THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS REFLECTED IN THE SHACK NOVEL

BY WILLIAM P. YOUNG (2007):

A PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION APPROACH

PUBLICATION ARTICLE

Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Getting

Bachelor Degree of Education in English Department

by:

DESY RATNA SARI

A 320 100 009

SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA

2015
Surat Persetujuan Artikel Publikasi Ilmiah

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini pembimbing skripsi/tugas akhir:
Nama : Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S.
NIK : 410
Nama : Mauly Halwat S.Pd., M.Hum., Ph.D.
NIK : 727

Telah membaca dan mencermati naskah artikel publikasi ilmiah, yang merupakan ringkasan skripsi/tugas akhir dari mahasiswa:
Nama : Desy Ratna Sari
NIM : A 320 100 009
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Naskah artikel tersebut, layak dan dapat disetujui untuk dipublikasikan.
Demikian persetujuan dibuat, semoga dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

Surakarta, 19 Januari 2015

Pembimbing I

[Signature]
Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S.
NIK. 410

Pembimbing II

[Signature]
Mauly Halwat H., Ph.D.
NIK. 727
THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS REFLECTED IN THE SHACK NOVEL
BY WILLIAM P. YOUNG (2007):
A PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION APPROACH

Desy Ratna Sari
A 320 100 009
dhesy_rathna@yahoo.com

Advisor 1 : Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S.
Advisor 2 : Mauly Halwat H, Ph.D.

Department of English Education
Muhammadiah University of Surakarta

ABSTRACT

This research paper aims at knowing the nature of happiness reflected in The Shack novel by William P. Young which is analyzed by using psychology of religion. The objective of the research is to analyze the novel based on the structural elements of the novel and to analyze the novel based on psychology of religion by William James. The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. Data of the research are taken from primary and secondary data. The primary data of the research is The Shack novel. The secondary data of the research are taken from books, website and other sources that are related to the study. The technique of collecting data are reading novel, clasifying the data, identifying the data that can be analyzed, taking note, and browsing to the internet. The method to analyze of this data is descriptive analysis. Based on structural elements of the novel, William P. Young delivers a message that “God is the answer to all problems of life”. Based on the psychology of religion analysis, the author illustrates a psychological phenomenon in which an individual should believe that there is always a way out of every problem.
Keywords: the shack novel, the nature of happiness, psychology of religion, psychological phenomenon.

A. Introduction

*The Shack* is a popular book in Christian circles, at least at the time this article was written in May of 2008. It is a fictional story of Mr. Mackenzie Allen Phillips, written by William P. Young and published in 2007 with 256 pages. *The Shack* novel was self published but became a USA today best seller, having sold 1 million copies and has been translated into 30 different languages (Slick, Matt. 2008. The Shack. Accessed by http://carm.org/shack).

There are four reasons why the writer is interested in explaining more in this novel. First, because it is the true life of story. Second, because in the novel the story is dominated with the happiness as the result. Third, it is interesting to explain more about what is the nature of happiness. The last is interesting to relate with the theory.

The problem statement of the study will focus on the nature of happiness reflected at *The Shack* novel. Based on the background of choosing the subject above, the researcher was going to focus her research on the nature of happiness in *The Shack* novel with the problem of this study as follows: “What is the nature of happiness reflected in William’s *The Shack* novel?”.

The objectives of the study as follows: first, analyze *The Shack* novel by William P. Young based on structural elements of the novel. Second, analyze the nature of happiness in Mack as major character based on Psychology of Religion. The writer also found some journals about *The Shack* novel, one of them is a trade journals about *The Shack* novel at New York, by Marcia Z Nelson in 2012 with the tittle after ‘*The Shack*’: ‘Cross Road’: William P. Young. The second, Christian Scholar’s Review by Larry Poston in 2009 in Holland, US. The third is the writer found a study
guide in Milford, Machigan-USA by Rev. Galen Lowery with the title ‘The Shack’ in 2009.


Based on the explanation above, the researcher defines that the nature of happiness is a strong character which is released to a behavior that comes from God and considered normal, acceptable with regard to nature and to control what happens in the world.

According to Stanovich (in Laura A. King, 2013: 5), Psychology is a rigorous discipline that tests assumptions, bringing scientific data to bear on the questions of central interest to human beings.

“Religion is clearly an ideology, meaning that part of culture which is actively concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of beliefs and values” Geertz (in Byrnes, 1984: 64).

Thouless (1971) in (Beit-Hallami & Argyle. 1997, p.6), stated that what distinguished religious individuals from others is that they ‘believe that there is also some kind of spiritual world which makes demands on our behaviour, our thinking and our feeling’ (p. 12).

For James studies that part of human nature that is, or is related to, religious experience. His interest is not in religious institutions, ritual, or, even for the most part, religious ideas, but in “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (V, 31) (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/james/#5). Psychology of religion has many parts, namely healty-mindedness, conversion, saintliness, mysticism, and religious experience and belief in God.
B. Research Method

In analyzing *The Shack* novel by William P. Young (2007) the researcher uses qualitative research. The research that does not used enumeration and calculation. The researcher clasify her research into qualitative research, because the research doesn’t need a statistic data to analyze and explore the facts. Type of data in this research is textual data. It consists of word, sentence, and phrase. The data source consists of two, they are primary source the novel. The secondary is about all of materials which are relevant with the study. The technique of collecting data are: reading the novel, determining the character that will be analyzed, Taking notes of important points, Classifying and determining the relevant data, Browsing on the internet to search information that relates with the novel, such as novel’s subtittles, identity, response of the public, etc. Searching the other sources which is relation with the novel.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Findings

Analysis *The Shack* novel based on five contents of religious experience, there are:

a. Healty-mindedness

“If, then, we give the name of healthy-mindedness to the tendency which looks on all things and sees that they are good, we find that we must distinguish between a more involuntary and a more voluntary or systematic way of being healthy minded” (James 1902:72).

In *The Shack* novel, there is one event where Mack is trying to force himself back to find Missy. When he is losing his child, Mack is sure that he plans to meet with Missy, such as when he desires to return to the shack after a few years ago, he hopes that he is able to meet with God and get the best result on his life. It can be seen in the following quotation:
“Secretly, he began to make plans to travel to the shack the following weekend. I am keeping it to myself for Nan’s sake, ..... he had kept secrets from her, secrets he still justified in his own mind. Sometimes honesty can be incredibly messy.” (The Shack, 2007: 69-70). “I’m not sure, Willie. I guess part of me would like to believe that God would care enough about me ..... .” (The Shack, 2007: 73).

“Mack felt shame reddening his face. He had to admit he had done an awful lot of judging in his time.” (The Shack, 2007: 160).

b. Conversion

According to James (2000: 13), the conversion can transform and unify the person’s life and can bring happiness. Conversion, therefore, may have profound spiritual and psychological importance for the convert, but it is never so complete that permanent bliss results. In The Shack novel, the writer found a big change before happiness. The main character found happily after he met with God. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“The conversations with each of the three, alone and then together, the time with Sophia, the devotion he had been part of, looking at ..... – so much healing with so little spoken. It was hard to take it all in”. “Sophia helped me understand a great deal about Missy yesterday. And it really helped talking to Papa. Uh, i mean, talking to you too.” (The Shack, 2007: 223)

And then, Mack is still able to think what will be said by his family to the current changes. “He knew only that he would never be the same and wondered what these changes would mean for Nan and him the kids, especially Kate.” (The Shack, 2007: 223)

c. Saintliness

Among other features of saintliness, spiritual emotion is the center of personal energy habits that feeling of the ideal power in the world.
1) Asceticism

“The self-surrender may become so passionate as to turn into self-immolation. It may then so over-rule the ordinary inhibitions of the flesh that the saint finds positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism, measuring and expression as they do the degree of his loyalty to the higher power” (James, 1902).

It can be seen in the following quotation, “Mack pulled back and looked Papa in the face. Such pure kindness and love and hope and living joy he had never beheld” (The Shack: 2007).

2) Strength of soul

“The sense of enlargement of life may be so uplifting that personal motives and inhibitions, commonly omnipotent, become too insignificant for notice, and new reaches of patience and fortitude open out” (James, 1902). It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Mack started feeling as if he was being watched, and once he even spun around quickly to see if anyone was there.”(The Shack: 2007)

3) Purity

The shifting of the emotional centre brings with it, first, increase of purity. The sensitiveness to spiritual discords is enhanced, and the cleansing of existence from brutal and sensual elements becomes imperative (James, 1902). It can be seen in the following quotation: “Mack managed a smile as his soul continued to melt and heal in the love of his Father.”(The Shack: 2007).

4) Charity

The shifting of the emotional centre brings, secondly, increase of charity, tenderness for fellow-creatures (James, 1902). It can be seen in the following quotation. “The more you live in the truth, the more your emotions will help you see clearly.”(The Shack: 2007)
d. Mysticism

Many things can be referred to as mystical, but James (2000: 15) uses the term mystical states of consciousness to encompass a spectrum of experiences, from the non-religious to the most religiously profound.

1) Noetic

Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain, and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time (James, 1902).

In *The Shack* novel, there is simple story related to the experience which is can be make as knowledge or it called history. And usually history is a story which is explaining to give lesson. Like Mack tells to his child about history the princess of Multomah. She chooses to die because she wants to save her people at that time, here are:

“The tale centered on a princess, the only child left to her aging father. The two tribes came together to celebrate the days of the wedding feast, but before it could begin, a terrible sickness began to spread among the men, killing many (*The Shack*, 2007: 29). “... an illness that could be stopped only if a pure and innocent daughter of a chief would willingly give up her life for her people (*The Shack*, 2007: 30).”

2) Ineffable

Its quality must be directly experienced, it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect. No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what quality or worth of it consists (James, 1902). She is feeling that she relates with the history told by her father. It can be seen in the following quotation:
“Well, the Great Spirit makes the princess jump off the cliff and makes Jesus die on a cross. That seems pretty mean to me”. “Sweetheart, Jesus didn’t think his Daddy was mean. He thought his Daddy was full love and loved him very much. His Daddy didn’t make him die. Jesus chose to die because he and his Daddy love you and me and everyone in the world. .....”. “Then will God ever ask me to jump off a cliff?”. “No, Missy. ....” (The Shack, 2007: 33-34).

3) Transient

Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory, but when they recur it is recognized, and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance (James, 1902). It can be seen in the following quotation:

“The Great Sadness had descended and in differing degrees cloaked everyone whose life had touched Missy’s. Mack and Nan weathered the storm of loss together with reasonable success, and in some ways they were closer for it. ....... Mack much longer to let himself off the hook, even a little bit” (The Shack, 2007: 66).

4) Passive

This latter peculiarity connects mystical states with certain definite phenomena of secondary or alternative personality, such as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trance (James, 1902).

In this novel, a woman called Sophia tries to show the true story by giving some questions to Mack about God, love, and his childs. However, Mack felt dissapointed with God because he
assumes that God does not really love human. It is related to the
dissapeared his child. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Why? Why did you let this happen? Why did you bring me here? Of all the places to meet you – why here? Wasn’t it enough to kill my baby? Do you have to toy with me too?” (The Shack, 2007: 80). “Mack could feel his jaw involuntarily clench as he listened, and he felt the anger once more begin to rise. What should have been a reassuring commendation seemed more like a bitter pill that .....

e. Religious Belief in God

James (2000: 17) said that, “God is real because he produces real effects”. James recognised that religious feeling precedes arguments, and that philosophy tends to be interested in a philosophical construct, whereas religious experience is concerned more with encounter.

In The Shack novel, when Mack came back to the shack again he met with God. It begins when he awaked from his sleep. He thinks that God really sent a message to meet with him in that place. But, in the first time it is hard for him to believe that he met with God. Because, what he saw just like some kinds of people in the world and their behaviour same as general people. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“...... the door flew open, and he was looking directly into the face of a large, beaming Africa-American woman (The Shack, 2007: 84). “......, a small, distinctively Asian woman emerged from behind her. ..... a third person had emerged from the cabin, this one a man. He appeared Middle Eastern and ..... “ (The Shack, 2007: 86).

So, Mack felt that his meeting with God is very real. This makes it real for Mack to assume that his experience is real,
although sometimes what the thrinity are doing beyond the limit of ordinary people.

2. Discussion

In *The Shack* novel by William P. Young told the real story about Mack as a major character there. The researcher analyzes it using psychology of religion by William James. Psychology of religion has five parts namely healty-mindedness, conversion, saintliness, mysticism, and religious belief in God. The main problem is the nature of happiness that happened by Mack because of lost his child and get the best answer of it.

Mystical experience of the events in the story has many lessons to be taken. The theory brings more detailed explanation in the novel as an example of the theory of James (1902). And then, we can also compare between the theory and the story of religious experience that happened to Mack and his family.

The conflict begins when Mack was young. His father always beats his mother when he drinks. The begginning of the conflict makes Mack try to change his life. Until he successes with his family. However, there is a moment which brings to the great sadness, that is losing his child Missy. He needs a long time to get hers. He does anything to find Missy dead or alive. His tries to fight his fear in order to get a bright spot on his child. He returned to the shack where he found last information for a dress and found spots of blood. That makes him increasingly convinced to keep searching for the presence of Missy. Until at last he gets directions as he wants to meet with Missy and his life change is better since searching and met with God. So, he assume that he has a close relation with God because of his religious experience to get his child. According to Wellek (1948) that subconscious world can be brought into reality.
“But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts, he moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life” (Wellek 1948: 76).

His meeting with God brings a big change. Mack gets closer to God. Mack begins to realize what he has done so far away from God. Regret always come at the end but this is not a regret. It is more a change to be better than ever. After the incident, Mack always thought that he would always miss God. The conclusion shows that finally Mack gets the best result about the presence of Missy. His effort has been paid by God. He found Missy in the last his adventure.

“It took them only a few minutes to find their bittersweet treasure. On a small rock outcropping, Mack saw the body of what he assumed was his Missy; face up, her body covered by a dirty and decaying sheet......” (The Shack (2007): 231-232).

From all something happened brings great lesson to Mack. It means that he felt happy in the last story about The Shack. As for the psychological phenomenon in this novel is when Mack has a process to happiness. Mack suffered the great sadness to bring into his subconscious. That is the end of his meeting with God as real and he becomes conscious of God.

Lowes formally acknowledges that "at the zenith of its power the creative energy is both conscious and unconscious. . . controlling consciously the throng of images which in the reservoir [the "well" of the unconscious] have undergone unconscious metamorphosis" but he scarcely attends to or attempts to define the really purposive and constructive in the creative process (Wellek 1948: 76).

**D. Conclusion**

The researcher has two conclusions in this chapter. First, based on the structural analysis, it can be concluded that in this novel the writer delivers a message that “God is the answer problems of life”. In order to deliver the message, the writer creates the characters and put the characters in a
particular setting, and build the plot in such a way that these elements relate to one another forming and unity.

Second, based on the psychological analysis, it can be concluded that in this novel, the writer illustrates a psychological phenomenon in which an individual should believe that there is always a way out of every problem.

E. References


http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/james/#5 accessed January 12, 2014 8.26 by Russell Goodman <rgoodman@unm.edu>

http://search.proquest.com/docview/201279883/510505E1266541D9PQ/8?
accountid=34598 accessed October 30, 2014 02:17 p.m by Larry Poston


http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nature by © 2014 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated accessed 01/04/2014 8:00 a.m