

**A YOUNG AMERICAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING OF LIFE
IN THE MOVIE *INTO THE WILD***

A THESIS

**In Partial Fulfillment Strata-1 Degree Requirements of
American Studies Section of English Department**

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this thesis is compiled by him without taking the results from other research in any university, both in S-1 degree and in diploma. In addition, the writer ascertains that he does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

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MOTTO

subhanalloh...

alhamdulillah...

walailahaillo...

allohuakbar...

allohuma soli *ala Muhammad...*

DEDICATION

I dedicated this thesis to

Alloh S.W.T.,

My family,

My past,

My future,

My dreams,

And every single spectrum in the universe

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TABLE OF CONTENT

TITLE	i	
VALIDATION	ii	
APPROVAL	iii	
ACCEPTANCE	iv	
MOTTO	v	
DEDICATION	vi	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vii	
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x	
TABLE OF ILLUSTRATION		xiii
ABSTRACT	xv	
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION		
A. Background of the Study	1	
B. Scope of the Study	2	
C. Purpose of the Study	3	
D. Methodology	3	
E. Organization of the Study	4	
CHAPTER II SYNOPSIS		
The Synopsis of the <i>Into the Wild</i> Movie		6
CHAPTER III LITERARY REVIEW		
A. Intrinsic Aspect	9	
1. Narrative	9	
a. Character	9	
b. Theme	10	
c. Setting	10	
d. Conflict	12	
2. Cinematographic	13	
a. Camera	13	
b. Sound	20	
B. Extrinsic Aspect	21	
1. Logotherapy and It's Background	21	
2. Philosophical Bases of Logotherapy	25	
3. The Meaning of Life in Logotherapy Point of View		26
CHAPTER IV DISCUSSION		
A. Intrinsic Aspect Analysis	29	
1. Christopher Johnson McCandless' Character		29
2. Theme	43	
3. Setting	44	
4. Conflict	45	
B. Extrinsic Aspect Analysis	46	
1. Existential Problems	46	
a. Eksistensial Frustration	48	
b. Existential Vacuum	52	
c. Noogenic Neurosis	52	

2. Logotherapy Philosophy in Christopher Johnson McCandless' Adventures	
53	
a. The Freedom of Will	54
b. The Will to Meaning	56
c. The Meaning of Life	59
3. Christopher Johnson McCandless' Ways to the Meaning of His Life	
61	
a. Creative Values	62
b. Experiential Values	65
c. Hope Values	69
d. Attitudinal Values (the values of behaving)	70
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION	77
REFERENCES	

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATION

Picture 3.1 Camera shooting range	14	
Picture 3.2 Extreme Long Shot	14	
Picture 3.3 Long Shot	15	
Picture 3.4 Medium long shot	15	
Picture 3.5 Medium Shot	16	
Picture 3.6 Medium Close-up	16	
Picture 3.7 Close-Up	17	
Picture 3.8 Extreme Close-up	17	
Picture 3.9 High Angle	18	
Picture 3.10 Straight on Angle	18	
Picture 3.11 Low Angle	19	
Picture 4.01 Chris Personality	29	
Picture 4.02 Sturdy	30	
Picture 4.03 Good Calf	30	
Picture 4.04 Chris' Graduation Dinner	31	
Picture 4.05 Chris and Rainey Chatting	32	
Picture 4.06 With Ron	34	
Picture 4.07 With a Couple	34	
Picture 4.08 With Tracy	34	
Picture 4.09 Conversation between Wayne and Chris	34	
Picture 4.10 Chris Enjoying His Activity in Alaska	35	
Picture 4.11 Room 1	37	
Picture 4.12 Room 2	37	
Picture 4.13 The Book on the Table	37	
Picture 4.14 Call of the Wild	38	
Picture 4.15 Jack London is a King	38	
Picture 4.16 Check from Wayne to Chris	41	
Picture 4.17 Letter from Chris	41	
Picture 4.18 Letter to Wayne	41	
Picture 4.19 Chris	44	
Picture 4.20 Walt	44	
Picture 4.21 Billy	44	
Picture 4.22 Carine	44	
Picture 4.23 Planning for Alaska	46	
Picture 4.24 Chris' Graduation	49	
Picture 4.25 Chris' Parents Graduation	49	
Picture 4.26 Lord Byron's poem in the beginning of the movie	51	
Picture 4.27 Chris Scribing on a Board	55	
Picture 4.28 Chris Enjoying Tolstoy's Family Happiness	57	
Picture 4.29 Feet Relax through the Window	57	
Picture 4.30 Chris' Face after Reading Tolstoy's Family Happiness	57	
Picture 4.31 Working at Restaurant	63	
Picture 4.32 Selling Books	63	
Picture 4.33 Working for Wane	64	
Picture 4.34 I like All This	64	

Picture 4.35 Belt	64	
Picture 4.36 Crafting	64	
Picture 4.37 Learning to Ron	64	
Picture 4.38 Chris and Ron Franz on a Hill	65	
Picture 4.39 Sharing Their Experiences	67	
Picture 4.40 Some People Who Love Chris	68	
Picture 4.41 Chris' Graduation Dinner	71	
Picture 4.42 Chris' Impossible River Cross	73	
Picture 4.43 Chris' Condition After Survived from Poisoned		74
Picture 4.44 Chris' Imagination in His Dying Condition		75
Picture 4.45 The Last Words of Chris' Life	75	

ABSTRACT

Hasrat utama dalam hidup manusia adalah hasrat untuk meraih hidup bermakna. Hasrat tersebut sering kali menemui banyak hambatan dalam pemenuhannya. Diantaranya adalah frustrasi eksistensial, kehampaan eksistensial, dan neurosis noogenik. Salah satu contoh mengenai pemenuhan hasrat hidup bermakna yang menemui hambatan-hambatan tersebut adalah kisah seorang pemuda Amerika Serikat bernama Christopher Johnson McCandless dalam film *Into the Wild*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa jalan atau cara tentang pemenuhan hasrat hidup bermakna yang ditempuh oleh seorang Christopher Johnson McCandless di dalam perjalanan panjangnya menuju Alaska. Dalam penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan yaitu dengan menggunakan bahan-bahan penelitian yang berasal dari karya-karya literatur dan juga menggunakan metode pendekatan structural dan psikologi terutama logotherapy. Dengan menggunakan kedua metode pendekatan tersebut ditemukan benang penghubung berupa penjelasan analitis mengenai hasrat hidup bermakna yang merupakan alasan mengapa Christopher Johnson McCandless harus menghargai hidupnya.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Which one is going to be your choice, live to eat or eat to live? That is one question that once flew toward us. It sounds like a simple joke so lightly spoken. However, if we want to reflect in a more sensible, it seems like this question is a big determination on our attitude toward life which we live.

When live to eat becomes the choice, it will be similar to what has been disclosed by Sigmund Freud who stated that the obtaining pleasure, *the will to pleasure*, is the main motivation in human life. A human being will feel pleased and happy when he is able to fulfill everything that could give him pleasure.

A bit different from Freud, Alfred Adler believes that pleasure is less important in comparison to power. Because by having a great power, a man can get various pleasures more easily. So for Adler, be a powerful person, *the will to power*, was a major passion in human life.

Although the two opinions from two psychologists above are a bit different, we can actually notice both of them have the same core. If I may say so modestly, both tend towards that life is to eat, to satisfy the desire for pleasure. The will to power and the will to pleasure lead someone to get enjoyment for himself.

Unlike the two figures above, Viktor E. Frankl, a neuro-psychiatrist who was also coming from the same city as the two names that have been mentioned before, Vienna (Austria), who survived out of the deadly Nazi concentration camps during World War II, believes that the primary desire of human life is the desire to live meaningful (*the will to meaning*). In explaining to the will of meaning, the logotherapy founder departs from his critique of *the will to pleasure* (Sigmund Freud) and *the will to power* (Alfred Adler), each of which considers the primary purpose of human motivation is to get the fun/enjoyment and power. Frankl notes that the pleasure is not merely a goal of human life. In his view, *the will to pleasure* is one byproduct of *the will to meaning*, whereas *the will to power* roles as a tool or mean to fulfill the will to meaning (Bastaman, 2007: 92).

If it is true what is presented by Frankl that the desire to live meaningfully is the main motivation in human life, then how can the desire to live meaningfully be fulfilled? Here, in this thesis the writer is trying to find the evidence by looking carefully at what has been experienced by Christopher Johnson McCandless in the film *Into the Wild* based on logotherapy point of view.

Into the wild is a movie released on September 21, 2007 (an adaptation from a book entitled *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer), directed by Sean Penn. The writer is interested in this movie not just because it tells about adventures and nature. What makes the writer fall in love with this movie is that it's not only entertaining but also inspiring, in which at Christopher Johnson McCandless' early young age, he experienced such a great and dark emptiness in his life. This big hole in his soul has encouraged him to make the long journey in order to find the meaning of life he lived.

B. Scope of the Study

There are so many things that can be talked about in regard to *Into the Wild* movie, both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. However, it is impossible to write it all in this thesis. Therefore, the writer would like to focus this thesis on analyzing the experiences of Christopher Johnson McCandless, especially on his way to find the meaning of his life in the movie through the logotherapy standpoint.

C. Purpose of the Study

There are two purposes regarding to the writing of this thesis. First, the writer wants to analyze the ways that have been taken by Christopher Johnson Mc.Candless in searching for meaning of his life based on logotherapy point of view. The second purpose is the writer hopes that the writer is able to take lesson from the story of Christopher Johnson McCandless in order to equip the writer's with wisdom to sail the oceans of life.

D. Methodology

In obtaining the data and information that supports this topic that will be discussed in the thesis, the author uses two methods, which are research method and approach method.

1. Research Method

The research method in this thesis is library research which means the writer takes the data and reference through library or from books, and also from other information through the media technology that supports the topic.

According to Sypherd, Fountain, and Gibbens (Novania, 2010:123), the library research paper is study of defined topic, and the researcher's task is to read and analyze the published materials on the topic, to develop a well-organized paper on his reading and to document the sources of information carefully. So, reading is very essential in this case.

2. Approach Method

Related to the scope of the thesis, the writer uses two methods of approaches. They are exponential and psychological approaches. Exponential approach is commonly used in literary research comes from structural approach. It focuses on some intrinsic aspects of literary work. According to Novania (2010: 3), the approach moves up from an assumption that literature as a creative work has an autonomy that is separated from the elements outside of it. In this film case, the writer uses some of narrative and cinematographic aspects.

For the psychological approach, the author will use logotherapy, one of psychology mainstreams, as a method of approach. This is based on the assumption that literary works are always discussing about the events of human life. According to Attar Semi's book, *Metode Penelitian Sastra*, human behavior is always showing a diverse, if somebody wants to see and get to know people further, psychology is necessary (Umam, 2009: 5). In other words, literatures reflect and express lives.

In accordance with Wellek and Warren quoted by Novania (2010: 110), authors can not express their experiences and views about life. But it is not true to say that the authors express their overall life, the life of a certain age in a concrete and comprehensive.

E. Organization of the Study

CHAPTER I : Introduction. This chapter consists of background of the study, scope of the study, purpose of the study, and organization of the study.

CHAPTER II : Synopsis. This chapter contains synopsis of the *Into the Wild* movie.

CHAPTER III : Literary Review. This chapter consists of a literary review that the writer uses to support the analysis. Theories in this chapter cover intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the movie such as character, conflict, cinematography aspects, and logotherapy.

CHAPTER IV : Discussion. This chapter contains the discussion of the topic.

CHAPTER V : Conclusion. This last chapter contains the conclusion of the discussion.

CHAPTER II

THE SYNOPSIS OF *INTO THE WILD* MOVIE

Christopher Johnson McCandles, A.K.A Alexander Supertramp is an intelligent young man who had just graduated from Emory University. The existence of problems that Chris experienced in his family boost him to make decision to conduct a long journey across his country, the United States of America; a long journey which is full of adventures to find the meaning of life which culminates in Alaska.

Shortly before he began his journey, he donated all his savings amounting to \$ 24,000.00 for the charity to Oxfam America. Then he began his journey without any notification for his family. He intentionally made himself untraceable by anyone. He burned his wallet and all its contents, including identification or his ID card. For the sake of his confidential existence, he willingly left his car that had got stuck in a mudslide, eliminated the number of the car, and even changed his name from Christopher Johnson McCandles to Alexander Supertramp.

Then with a back-pack on his back, Alex was taking a trip to Alaska on foot, asking for a ride from vehicles in the same direction, even he also took his journey by train and kayak. He also worked at some places he visited to obtain his needs in fulfilling his ambition to reach Alaska as a backpacker.

Along the way, Alexander Supertramp met many people who each of them had a story and a remarkable impression to him. He met Jan and Raney, a couple of hippies who had long lost a son who maybe, if he is still alive, was in Alex's age. He also met Wayne, wheat farmer who later gave a job to Alex and from the job he got quite lots of money. He also met Ronz Franz, a veteran who gave him many advice about life and thought him how to make good leather craft. Those meeting had a big role in shaping Alex's life.

Alex had met and made interaction with people he met; even Alex can become very close with these people. But when he came to an end of his journey, he actually cut off and isolated from humans. Then he entered the wilderness (into the wild) of Alaska's nature. With the backpack and its contents, a shotgun, books about the philosophy of life that he carried, he was ready to face the ferocity of Alaska.

He walked away quietly into the wilderness, crossing rivers, and found a crumpled school bus, and then made it a place to live. The story of survival in the movie goes up and down in line with successive season. Until one day after a long contemplation, finally he felt like he had found what he had been searching for all of the time and it made him want to go back to society. He packed his belongings and stepped out of Alaska. Unfortunately, instead reached the society, he discovered the bitter truth because he was trapped in the wilderness; a river that once he crossed in the winter, now had become very wide, deep, and swift. At that time, Alex was surprised and panic. He went back to the bus which became his home, and tried to be patient waiting for the river re-freezes or until he gets another way out.

It's really out of Alex's prediction. The food was running out. He did a very extreme food saving in order to survive. But that food supplies were used up. In an agonizing starvation conditions, he was looking for alternative foods; by the guide from the book he had, he gathered plants surround the place that possible to eat. Unfortunately, he chose the wrong plants for food, so he was poisoned.

Poisoned in a miserable condition of body and soul, Chris tries desperately to survive. And with his effort to heal, he eventually succeeded to survive from the risk of dying from poisoning. But despite the successful recovery, Alex was in a very weak condition. Alaska and the state of

his body did not allow him to go anywhere. Finally, Alex was lying dead in the bus with a blanket over his body and his eyes were staring at the sky. Christopher Johnson McCandless' body was discovered by moose hunters two weeks later. His sister Carine McCandles flew to Alaska, and then casted her brother's ashes on East Coast.

Semarang' 15 November 2010

Agus Sugiyarto

Semarang, November, 2010
The writer