

## Narrative Style of American Psycho and Fight Club: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract:

This research explores the cinematic representations between two iconic literary and cinematic works Bret Easton Ellis's "American Psycho" and Chuck Palahniuk's "Fight Club". This comparative study delves into the cinematic differences and narrative styles presented in these works. Both Chuck Palahniuk's "Fight Club" and Bret Easton Ellis's "American Psycho" are well known for their avant-garde narrative techniques, which are marked by erratic narrators and unusual frameworks. In the film version, "American Psycho" takes on a very different narrative style. Ellis's disjointed structure is preserved in Mary Harron's adaptation, which prioritizes visual storytelling. The film skilfully conveys the protagonist's madness by capturing the bizarre and hyperreal atmosphere of 1980s Manhattan through set design, photography, and sound design. Similar to this, "Fight Club" changes stylistically as it gets from the paper to the screen. Although David Fincher's adaptation adds visual flourishes like inventive editing methods and spectacular cinematography, it keeps the novel's nonlinear storyline and unreliable narrator. This study illustrates how cinematic storytelling strategies reinterpret and remake textual narratives through a comparative analysis of the narrative styles in the source texts and film adaptations of "American Psycho" and "Fight Club."

**Keywords:** Narrative style, fact and fiction, Syuzhet framework, human psyche, film adaptation.

### Introduction

#### Bret Easton Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk

In 1964, Bret Easton Ellis was born in Los Angeles, California. *Less Than Zero*, his debut book, was released in 1985 when he was still a Bennington College student. Ellis's second book, *The Rules of Attraction*, came out in 1987. Ellis's third book, *American Psycho*, was set to be published in the fall of 1990 but was cancelled by publisher Simon & Schuster on the eve of publication. Ellis is still regarded as a major and influential figure in American literature because of his unwavering vision and his unashamed depiction of the darker aspects of human existence, even though his works have generated heated arguments and

controversy. With a distinctive style characterized by its sharp wit and incisive social commentary, Ellis continues to compel readers to confront the complexities and contradictions of contemporary life.

On February 21, 1962, Charles Michael Palahniuk was born in Pasco, Washington, into a family that was not wealthy. Palahniuk made two crucial decisions that would ultimately define his future career: first, he began volunteering to accompany terminally ill patients, where he was exposed to death and the harsh reality of people's inevitable decline from life. This type of encounter not only irreversibly alters one's perspective on life and death, but in this instance also motivates Palahniuk to incorporate the harsh realities of support groups as a crucial structural component of *Fight Club* and, subsequently, *Choke*. Furthermore, he asserts that he utilizes his books as a coping mechanism for the worst times in life. He says that this experience forced him to confront these times frequently and helped him develop coping mechanisms so that they wouldn't paralyze him. These strategies he then incorporates into his novels. Second, and maybe more importantly, he started going to a writers' workshop instead of just writing for mental stimulation while he waited for replacement parts.

### **“American Psycho”: Text vs. Film**

"American Psycho" is a story that has sparked controversy and curiosity due to its unconventional narrative style and controversial themes. The novel, authored by Bret Easton Ellis, and the subsequent film adaptation by Mary Harron, tell the story of Patrick Bateman, a wealthy and self-obsessed investment banker who secretly leads a life as a serial killer. The unique storytelling techniques used in both the novel and film adaptation have contributed significantly to the interpretation of the story and how it is perceived by audiences.

The way a story is told could be a component that impacts how the group of onlookers sees and encounters it. "American Psycho", both the novel and the adjustments in the film display a particular style of story-telling that essentially contributed to the translation. Most pondering is on how cinema affects scholarly works, but few steps or measures taken into consideration how writing impacts cinema. "*American Psycho*", is known for its questionable subject matter and remarkable account fashion, which serves as a perfect case study for investigating the relationship between writing and cinema. Within the novel, Bret Easton Ellis employs a first-person story to grant readers coordination to get to the protagonist's deepest contemplations, fantasies, and uncertainties. This approach drenches readers in Patrick Bateman's mind, obscuring the line between reality and fancy. In differentiation, Mary Harron's film adjustment utilizes inconspicuous subtleties and visual signals to communicate Bateman's inward turmoil while keeping up a remove that permits translation. Moreover, the film offers impressions of Bateman's intellect through voiceover narration, but it does not dive as deeply as the novel. Analyzing the comparison of narrative styles of both the initial content and the cinematic adjustments will pave the way to understanding the relationship between writing and cinema. This investigation permits us to appreciate the special narrating strategies utilized in both mediums and how they have contributed to the by and large elucidation of the story.

Ellis fastidiously dives into Bateman's character, investigating his fixations, wants, and existential apprehension, through distinctive portrayals and inner monologs, readers' knowledge about Bateman's mind, and the societal powers that sharpen him. The depiction of

characters is more streamlined in the film compelled by its running time in the movie, Christian Bale's execution is commended for its concentration, and a few subtleties of Bateman's character may be misplaced in interpretation from page to screen. One of the foremost disputable angles of "American Psycho" is its graphic delineation of savagery and gut, the book delves deeply into the depravity and spirals into the lunacy of its protagonist, Patrick Bateman, frequently describing his violent deeds in graphic detail. Bateman commits numerous violent crimes in the book, including murder. Ellis does not hold back when describing these sequences, often going into gruesome detail to highlight how violent and gory Bateman's actions were. In several situations, for instance, Bateman talks about dismembering his victims and partaking in necrophilia. Bateman frequently uses torture and sadism in his violent deeds. He enjoys causing his victims agony and misery, rendered with unsettling realism. In several situations, for example, Bateman talks of torturing his victims before killing them. Bateman frequently uses torture and sadism in his violent deeds. He enjoys causing his victims agony and misery, rendered with unsettling realism. In several situations, for example, Bateman talks of torturing his victims before killing them. "American Psycho" explores Bateman's viciousness on a psychological level in addition to its physical brutality. Another dimension of horror to the story is added by the novel's portrayal of his shattered mental state and inability to discriminate between fact and fiction.

Ellis failed to add the pictures in a detailed depiction of Bateman's twisted acts, utilizing them as a focal point to evaluate the abundance of 1980s elitist culture. In distinguishable, the film adjustment treads more gently, picking for a more controlled approach to viciousness, whereas certain scenes stay unsettling, the film relies on recommendation instead of the expression, clearing out much of the viewer's creative ability.

The novel and film serve as s scorching prosecutions of American consumerism, realism, and superficiality. Ellis utilizes parody to uncover the absurdities of corporate culture, whereas Harron's adjustment holds much of the novel's dim humour and social study. Through Bateman's intuitive with his peers and the world around him, both adaptations offer a condemning depiction of a society fixated on riches and status. Ellis experiments with narrative structure, utilizing non-linear narrating and divided scenes to reflect Bateman's broken mind. This disconnected approach includes the novel's sense of confusion and instability. Moreover, the film adjustment keeps up components of nonlinearity, it embraces a more direct story for cinematic purposes. Harron streamlines the plot, around the central storyline while relinquishing a few of the novel's diversions and subplots. American Psycho, both the novel and its film adjustment, are known for their unmistakable story styles that contribute to the translation of the story. Whereas the novel employments a first-person account to allow readers to coordinate access to the protagonist's mind, the film adjustment takes a more objective and detached approach, utilizing third-person camera points and consolidating scenes that do not include the hero. The film also includes components of dull humour and parody, which improve the study of customer culture shown in the narrative. By comparing the story styles of both the novel and film adjustment, ready to better understand the transaction between writing and cinema and appreciate the interesting narrating procedures utilized in both mediums. There are aberrations between the Syuzhet framework and the elaborate framework utilized within the two mediums.

The fashion account of a story can significantly influence how it is seen and experienced by the gathering of people, and the comparative consideration of the account of fashion in American Psycho's text and film adaptation highlights this fact. The incongruities between the Syuzhet framework and the complex framework utilized illustrate the diverse approaches taken by the content and film in depicting the story of American Psycho, eventually forming the audience's recognition and understanding of the story. This investigation exhibits the noteworthy effect that account fashion can have on the general elucidation of a story. By recognizing and increasing in value the unmistakable approaches taken by the content and film, we pick up a more prominent appreciation for the complex relationship between writing and cinema and the control of narrating to shape our recognition of the world around us.

By analyzing and comparing the narrative styles of both the original content and the cinematic adjustment, ready to understand the relationship between writing and cinema and appreciate the unique narrative techniques that were utilized in both mediums. These aberrations involve the fashion account of narrative style not as it shapes the audience's discernment and translation of the story but illustrates the particular approaches taken by the content and film. The novel employments a first-person account style, allowing readers to coordinate access to the protagonist's psyche, whereas the film adjustment takes a more objective and confined approach. Besides, the film adjustment includes elements of dull humour and parody, which serve to improve the study of the shopper culture present within the story. Eventually, by understanding the diverse account styles utilized in both mediums, able to pick up distant better; a much better; a higher; a stronger; an improved "a stronger appreciation of the control of narrating and its capacity to shape our recognition of the world around us".

### **Fight Club: Text vs. Film**

Chuck Palahniuk's "Fight Club", both as a novel and a film directed by David Fincher, has captivated audiences with its gritty portrayal of modern masculinity and anti-consumerist sentiments. The story follows an unnamed narrator who forms an underground fight club with the enigmatic Tyler Durden, leading to a spiral of chaos and self-discovery. The narrative style of "Fight Club" is a crucial component that contributes to the interpretation of the story. Both the novel and its film adaptation utilize a first-person narrative to immerse the audience in the protagonist's psyche. Through voiceover narration, viewers gain access to the protagonist's innermost thoughts and motivations, providing a raw and unfiltered account of his descent into anarchy and self-destruction. This approach allows the audience to experience the story through the protagonist's eyes, creating a powerful emotional connection with the character. By utilizing this narrative style, "Fight Club" effectively conveys its message and themes to the audience, making it a thought-provoking and engaging piece of storytelling. The vivid descriptions, surreal imagery, and nonlinear structure employed by Palahniuk and Fincher serve to transport the audience into the disorienting world of the protagonist. With fragmented scenes and a non-traditional narrative structure, Palahniuk's prose mirrors the fractured psyche of the narrator, while Fincher's visual techniques, such as rapid editing, stylized cinematography, and surreal imagery, capture the essence of the novel's disjointed narrative. By utilizing these techniques, the film adaptation succeeds in immersing viewers in the chaotic world of "Fight Club," making it a must-see for fans of the book. Fight Club is an exceptional story that delves into the complexities of the human psyche. Both the

novel and film adaptations masterfully convey the struggle and disillusionment of the main characters. The novel offers a deeper understanding of the protagonist's psyche, exploring his insecurities and internal conflicts in great detail. Meanwhile, the film captures the essence of the characters through powerful performances and visual storytelling, immersing the audience in their struggles. Norton and Pitt's portrayals of the narrator and Tyler Durden are particularly impressive, adding depth and nuance to their roles. The film adaptation's use of compelling visuals and dynamic cinematography also contribute to its success in capturing the essence of the story. "Fight Club" explores the complex themes of masculinity, identity, consumerism, and the quest for meaning in a world dominated by materialism. Palahniuk's novel serves as an incisive and thought-provoking critique of modern capitalism and societal norms, challenging readers to question the status quo. Fincher's film adaptation masterfully captures the novel's themes and social commentary, presenting a visually stunning commentary on our contemporary culture and the search for authenticity in a world of conformity. The film's provocative nature of narrative style and striking visual symbolism are a feast for the senses, inviting the viewer to immerse themselves in a world of dark humour, gritty realism, and biting social critique. Through its powerful portrayal of the dangers of consumerism and the search for true identity and purpose, "Fight Club" reminds us of the importance of individuality and authenticity in a world that values conformity and materialism above all else. Chuck Palahniuk's novel employs a non-linear narrative structure that intricately weaves together the protagonist's fractured psyche and the themes of the story. The book jumps between past and present, creating a sense of disorientation and blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. The use of vivid descriptions and internal monologues offers a glimpse into the protagonist's mind, his thoughts, and his motivations. David Fincher's film adaptation, while maintaining the essence of the story, adopts a more linear narrative style for cinematic purposes. The film streamlines the story to enhance pacing and coherence, while still maintaining some of the nonlinearity used in the novel. The film uses visual cues and subtle nuances to convey the protagonist's internal struggles, creating an immersive viewing experience for the audience. Despite the differences in narrative style between the two mediums, both the novel and the film offer a captivating exploration of the human condition and the search for meaning in a chaotic world. The story delves into themes of masculinity, consumerism, and identity, offering a scathing critique of contemporary society. The narrative style employed in "Fight Club" is a crucial component that significantly contributes to the interpretation of the story, making it a compelling case study for exploring the relationship between literature and cinema.

By analyzing the structure, dialogue, and visual presentation used in both versions, this study offers a fascinating insight into how different mediums can shape the way a story is told. The nonlinear narrative structure creates a sense of disorientation and uncertainty, keeping the audience on the edge of their seat. The sharp, witty, and often darkly humorous dialogue provides insight into the characters' personalities and motivations. The film adaptation also employs creative visual elements such as split-screen and fast-paced editing to enhance the narrative experience. However, the film adaptation does make some changes to the source material, which may disappoint fans of the novel. Despite this, the study's findings demonstrate the power of narrative style in shaping the way a story is perceived and experienced. Since the adaptation of "Fight Club" is concerned with fidelity, it transfers most of what is possible. We can easily trace the cardinal functions, for instance, the narrator attending support groups to help fight his insomnia, meeting Marla, meeting Tyler, moving in with him after the explosion of his condo, and so on. Because of the nature of this narrative,

as much in the novel as in the film, the causal relations between the functions are not immediately clear and are only clarified by the end. Only one of the cardinal functions present in the novel is not transferred to the film – the narrator’s placement in a psychiatric hospital – but it certainly changes the meaning substantially. While the film’s ending might be perceived as “happy”, it is more ambiguous in the book. The setting of the narrator’s first meeting with Tyler: in the novel, they meet on a beach where Tyler is building a “temporary perfection”, a giant shadow hand. The scene is rather dream-like and symbolic, suggestive of Tyler’s imaginary character, and it might not be easily accepted in a film. It is replaced by a more probable scenario, in which the two characters meet on a plane. We also notice a difference in the initiative in this scene: in the book, it is the narrator, fascinated by Tyler’s creation, who starts the conversation; in the film, it is Tyler, “an external agency looking for a way in”. Thus, it may imply, that Tyler represents the devil’s temptation.

In “Fight Club”, we witness an unusual shift in the opposite direction – the unreliability of the book’s narration is not only preserved in the film but supplemented with new aspects. The film uses meta-cinematic elements to enhance the viewer’s sense of disruption and to emphasize the deceptiveness of the medium. The spliced-in frames are at the same time mentioned by the characters and used in the film itself, crossing the traditional boundaries between the medium and the content of the film. Moreover, the characters violate the rules of conventional narration when they manifest their awareness of existing within the film and its limited period. These features, not present in the book, make the film exceptional in its position as a big-budgeted Hollywood production. Overall, even though the adaptation of “Fight Club” is rather faithful, there are differences between the two works due to the different media and their cultural status and impact. While Palahniuk’s novel is outstanding in its portrayal of the crisis of masculinity in consumerist society, Fincher’s film played an important role in the innovation of cinematic narrative style which took place on the brink of the millennium.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of the narrative styles of American Psycho and Fight Club in both their literary and cinematic forms have shed light on the intricate relationship between writing and cinema. The exploration of narrative techniques, character portrayal, and thematic interpretations has revealed the distinct impact of storytelling methods on the overall presentation and reception of the narratives. We observed the divergence between the narrative style in the novel “American Psycho” versus its cinematic adaptation. The use of first-person storytelling in the novel allows readers to intimately experience the protagonist’s mind, blurring the line between reality and fantasy. Conversely, the film adaptation adopted a more objective approach, utilizing visual cues and a controlled representation of violence to convey the protagonist’s inner turmoil. This distinction in narrative style prompted a deeper understanding of the influence of storytelling techniques on audience perception. Similarly, the analysis of “Fight Club” highlighted the immersive nature of the first-person narrative in both the novel and its film adaptation. The nonlinear structure and vivid descriptions in the novel mirrored the fractured psyche of the protagonist, while the film’s visual techniques effectively captured the essence of the original narrative. The exploration of causal relations between key events in both the novel and the film underscored the impact of narrative fidelity and creative adaptations on audience interpretation. Furthermore, the research delved into the

nuanced differences between the narrative styles in the text and film adaptations, unraveling the distinct approaches taken by each medium in portraying the stories. The novel and film revealed unique nuances and complemented each other by showcasing the transformative power of storytelling across different mediums. In essence, the comparative analysis of these narratives emphasized the profound influence of narrative style on audience engagement and interpretation. The exploration of distinct narrative techniques and their impact on the portrayal of characters and themes showcased the dynamic interplay between literature and cinema. As we navigate the complexities of storytelling, it becomes evident that the narrative style serves as a powerful conduit for conveying meaning, provoking introspection, and shaping our collective understanding of the world around us. Ultimately, this comparative analysis invites further exploration into the evolving landscape of narrative styles, encouraging a deeper appreciation for the art of storytelling and its enduring impact on diverse audiences.

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