her chest heaves, and brown pudding bubbles out of her nose. Her eyes role back. Her skin, it's getting bluish. Her chest heaves again. (*Choke* 269)

Although he hears his mother's confession about his childhood, Victor cannot separate delusion from reality and sticks on his Jesus identity. Victor used to perform others' identities but he was always aware that these identities were either fake or simulated ones. However, he fails to understand the fakeness of his newly acquired Jesus identity. While Paige is performing rescue breathing, Victor tells her that there is no need for trying; he can save his mother. Like Jesus who resurrected Lazarus, Victor commands Ida to turn back to life: "It's okay. I can do this. Just like with Lazarus. . . . I've done this before. . . . I *am* the Christ" (*Choke* 270). The moment of epiphany dawns on Victor when Paige's patient card hidden in her forearm falls down to break the whole spell. For Victor, it becomes obvious that nothing is as it seems; his mother turns out to be his kidnapper, her mother's doctor is lunatic.

Victor's reterritorialization signifies a return to the familiar territories until he decides to join Denny who builds a construction out of rocks. Denny's progress in the novel is also important because of his movement from deterritorialization to reterritorialization which first starts with the relation to the known territories then turns to a relation to the unfamiliar ones. At the beginning of the novel, Denny, like Victor, displays the characteristics of a schizo who detaches himself from the impositions of the capitalist society. Away from the familial territory, Denny has no intimate relationship and is addicted to masturbation. He acts beyond labels and definitions by following his deterritorialized flows of desire. In time, Denny aims to find the meaning of life and seeks for an attachment. He desires to be settled in a territory. Deleuze and Guattari indicate that "anything can serve as a reterritorialization, in other words, "stand for" the lost territory: one can reterritorialize on a being, an object, a book, an apparatus, a system" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 508). Denny reterritorializes on rocks which he believes, are "like land" representing a territory (*Choke* 141). Denny starts collecting rocks from neighborhood and brings them to Victor's house. He also quits his hyper-real job in Colonial Dunsboro and meets a woman called Beth with whom he desires to have a stable relationship. In that sense, Denny normalizes himself by returning to known territories. In a short time, Denny fills Victor's house with the rocks; all pieces of furniture in the house are piled up with large and small rocks. Denny's reterritorialization moves from the familiar territory to the unknown when he decides to

construct a new structure on an empty field. Denny aims to build a new land that “operates as reterritorialization has “the-value-of” home” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 326).

After Ida’s death, Victor believes that he can bring order into his life by “simplifying” himself (*Choke* 282). Leaving his former life, his dysfunction behind, Victor is left with two options: either to “accept the world as it is given” or to be in the intermezzo (284). Victor chooses to be in the intermezzo. Together with Paige, he joins Denny to be a part of his new construction to create “the unknown country, his own, which alone is created by his work in progress” (*Anti-Oedipus* 363). The construction might resemble to any place that is beyond definitions and restrictions and it bears the marks of its creators who can be anyone at any territory:

We can spend our lives letting the world tells us who we are. Sane or insane. Saints or sex addicts. Heroes or victims. Letting history tell us how good or bad we are. Letting our past decide our future. Or we can decide for ourselves. And maybe it’s our job to invent something better. . . . Even after all that rushing around, where we’ve ended up is the middle of nowhere in the middle of the night. And maybe knowing isn’t the point. Where we’re standing right now, in the ruins in the dark, what we build could be anything. (*Choke* 292)

At the beginning of the novel, Victor is a psychotic man who detaches himself from the social reality. Running after his own revolutionary desire, he refuses to bury himself in the codes of the capitalist American society. He is a rebellious con man, a sex addict who violates all the ethical norms. Victor deterritorializes himself from the known boundaries of the society to form alternative realities where he can hold the strings and manifest his own flow of desire. For Victor, his addiction is a line of flight that helps him to escape from the reality of life. While having sex, he sets his desiring machines into motion and connects to other flows that will carry him into the body without organs. Only in the body without organs can he enjoy his incompleteness for his body does not represent anything there. His deterritorialization as a psychotic body is obstructed when he starts to improve his ties to the known territories. Victor reterritorializes on oedipalized territorialities by improving his familial ties and by trying to be the good person the society requires him to be. Rather than floating in the free realm of the body without organs as a psychotic body, Victor chooses to be in the intermezzo and to act in between. He neither submits to social codes imposed on him

nor loses his sense of reality completely. Victor keeps his desire to move between things, which “does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps and the other away” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 25). By constructing a new structure that has creative dynamics in it to lead him into deterritorialization, Victor signals to maintain his schizo character and experiment with new practices to create new spaces.

## CONCLUSION

*The desiring-machines take form and train their sights along a tangent of deterritorialization that traverses the representative spheres, and that runs along the body without organs. Leaving, escaping, but while causing more escapes. The desiring-machines themselves are the flows-schizzes or the breaks-flows that break and flow at the same time on the body without organs: not the gaping wound represented in castration, but the myriad little connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions by which every machine produces a flow in relation to another that breaks it, and breaks a flow that another produces.*

Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*

*My characters are not people. They are machines that do a job. They are machines designed to destroy themselves. I think it was Derrida who said a book is the “software that plays in the hardware of your mind.” Characters are just vehicles for telling a story. Devices. Mechanisms.*

Chuck Palahniuk, from an interview

Palahniuk’s definition of “machines” can be extended to include people who obey the systematic orders of the society in occupied territories. Both in their conceptual territories such as family, work and society and in physical boundaries, people allow their desires to be directed and let their bodies be subjugated through physical and mental formulations. They prefer to be parts of a machine and function according to its principles. Such people simply fit into Foucault’s definition of “docile body.” In Foucault’s theory, individuals’ bodies are disciplined by hierarchical powers in order to be transformed from free individuals to controlled subjects that obey the rules of the social order with docility. However, rather than being an entity to be subjugated, there are also people who act as mechanisms to challenge subjugation. Like “the machines designed to destroy themselves,” these people refuse to be parts of the machine and desire to run counter to it. Their ultimate desire is to subvert the codes of the society to create their own formulations. In the framework of schizoanalysis, developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, these people are called schizos who desire to dismantle the organization of their bodies by setting their desiring machines into motion. Breaking their relations to known territories of the society or any social institution that holds power, the schizos aim at “leaving, escaping but while causing more escapes” to direct their own desire which has both a revolutionary power that can challenge all the strict rules and borders of hierarchical powers and a productive

strength to create new syntheses and formulations (359). To escape from the restriction of their bodies, schizos follow the lines of flight to arrive the body without organs which is neither restrictive nor regulative but productive and liberating.

In the novels discussed in this thesis, the main characters; the Narrator, Shannon and Victor display the character traits of the schizo as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. They follow their own lines of flight to create their formulations of desire. They both violate and challenge the codes imposed on them to reassert their revolutionary bodies. Each character uses violence as an apparatus and directs it to their bodies to break the organization of their bodies. They aim to arrive at the body without organs where their dismantled bodies will no longer suffer from being manipulated by hierarchical powers. In the body without organs, they will go “off the rails” and transcend the limits set on them. As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, going off the rails is a process with full potential to create new possibilities; “an inevitable experiment” filled with “a set of practices” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 149).

The Narrator, Shannon and Victor are schizos first of all because they desire to be free of the constraints imposed on their bodies and subjectivities by hierarchical and social institutions. In *Fight Club*, the Narrator desires to get rid of his organized life in which he strives to satisfy the urges of the system. Stuck in his neatly decorated house and his well-paid job, he acts as an ordinary middle class citizen of America without any peculiar merits. He feels as though he were a puppet of capitalist America who turns consumption into obsession. Similarly, Shannon in *Invisible Monsters* desires to be free of the society that turns beauty into a sublime ideal. Having an exquisite beauty and slender body, Shannon tries to fit into the stereotype designated for women in the society. The labels and definitions reduce her from a free individual to an ordinary person. Victor in *Choke* pursues his productive desire. He does not believe in the ethical norms of society and desires to escape from the codes of social life. He resists to be stuck in an ordered life where he will perform his measured role as a well-educated, white-collar young man following standard routes.

The Narrator, Shannon and Victor are schizos who set their desiring machines into motion to experiment with other possibilities. Desiring machines, Deleuze and Guattari explain, work only when they run counter to the systematic order. For desiring

machines, therefore, dysfunction acts as function. The Narrator and Shannon set their desiring machines into motion when the impositions on their bodies become intolerable for them. The Narrator gives the first signals of his dysfunction by suffering from insomnia. Attending support groups with alternate identities and fake diseases, he looks for other possibilities to find relief. Similar to the Narrator, Shannon in *Invisible Monsters* triggers her desiring machines when the culture of beauty turns into a nightmare for her. To resist being a product, a commodity of her culture, Shannon dismantles the unity of her body and creates alternative identities. Contrary to Shannon and the Narrator, Victor does not wait for a challenge to set his desiring machines motion. In Victor's case, there is no discernible imposition on his body, he is a rebel from the outset.

Victor acts as an ideal schizo because he is away from the familial and social territories in the beginning of the novel. His relation to his mother who is kept in an asylum is limited to occasional meetings in hospital. Victor does not visit his mother as a son; rather, he deserts his own identity and impersonates other identities to create better versions of himself. As a schizo, Victor "has his own system of co-ordinates for situating himself" apart from social codes (*Anti-Oedipus* 27). He has also no intimate relationship with a woman; he indulges in casual sex with a multiple women. Victor displays a similar detachment from the social territory in his job. Working as an Irish indentured servant in a historical theme park, Victor severs the ties with normality and reality. In a place where the historical setting is reconstructed without obeying the rules of historical accuracy, he avoids having intimate relations with other people around him.

Similar to Victor, the Narrator has no familial ties. Deserted by his father at a very young age, the Narrator is raised by his mother whose presence has no signification in his life. For the Narrator, the familial territory has been a place that has no meaning. As he has no intimate relationships, his life is bounded to his decorated home and his proper job, which function as familial territories to be deserted. As a schizo, the Narrator refuses to situate himself to the known territories of the capitalist society, he needs to "produce himself as a free man, irresponsible, solitary and joyous" (*Anti-Oedipus* 131).



Shannon's movement towards being a schizo starts when she breaks off her relation to familial, social and physical territories. Shannon deserts her family and her familial house to set out a journey to the unknown. Shannon breaks off her engagement to Manus who cheated on Shannon with her best friend. She also resigns from her job as a fashion model. Thus, she strips off all of her labels as a daughter, a fiancé and a beautiful fashion model. As Shannon looks for ways to make her detachment permanent, she decides to get rid of her beauty. Her desire is not reconciliation but an irreversible revolution.

The Narrator's, Shannon's and Victor's lines of flight take place on mental states which are followed by physical movements. By dismantling their relations to familiar territories, these characters aim to wander constantly to find new territories. Deleuze and Guattari define this act of moving from known territories to unknown ones as "deterritorialization." For Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialization has an essential role in defining the character of a schizo as it is an active process paving the way of the schizo. When the schizo deterritorializes, s/he can be anyone and at any place. There are no strict limits for him/her any more that will stop them from enjoying the freedom it offers. Deterritorialization is either mental or physical or both at the same time. While mental deterritorialization occurs in the mind of the schizo, physical deterritorialization necessitates a physical movement.

The deterritorialization of the Narrator first happens mentally when he meets Tyler. Suffering from insomnia, he creates Tyler in his mind by splitting his identity. For the Narrator, Tyler stands for a better version of himself with his muscular body and free-spirited personality. Through Tyler, the Narrator engages in activities neither the society nor his auto-control would permit. As Tyler is beyond familial and social territories, his body becomes the agent of experimenting with the codes of society. When the Narrator evolves into Tyler, he leaves his repressed psyche behind to have a productive one to code the flows of desire. With his mental deterritorialization, the Narrator also deterritorializes physically. Burning his condominium into flames, he gets rid of all of his furniture. He changes his apartment and moves into his schizophrenic alter ego's shabby house which does not bear any resemblance to a real home at all.

Shannon's deterritorialization happens first when she leaves her familial house to find a

new land where she will manifest her new identity freely. She leaves her parents and her definition behind in Oedipal territory. However, Shannon's first deterritorialization is obstructed when she halts in a familiar territory. Turning her beauty to an opportunity, she becomes a fashion model. In a short time, Shannon is restricted by familiar urges to satisfy the expectations of beauty culture. Definitions, impositions and borders turn back to her life. Having the character of a schizo, Shannon needs to wander constantly to find new lands. She sets out on a journey to the unknown with Brandy, her transsexual friend. Driving across the country without a definite aim, they release themselves from the restrictions of the society and enjoy the freedom of being beyond boundaries. Throughout the journey, Shannon keeps changing her identity. Like each place, each identity becomes a new territory to explore.

Victor's experience of deterritorialization is mental. Victor deterritorializes himself from the burdens of the society by deserting the reality of social life. He constructs an alternative world in which he acts according to his own free desire. Victor switches from one identity to another in those meetings with his mother to get away from his responsibility as a son. Working in a hyper-real job as an historical figure, he has no familiar ties to reality. Victor flows in his redefined, restructured world pursuing his ideal unrestricted life.

In these processes of deterritorialization, the Narrator, Shannon and Victor engage in violence. For each character, violence is an apparatus, a line of flight to arrive at the body without organs. Defined as a productive and dynamic surface, the body without organs offers experimental practices to the schizo. The body without organs does not represent an organless body. It challenges the hierarchy of the organism that puts the organs in a systematic order. According to Deleuze and Guattari, organism is "the enemy of the body" and the body without organs seeks ways to dismantle the hierarchy of organism (*A Thousand Plateaus* 158). In that sense, the body without organs is the nonrestrictive imaginary terrain where the individual body exists beyond limitations and definitions. The body without organs enables the individual body to be in a perpetual process of becoming.

The Narrator aims to attain the body without organs by organizing an alternative society called Fight Club to abolish all the regulations on his body. Violating the unity of his

body with bruises, gapes and wounds, the Narrator desires to attain the body without organs where his body will be free of all kinds of impositions. For the Narrator, Fight Club is the body without organs because there is absolutely no hierarchy here. In Fight Club, he is free of his titles, responsibilities and measured roles. With his disorganized body, he performs not only his individuality but also his masculinity. Here, he is no more the emasculated man of the capitalist society who tries to solve his problems in support groups, but the tribal man of ancient times who seeks purgation with his fists. In other words, in Fight Club, the Narrator restructures his masculinity and individuality from the outset by breaking the order of his body and the formation of his subjectivity.

Shannon's journey to the body without organs starts when she shoots herself in the face. To create chaos in her perfect life, she deliberately mutilates her face. For Shannon, violence is the only way of getting rid of her beauty. As the other options such as gaining weight or going bald can result in a possible return to her former beauty, she finds her irreversible solution in mutilation. For Shannon, the life she maintains with her jawless face is her progress towards the body without organs because here self is an unformed subjectivity in the process of becoming. After mutilating her face, Shannon sets out a journey with Brandy, throughout which they are free of territorial boundaries, regulations or limitations and free to perform whatever they desire. With her jawless face that causes her to be mistaken for a monster, Shannon is beyond labels; she is no more the beautiful body to be manipulated, a product to be displayed. She is just a woman with a jawless face who moves from one identity to another.

Contrary to the Narrator and Shannon, who break the unity of their bodies through violence, Victor manipulates the function of his body to attain the body without organs. Victor exploits his body by turning it into a sex machine. His overindulgence in sex breaks the systematic order of his body. Sex does not give him pleasure but freedom. He believes that he can be a human being only when he is having sex because the performance does not necessitate an identity or a label. He just needs his body. In that sense, his addiction to sex functions as a door that open on to the body without organs and makes him go beyond the temporal and bodily restrictions.

The Narrator's, Shannon's and Victor's movements of deterritorialization are followed by the processes of reterritorialization. The process of reterritorialization is defined as a

stationary process because it requires turning back either to familiar or new and unknown territories. Whether deterritorialization is negative or positive depends on its relation to the territory. If a schizo halts in a territory that imposes the familiar codifications of the deserted territory, deterritorialization becomes negative and leaves its place for reterritorialization. If the schizo dismantles his/her connection to a territory, reterritorialization is obstructed and gives its place to deterritorialization.

The Narrator's reterritorialization takes place with Project Mayhem. When the Narrator gets stuck in his schizophrenia, his alter ego, Tyler, takes control and organizes Project Mayhem. Unlike Fight Club, Project Mayhem aims at the destruction of the whole civilization. Against Fight Club's promise of freedom, Project Mayhem stipulates docility, restriction and authority. Tyler will be the only one in charge in this Project and people who are involved will not even know each other's roles. In that sense, Project Mayhem functions as the microcosm of capitalist America directing the individuals without their consent. Coding the flows of desire, it turns its members into disciples and makes them parts of a machine. The Narrator's reterritorialization becomes positive when he aims at cancelling the organization. He shoots himself in the face to kill his alter ego and to move away from the imposition of Project Mayhem.

Shannon's reterritorialization takes place first when she decides to resettle in the culture of beauty. However, this territory brings back the familiar codifications that she has already deserted. She becomes a piece of meat rather than a free individual body, a commodity whose rights can be owned. Definitions and limitations reenter her life. Moreover, she builds up familiar familial relations by engaging to Manus. Shannon's negative reterritorialization turns to be positive when she dismantles her relations to Oedipalized territory<sup>17</sup> by mutilating her face. With her second attempt, Shannon detaches herself from familiar ties completely and takes a step toward her deterritorialization that will last forever.

Victor's reterritorialization which starts mentally results in a physical reterritorialization. When Victor mistakenly believes that he is Jesus Christ, he decides to quit his addiction to sex. Rather than being a schizo who violates the ethical rules of

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<sup>17</sup> As stated in third chapter, any institution that imposes hierarchy on individuals such as Church, school, family, nation etc. is called an "Oedipalized territory" in *Anti-Oedipus* (3).

society, he persuades himself to be a normal man. He returns to Oedipalized territory by trying to save his mother from dying and improving his ties to women and religion. In spite of his decision to be a normal man who fits into the stereotypical definitions, Victor also seeks ways to build up a new construction from rocks that will be beyond definitions, a construction in progress. In that sense, the reterritorialization of Victor which seems negative at first turns to be positive when he constructs a new land that can be anything.

When their actions are analyzed through the perspectives of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, each character may be said to be mentally ill. The Narrator splits his identity and creates his schizophrenic alter ego. Shannon engages in a masochistic act by shooting her face with a rifle and ripping her jaw off. Victor creates his own alternative realities in a psychotic way. However, when analyzed from the perspective of schizoanalysis, schizophrenic, masochistic and psychotic individuals are not mad; rather, they are schizos who resist to be stuck in limited territories. They react to the power imposed on their bodies. Rather than being parts of a subjugated group whose bodies are held under control, they choose to be parts of a subject group who direct their own revolutionary desire to be free. In the final analysis, it may be argued that the Narrator, Shannon and Victor revolt against the very system which formulate them. They are the disobedient children of the society for whom breaking the walls seem to be a better option than obeying their dictates.

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