

Sezione 7

Following the experiences of the *Beat Generation* poets and writers, who desired to leave according to what their instinct suggested them, *Into the Wild* is a modern journey into the natural life to rediscover the real self of man far from civilization.

Jon Krakauer (1954 -) is an American writer and mountaineer, well-known for outdoor and mountain-climbing writing. Up to now he has published *Eiger Dreams: Ventures Among Men and Mountains* (1990) ; *Into the Wild* (1996), *Into Thin Air* (1997); *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (2003) and *Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman* (2009)

Into the Wild (1996) tells the true story of Christopher McCandless, a young man from a wealthy East Coast family who, after graduating from college, gave all his money to charity, renamed himself "Alexander Supertramp," and began a journey in the American West. Two years and four months later, his decomposed body was found dead in the Alaska wilderness. In the book, Krakauer draws parallels between his own experiences and motivations and those of McCandless. *Into The Wild* was adapted into a film in 2007.

*Here is the writer's introduction where **Krakauer** explains the reasons why Christopher's McCandless's unlucky adventure has attracted him.*

Author's introduction

[...] In April 1992, a young man from a well-to-do East Coast family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mount McKinley. Four months later his decomposed body was found by a party of moose hunters.

Shortly after the discovery of the corpse, I was asked by the editor of Outside magazine to report on the puzzling circumstances of the boy's death. His name **turned out to be** Christopher Johnson McCandless. He'd grown up, I learned, in an **affluent** suburb of Washington, D.C., where he'd excelled academically and had been an elite athlete. Immediately after graduating, with honors, from Emory University in the summer of 1990, McCandless **dropped out of sight**. He changed his name, gave the entire balance of a \$24,000 savings account to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, and **burned all the cash in his wallet**. And then he invented a new life for himself, **taking up residence** at the **ragged** margin of our society, wandering across North America in search of **raw**, transcendent experience. His family had no idea where he was or what had become of him until his remains **turned up** in Alaska.

[...] I was **haunted** by the particulars of the boy's **starvation** and by vague, **unsettling** parallels between events in his life and those in my own. **Unwilling** to let McCandless go, I spent more than a year retracing the **convoluted** path that led to his death in the Alaskan **taiga**, **chasing** down details of his peregrinations with an interest that **bordered** on obsession. In trying to understand McCandless, I inevitably came to reflect on other, larger subjects as well: the **grip** wilderness has on the American imagination, the **allure** high risk activities **hold** for young men of a certain mind, the complicated, highly **charged bond** that exists between fathers and sons. [...] I won't claim to be an impartial biographer. McCandless' strange tale struck a personal note that made a **dispassionate rendering** of the tragedy impossible. Through most of the book, I have tried—and largely succeeded, I think—to minimize my authorial presence. But let the reader be warned: I interrupt McCandless' story with fragments of a narrative **drawn** from my own youth. I do so in the hope that my experiences will throw some **oblique** light on the enigma of Chris McCandless. He was an extremely intense young man and possessed a **streak** of stubborn idealism that did not **mesh** readily with modern existence. Long captivated by the writing of Leo Tolstoy, McCandless particularly admired how the great novelist had **forsaken** a life of wealth and privilege to wander among the **destitute**. In college McCandless began emulating Tolstoy's asceticism and moral rigor to a **degree**

that first **astonished**, and then alarmed, those who were **close** to him. When the boy **headed off** into the Alaskan bush he **entertained** no illusions that he was trekking into a land of milk and honey. Peril, adversity, and Tolstoyan renunciation were precisely what he was **seeking**. And that is what he found, in abundance. For most of the 16-week **ordeal**, nevertheless, McCandless more than held his own. Indeed, were it not for one or two seemingly insignificant **blunders**, he would have walked out of the woods in August 1992 as anonymously as he had walked into them in April. Instead, his innocent mistakes turned out to be **pivotal** and irreversible, his name became the **stuff** of **tabloid headlines**, and his **bewildered** family was left **clutching** the **shards** of a fierce and painful love.

A surprising number of people have been affected by the story of Chris McCandless' life and death. In the weeks and months following the publication of the article in *Outside*, it generated more **mail** than any other article in the magazine's history. This correspondence, as one might expect, reflected **sharply** divergent points of view: some readers admired the boy immensely for his courage and noble ideals; others **fulminated** that he was a **reckless** idiot, a **wacko**, a narcissist who perished out of arrogance and stupidity—and **was undeserving** of the considerable media attention he received. My convictions should become apparent after reading a chapter or two of *Into the Wild*, but I leave it to the reader to form his or her own opinion of Chris McCandless.

Notes

turned out to be: came out

affluent: rich, wealthy

dropped out of sight: disappeared

taking up residence: going to live

ragged: poorest

raw: true, real, unrefined

turned up: were found

haunted: obsessed

starvation: hunger

unsettling: disturbing, upsetting

Unwilling: reluctant

convoluted: tortuous, complicated

taiga: climatically and geographically defined area characterized by coniferous forests

chasing: following, looking for

bordered: was on the limit of

grip: attraction

allure: fascination

hold: took, exercised

charged: emotional

bond: relationship

dispassionate: unemotional, detached

rendering: portrait, report

drawn: taken

oblique: indirect

streak: vein

mesh: cope, interconnect

forsaken: abandoned

destitute: poor

degree: point, level

astonished: surprised, amazed

close: near

headed off: went to, took the direction

entertained: have, thought

seeking: searching, looking for
ordeal: trial, suffering (once: trial to enter adulthood)
blunders: mistakes, changes
pivotal: crucial
stuff: material
tabloid: scandalous, gossip newspaper
headlines: title pages
bewildered: puzzled, confused
clutching: taken
shards: ruins, ashes
mail: post, letters
sharply: rudely, completely
fulminated: blamed, judged
reckless: irresponsible, careless
wacko: eccentric, strange, freaky
was undeserving: did not merit (undeserving: unworthy)