



**THE PORTRAYAL OF ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISM  
OF THE MAIN CHARACTER AS REFLECTED IN *INTO THE WILD*  
BY JON KRAKAUER**

**THESIS**

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Skripsi berjudul

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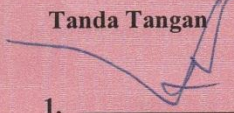


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Abstract

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**THE PORTRAYAL OF ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISM OF  
THE MAIN CHARACTER AS REFLECTED IN *INTO THE WILD* BY JON  
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**Abstract**

In this paper, the writer analyzes about the main character, McCandless which describes in *Into The Wild* by Jon Krakauer. The novel captures the main character, McCandless who is going to Alaska to find his own happiness. The analysis has two goals which are describing the anxieties and defense mechanisms which are experienced by the main character. The anxieties are realistic anxiety and neurotic anxiety. In defense mechanism, it appears in form of acting out, isolation, suppression and humor. Then, the writer uses Psychoanalysis as the theory according to Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud. The technique that is applied by the writer is close reading to gain understanding the structure that can be seen in the novel. Together with close reading, the writer is helped to collect proofs for the analysis. The result from the novel is about the main character's mental disorder and the way defending it. The novel describes how the main character experiences two kinds of anxiety. The first anxiety is realistic anxiety which he experiences fear of wilderness and fear of death. The second anxiety is neurotic anxiety. In neurotic, the main character experiences the rebellion to his parent's will in education and their life style, and disclaimer of society rules in education and job. The main character defends him self with defense mechanism for several problem that he gets from two of anxiety. There are humor for fear of wilderness and death, acting out in parents's will, isolation in parents's will in education and suppression.

**Keywords : Main Character, Psychoanalysis, Anxiety, Defense Mechanism**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Reason for Choosing The Subject

*Into The Wild* is one of novels which contains true story of a man going to Alaska to find his own happiness. This novel is written by Jon Krakauer, an American writer who is famous with his outdoor writings. *Into The Wild* becomes an international bestseller which publishes in 1996. The novel pictures the journey of Christopher Johnson McCandless who is the main character to Alaska. This novel is not just telling about the journey, but also the reason why McCandless decides to leave his life in town, East Coast. McCandless is from a well to-do family background. He graduates from Emory University with honor. With a well background of education and family, he should be happy and satisfied with this. That is the uniqueness of this book.

McCandless does not care about his well family background. He does not like to be told by his parents about his life which becomes the reason why he hates his parents and disobeys all of his parent's desire. He lives without following the normal rules of the common people. There are several normal rules that he disagrees with. In academic rules, he never follows what his professor told to him. Furthermore, it goes same with job rules. He is working without paying attention to the rules has made long before he starts to work. In addition, the main character also does not follow the law of government. He never likes politic of his country. The main character is a man who does not has goals in his life. He does and tries everything without any purposes. He once has a goal to help people from the poverty, but he never did it right and finish it until the end.

All of these reasons make him out of his rational mind, losing his control in his thought and temper. It leads him to leave his family and decides to find his own happiness

without remembering anything about his old life. He is going to Alaska without telling his family. In Alaska he finds his happiness, but unfortunately it is just for a while. It is because he starts to think that he is wrong.

This case leads the main character to feel anxiety. The main character starts to experience the anxiety when he has to deal with his parent's desire. In Alaska, the main character also experiences anxiety because of his circumstances. There are two kinds of anxiety that the main character has. First, he has realistic anxiety which appears when he is in Alaska. Realistic anxiety is full of fear of danger that can be seen. One of the main character anxiety is fear of the wilderness of Alaska. Second, he has neurotic anxiety which appears before he goes to Alaska, which means when he lives with his parents and deals with his parents. Neurotic anxiety of the main character is triggered by the oppression of his parents which leads him to release his Id. He becomes disobeys to his parents.

The anxieties later make the main character defending himself in order to not experience much to the anxieties. The main character tries to defend himself which unconsciously appears as shield for his mind. It is called as defense mechanism which can be used to defend the main character from his anxiety. In main character's case, he has several defense mechanisms that he uses which relate to the each of part anxiety. However, the main character does not use all of the defense mechanism for each problem in anxiety that he has. The main character experiences the acting out, isolation, suppression and acting out.

Therefore, according to psychology, anxiety is a one of psychological disorder where people want to escape from it which is full of fear, guilt and shame. Treating anxiety uses a way called defense mechanism. The main character feels anxiety toward his life. The anxiety is representation of his Id about disagreement to his old life and his



circumstances in wilderness. Escaping from his anxiety, unconsciously, he uses several defense mechanisms to help him. Later, his anxiety leads him to create realistic and neurotic anxiety. Freud in Boore's "*Personality Theories*" explains that reality anxiety means fear of realistic danger.

Neurotic anxiety is result of overwhelmed fear that appear as losing control in mind or temper (Boore's "*Personality Theories*"). Based on McCandless, he loses control of his rational mind and temper because he does not match with his parent's lifestyle and thought. He is oppressed by the way his parents teach him how to run his life. His fear comes because he cannot run his life as what he wants. That is why his anxiety builds and leads him to act irrationally by leaving his family and his old life in town and choose Alaska as his goal in life.

Then, defense mechanism appears as shield for McCandless to handle his anxieties. According to Freud, defense mechanism is necessary to self for defending against unpleasant feeling (anxiety) and threatening event (Cramer:1991). However, defense mechanism is not just a way to escape from anxiety, but also for protecting human from unacceptable reality. When human must face to face with the hidden desire or Id, mind will seek rational way to avoid it unconsciously.

The writer chooses Psychoanalytic Criticism as literature studies that can be applied in the analysis because the writer finds anxiety and defense mechanism that are the subject of the studies. Together with Sigmund Freud theory of Psychoanalysis, the writer tries to analyze about mental disorder of the main character. Analyzing psychology means analyzing about character, behavior, attitude, thought or psychological disorder of a person and it is called as Psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud in a book *Introduction to Theoretical Approaches to Literature* stated that " Psychoanalysis is a medical technique,

a method of therapy for the treatment of mentally ill or distressed patients that helps them to understand the source of their symptoms” [27].

It means that Psychoanalysis is a method to treat psychological disorder to help the patient gaining understanding about their psychological state. This method can be used in interpretation literary work that engaged in Psychoanalytic Criticism (Freud in Charles E. Bressler’s 1999:148). Interpretation using Psychoanalytic Criticism carries methods in psychoanalysis to uncover hidden desire or ambition.

Psychoanalysis criticism seeks psychological disorder which can be seen in ambition, hidden desire or hidden pleasure through character’s dialogue, daily life, mindset and behavior. Freud in Thompson’s article shows that there are three part of human’s structure mind which are Id, Ego and Superego. “ Id seeks to fulfill all wants, needs, and impulses, ego is the aspect of personality that deals with reality while superego tries to get the ego to act in idealistic and moral manner” [1]. Those mean that human’s structure mind consists of desire, ambition, yet there is part of mind that work along reality and moral to find balance. Ego acts by controlling Id that contains of desire and irrational mind. If ego cannot handle the Id, then anxiety will appear as signal for ego to take action.

Based on this, the writer urges to bring anxieties and defense mechanisms that appear in main character to this thesis. Anxiety and defense mechanism in the novel are interesting to analyze and add more analysis in literary works. This analysis will expands the novel through Psychoanalysis criticism based on Sigmund Freud. The writer will look carefully to signs of anxiety and defense mechanism and directly limit the scope of the analysis.

## **1.2 The Objective and The Scope of The Study**

Previously, the object of this analysis is a book *Into The Wild* by John Krakauer. The analysis is analyzed by using Psychoanalytic Criticism as the theory. There are a lot of object that can be studied. The writer will scope the study into two parts of Psychoanalysis Criticism which are anxiety and defense mechanism.

The writer limits the studies by using Psychoanalysis according to Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud. Therefore, the objectives of this study are all about describing the problem that has found in the novel. There are two limits of the analysis which are describing the anxieties of the main character and describing the defense mechanisms of the main character in *Into The Wild*:

## **1.3 Formulation of The Problem**

According to the objective and scope of the study, at least there are two research questions coming up that is useful to find data in *Into The Wild*. The two research questions are :

1. How are anxieties disorder reflected in the main character of *Into The Wild*?
2. How are defense mechanisms pictured in the main character of *Into The Wild*?

## **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

Freud once stated in Boeree's article that anxiety is the condition when Id and superego have conflict between desire and moral then make Ego feels threatening and danger. Anxiety's position is to give signal to Ego to take action and escape from threatening. Anxiety will appear as fear to things that go wrong. Freud then develops human's anxieties into three parts in Boeree's book *Personality Theories* which are :



1. Realistic anxiety, refers to fear of the real danger. It means that if you are having a danger situation or an event is threatening, you will experience realistic anxiety. For instance from Boeree, if I throw you into a pit that is full of poisonous snake, you will feel realistic anxiety. It means that you will feel the real danger of poisonous snake in front of you.
2. Moral anxiety, comes not from physical world or the outer. However, it comes as guilt or shame of punishment from the internalized social world of the superego. It connects to superego because people who experience this will think that every action they have been taking are wrong according to society or people point of view. For instance, adults are punished for violating society's moral code (Duane P. Schultz *Personality Theories*: 8th edition).
3. Neurotic anxiety, is the fear of being overwhelmed by impulses from the Id. You will lose control of your thought, rational mind or temper because of this anxiety. Neurotic anxiety also control by unconscious mind. According to Rajeevan E. in *Yoga and Psychoanalysis : The Dynamics of Transcending The Present*, ego need not always to fall into neurotic anxiety. The instinctual needs of the Id may be given indirect outlet in satisfying the Id [p.105].

Giving treatment to those anxieties, Freud comes up with defense mechanism. Defense mechanism helps avoiding and defending from those anxiety, unacceptable reality, or harmful conflict. Freud's daughter, Anna Freud develops defense mechanism to continue her father analysis.

Then, George Eman Vaillant in his book "*Adaption to Life*" introduces four levels of defense mechanism, as follow :

## Level I : Pathological Defences

This level appears as irrational and insane. It normally can be found in psychosis, dream and throughout childhood. . In this level, there are several defense mechanism, which are (Dr. Sanity's article *Defense Mechanism*) :

The first pathological defense mechanism is Denial. Denial is a refusal to accept external reality because it is too threatening. It means that someone will deny everything that related to unpleasant feeling or unacceptable reality.

The second is Distortion which is a gross reshaping of external reality to meet internal needs. It recreates the external reality to decrease the unpleasant mind in internal, so that it can be changed.

The last defense mechanism of pathological is Delusional Projection. It is a frank delusion about external reality, usually of a persecutory nature. It creates a delusion directly about the external reality.

## Level II : Immature Defences

It often presents in adults. In this level, people decrease the anxiety by threatening people. Immature defenses lead to difficulty to accept or deal with the reality and cause serious problem. This level is used for people who social undesirable, immature, difficult and out of touch. These include (Dr. Sanity's article *Defense Mechanism*) :

Fantasy is one of immature defense mechanism which tendency to retreat into fantasy in order to resolve inner and outer conflicts. For example, when a woman who cannot pregnant does not allow people to visit her, yet she spends her time to look at baby's room and sing lullaby for them imagining that one of the babies is hers (James L. Holly, MD : *Maladaptive Strategies and Mature Defense*).

Next defense mechanism is Projection which attributes one's own unacknowledged feelings to others; includes severe prejudice, severe jealousy, hyper vigilance to external danger, and "injustice collecting". For instance, the woman who cannot pregnant judges job of the doctor is not good because the doctor cannot make her pregnant (James L. Holly, MD : *Maladaptive Strategies and Mature Defense*).

Hypochondriasis is kind of defense mechanism that transforms of negative feelings towards others into negative feelings toward self, pain, illness and anxiety.

Passive Agressive Behaviour is aggression towards others expressed indirectly or passively. For example, when a woman who tries to get pregnant agrees to follow medicine from the doctor, but she calls the nurse and told them that she is calling not because of she knows that they will take care of them. In this example, she is angry and feel hurt because she has to follow all of the medicine (James L. Holly, MD : *Maladaptive Strategies and Mature Defense*).

The last one is Acting Out. It is direct expression of an unconscious wish or impulse to avoid being conscious of the emotion that accompanies it. For instance, the woman who wants to get pregnant has a fair with other man. It causes of her disappointed and anger of disability to get pregnant (James L. Holly, MD : *Maladaptive Strategies and Mature Defense*).

### Level III : Neurotic Defences

Neurotic defences have short-term advantages in coping, often appear to adult. In neurotic defense mechanism, it involves divergence than mature ones and represents an attempt to cope with significant internally or externally generated stress. However, it can causes long-term problem to relationship, as follow (Brad Bowins : *Psychological Defense Mechanism : A New Perspective* : 2004)



The first neurotic defense mechanism is Intellectualization which largely transforms events into a none emotional experience through the overuse of conscious thought processes.

The next one is Rationalization which makes unacceptable attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors more palatable by providing a socially acceptable meaning.

Repression is kind of defense mechanism which involves the expulsion or withholding of a distressing idea from consciousness while allowing affect to remain, thereby attenuating conscious realization of what object or situation is related to the affect.

Isolation spares the idea but modifies awareness of affect. For example, a surgeon must do surgery to his or her child. However, there will be no any emotions for the surgery because he or she thinks that the surgery is interesting (*Psychodynamic Perspective's* article : 2011).

The next defense mechanism in neurotic level is Reaction Formation. It is transforms an unacceptable impulse into its opposite. For example, instead of accepting a desire to have sex with multiple partners, you preach the virtues of celibacy. For instance, a man who wants having a sex will not do the sex. In contrast, he will teach and told everyone what the advantages to become single without sex (*Psychodynamic Perspective's* article : 2011).

Displacement is Displacement shifts affect and the focus of attention from an object that is unacceptable to a safer one. For example, you are angry to your boss. Instead of kicking your boss, you will kick a dog instead to release your anger (*Psychodynamic Perspective's* article : 2011).

Dissociation will be the last of neurotic defense mechanism. It usually included in the neurotic defenses, but its definition in this regard is restricted to a severe form

involving a breakdown of psychological functions and a drastic modification of one's own character.

#### Level IV : Mature Defences

This level is considered as mature because it helps to integrate conflicts and emotions. It is called as emotionally healthy although there are still some immature developments on it. It contains of subjective happiness, occupational success or stability of relationship. Mature defences divides into several defences (George E. Vaillant, *Adaptive Mechanism, Their Rule is A Positive Psychology*) :

The first one is Altruism. Altruism is to transform conflict. Altruism involves getting pleasure from giving to other what people would themselves like to receive. For example, when people who get child abuse in their childhood tend to do same with their children, with altruism, they will not do that. In contrast, they will work in community that helps children who get abuse or join charity to stop child abuse. It means that with altruism, people will think and do differently from what they get from harmful event.

The second is Sublimation. Sublimation allows an indirect resolution of conflict with neither adverse consequences nor marked loss of pleasure. Sublimation does more than make affect acceptable; it also makes ideas exciting. For instance, when someone is frustrating to have sex and cannot release it, then he or she can make a poem with full of words reflecting the desire or hidden dreams. It means that the negative desire can be changed to something positive and useful. However, sublimation is different from fantasy.

The third is Suppression. It is the only defense mechanism which is controlled by conscious mind. It often regarded by psychotherapists as a vice, not a virtue. Suppression involves the semiconscious decision to postpone paying attention to a

conscious impulse and or conflict. For example, a man who has a busy life without having enough time for relax knows that he cannot be helped by anything or anyone. He absolutely knows about how sad his life, but he does not do anything. Instead, he suppresses it until he is rescued.

Anticipation becomes the fourth defense mechanism of mature. Anticipation is often voluntary and independent of conflict resolution. Anticipation is the capacity to keep affective response to an unbearable future in mind. The defense of anticipation reflects the capacity to perceive future danger affectively as well as cognitively and by this means to master conflict in small steps. For instance, when a group of people who have a excellent career want to press stress and they anticipate the danger and problem that they will face, they make list of the danger and problem, in case to survive from it.

The last one of defense mechanism of mature is Humor. Humor permits the expression of emotion without individual discomfort and without unpleasant effects on others. Humor keeps both idea and affect in mind. Mature humor allows people to look directly at what is painful, whereas dissociation and slapstick distract people so that they look somewhere else.

Seeing these, the main character in this novel experiences two kinds of anxieties which are realistic and neurotic anxiety. For defense mechanism, the main character displays three levels of defense mechanism which are immature, neurotic and mature levels. In immature level, the main character does not have all of kind of defense mechanism, but there is one kind of defense mechanism in this level which is Acting Out. For neurotic, the main character also pictures one of defense mechanism which is Isolation. In mature level of defense mechanism, there are two kinds that is clearly in main character which are suppression and humor.



## 1.5 The Method of The Research

Analyzing *Into The Wild* to collect anxieties and defense mechanism in main character, the writer expands the analysis with close reading method.

Close reading is a method which examine the meaning of each words and sentences to find central idea and supporting details (Parcc:2011 p.7). This method mechanism is re-read and understanding the literary as whole to develop ideas and to connect every events deeply. Close reading focuses on intrinsic elements such as character, setting, plot, point of view and theme. In addition, close reading also seeks for meaning whether meaning from dictionary or implied meaning and collects data. Together with Psychoanalytic Criticism, this method will sharp the analysis. In brief, the writer reads the literary work first and then uses this method to find object of analysis.

The first step that is match with close reading is choosing the literary work. The writer assumes that "*Into The Wild*" contains of anxiety and defense mechanism after take glance at the book. After reading the book, the writer then finds defense mechanisms that are used by main character. The writer tries to collect first the defense mechanism to see what cause the main character's psychology contains of defense mechanism. Defense mechanism can be found through how main character faces to face with problem. This makes the writer re-reading and scanning deeper to the book. After that, the writer captures what the reason defense mechanisms showing up. It is because there is one of psychology disorder which is anxiety. In main character, the writer finds two kinds of anxieties which are realistic and neurotic anxiety. Finding anxiety can be looked at fear of the main character. If the main character consists of fear, then it can be interpret as one of anxiety. In this book, the main character pictures directly the use of anxieties.

In this case, the writer clearly chooses Psychoanalytic Criticism as theory that will be used to interpret the book. The next step of the writer is that analyzes the

anxieties. The writer also looks the relationship of anxieties and defense mechanisms. The relationship between anxieties and defense mechanisms is about how anxiety develops and how defense mechanisms treat the anxiety that control by unconscious mind of main character. It means that every anxiety will have their own defense mechanisms according to the advantage. The writer seeks at character's behavior, dialogue between main character and other characters, thought of the main character and the background of the main character to make sure that there is no mistake in analysis.

Knowing there is no mistake in interpretation, the writer starts to collect data as prove in this thesis. This data help writer to make tentative outline for the thesis. The writer will classify data into content that is in the theory. After classifying the data, the writer can make research question based on theory and data. Research question is used to make scope of object in this thesis. It is used to make limit for the object of analysis, so that the analysis will not too broad and easy to understand.

Collecting data come from quotation. Quotation is used to quote important data that match with object. Quotation helps writer to not input all of the data, but just data which is important to support the theory.