

**NIHILISM AND ITS DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT ON OBA YOZO
IN *NO LONGER HUMAN* BY OSAMU DAZAI**



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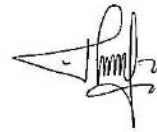
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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji novel berjudul “No Longer Human” dengan menggunakan teori Nihilisme oleh Friedrich Nietzsche. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk 1) menjelaskan Nihilisme dalam pandangan Nietzsche, 2) mendeskripsikan karakterisasi Oba Yozo, 3) mengungkap gagasan nihilisme yang tercermin dalam Oba Yozo, dan 4) menemukan dampak destruktif nihilisme dalam kehidupan Oba Yozo. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara mencatat dan teknik analisis data menggunakan 3 tahap analisis data menurut Miles & Huberman yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Untuk mengetahui keakuratan penelitian ini digunakan triangulasi teori sebagai validitas data. Peneliti menemukan karakterisasi Oba Yozo melalui metode analisis karakter Murphy. Ide nihilisme seperti ketidakamanan, kurangnya ketenangan, malu pada diri sendiri, meniadakan semua makna dalam hidup, dan percaya pada apa-apa terjadi dalam kehidupan Oba Yozo yang menyebabkan beberapa efek destruktif termasuk pecandu alkohol dan narkoba, pelacuran, dan upaya bunuh diri.

Kata kunci: Nihilisme, Nietzsche, No Longer Human

Abstract

This research study about novel entitled “No Longer Human” using theory of Nihilism by Friedrich Nietzsche. This study aims to 1) explain Nihilism in Nietzsche’s view, 2) describe characterization of Oba Yozo, 3) reveal the idea of nihilism as reflected in Oba Yozo, and 4) find the destructive effect of nihilism in Oba Yozo’s life. This research is qualitative research. The data is collected by note-taking and the technique of analyzing data is using 3 stages of data analyze by Miles & Huberman called data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To determine the accuracy of this research, the theory triangulation is used as data validity. The researcher finds the characterization of Oba Yozo through Murphy’s method of analyzing character. The nihilism idea such as insecurity, lack of gaining composure, ashamed of oneself, negate all meaning in life, and believe in nothings is occurred in Oba Yozo’s life which caused some destructive effect includes alcohol and drugs addict, prostitution, and suicidal attempt.

Keywords: Nihilism, Nietzsche, No Longer Human

1.INTRODUCTION

Literature is the expression of anything poured into writing. Literature is an entirely aesthetic or creative textual expression, claims Mario Klarer (2004). The term "literature" may not apply to all written works. According to Mario Klarer (2004), the words "aesthetic" or "artistic" are used to set literary works apart from texts that are used on a regular basis, such

as phone books, newspapers, legal documents, and scholarly literature. In textual studies, Mario Klarer (2004) separated literature into four main genres: fiction, poetry, theater, and film. Novels are a type of fiction writing. A novel, according to Abrams (1981), is a wide range of texts that share solely the characteristic of being lengthy works of fiction published in prose. It has a wider range of characters, a more complicated plot, a more fully realized atmosphere, and a more thorough examination of character and motivation.

Numerous novels have been written in several languages. *No Longer Human* is a novel written by a Japanese writer who is known as the best fiction writer in Japan in the 21st century named Osamu Dazai. Osamu Dazai was born on June 19, 1909 in Kanagi, Japan with the name Shuji Tsushima from the family of the Tsushima clan which was bloody art and full of luxury. He has shown his writing talent since his youth by participating in writing poetry in literary magazines. In his work in the literary world, Shuji makes writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa his role model. Ryunosuke Akutagawa's death by suicide then affects Shuji Tsushima's life. Shuji was in such deep pain that he was trapped in alcohol and prostitution which led to an attempted suicide in 1929 while he was still studying at university. In 1948, he published an autobiographical novel entitled “*No Longer Human*” before taking his own life.

Novels are frequently translated into different languages in order to reach a wider audience because of the limitations of language that people can understand. Translation, according to Hatim and Munday (2004:6), is the process of converting a written text from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). On the other side, translation is a process of replicating the nearest natural equivalent meaning of the receptor language from a source language, according to Nida and Taber (1982: 12). These definitions reveal that a translated novel is one in which the language has been moved from the source language to the target language with an equivalent meaning. Due to the popularity of novel “*No Longer Human*”, it is translated in many other languages including English. The English version of novel “*No Longer Human*” is translated by Donald Lawrence Keene in 1958.

“*No Longer Human*” is a novel that tell story about Oba Yozo, a man that has a gloomy character who likes to pretend to entertain another people but then trapped into alcohol and

prostitution. The novel written in the first person point of view. In this novel, the author focuses on the life story of the main character, Oba Yozo, which is very gloomy and dark. Oba Yozo has no motivation in his life and goes with the flow of life. The main character, Oba Yozo, failed to find the meaning of his existence. The absence of meaning in the main character's life reflects a nihilistic view of life. Nihilism, in the writer's opinion, is a way of looking at life that presumes there are no values and that life has no purpose. According to nihilism, reality is arbitrary, irrational, pointless, valuable, and meaningless. The illusions, myths, and other social and cultural systems that have previously given us safety, hope, and meaning are destroyed by nihilism. Nihilism, according to Nietzsche (1887), is defined as suffer, insecurity, and unwarranted humiliation brought on by a person's own perception that they have done something wrong. According to Nietzsche, nihilism was first encountered by those who had known for a long time that there was nothing in the universe that had any objective worth, meaning, or truth that they sought or believed. Nihilists can be divided into two groups: those who possess the willpower to do so and those who lack it. The former are referred to as "active nihilists," whilst the latter are referred to as "passive nihilists." When faced with nihilism, a person who practices passive nihilism interprets it as a sign that the hunt for meaning has come to an end. In other words, people of this kind are powerless to make anything of their life. Additionally, the active nihilist will invent a new meaning that suits them. Nihilism is often related to the self-destructive behavior. A nihilist often has an impulse to destroy themselves. The inability to accept importance while looking for it in higher goals, unchanging truths, or objective values make it hard to create fresh meaning in this situation; instead, disappointment governs the mind. This situation drives oneself to commit destructiveness to themselves.

The reason why the writer analyzes this novel is because this novel is rarely studied by other writers, thus avoiding plagiarism. Furthermore, the novel "No Longer Human" has an interesting story about human life. Finally, the writer wants to know more about the values of nihilism and its destructives effect on the main character.

Based on the reasons above, the writer decided to examine the main character's characterization, the idea of nihilism in the main character's life, and the destructive effect

of nihilism on the main character's life in the novel *No Longer Human* using the nihilism theory by Frederich Nietzsche. This study also raised the theme of the destructive effect of nihilism on the main character's life. Due to the relation to the main character's struggle of finding the meaning of existence, this study will use existentialism perspective. Furthermore, this study is entitled "**NIHILISM AND ITS DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT ON OBA YOZO IN *NO LONGER HUMAN* BY OSAMU DAZAI.**"

2. METHOD

This research belongs to qualitative research because in analyzing and collecting the data, this research focus on words and expression. Qualitative research is defined as process of understanding social problem using words, reporting the detail view of information conducted in natural setting (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative research uses theory, definition, or symbol as references. The type of data used in this research is text that includes narrative, dialogues and monologues. The data sources of the study is divided into primary and secondary data source. The primary data source of this research is the novel "*No Longer Human*" and the secondary data source are previous studies and other documents related to the study. The technique of collecting data used in this research is note-taking. Note-taking is a technique of writing down the important information needed for the research by reading first the novel "*No Longer Human*". The technique of analyzing data used in this research is interactive analysis from Huberman (1994). Huberman suggests 3 stages that must be done to analyze qualitative research named; 1) Data Reduction, 2) Data Display, and 3) Conclusion Drawing. The data validity used in this research is triangulation technique. In qualitative research, the term "triangulation" refers to the utilization of several techniques or data sources to create a thorough understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). Triangulation has also been considered a qualitative research technique to test validity by comparing data from various sources.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data found by researcher from the novel *No Longer Human* as the main material and use theory of Nihilism in Nietzsche's view, in this section the researcher will answer problem statement that has been formulated in the previous chapter.

3.1 Description of Oba Yozo

Character is one of intrinsic elements in the literary work. According to Abram (1981: 33), the term "character" refers to a person who is represented in narrative or fictional work, who deals with moral, intellectual, and emotional traits. This research focuses in the protagonist, Oba Yozo. According to Harvey (1965: 45–47), the protagonist is a character who experiences challenges that shape his attitudes throughout the narrative. To describe the characterization of Oba Yozo, the researcher use Murphy's nine methods to characterizing a character. Those nine methods includes physical appearance, description from the other character, conversation, past life, reaction, mannerism, direct speech from author, character's speech and character's thought.

First, the description of Oba Yozo seen through his physical appearance that is described by other character. In the beginning of the novel, Oba Yozo was described by someone who found Yozo's note which contains three pictures of Yozo from different phase. The first picture is his childhood. He was described not as an ugly kid, but he had a weird smile that showed freakiness. The second picture is his adolescence phase. Far from the description of his childhood, Oba Yozo mentioned as extremely handsome boy. However, Yozo's pictures still gave the impression of a person who was not belong to a living human being, as the person who found the note states, "*At any rate, he is now extraordinary handsome. But here again the face fails inexplicably to give the impression of belonging to a living human being.*" (No Longer Human, 1958: 4) The third picture describe the appearance of Oba Yozo in his adulthood phase. In the photo Yozo is not smiling and does not have any expression. The photo makes people who see it uncomfortable. A face that lacks personality and is hard to remember.

Seen from his reaction in several situation, Yozo is described as pessimistic one. Oba Yozo is a typical person who will not fight for the things that he likes. It shown in Yozo's statement, "*I wanted to enter an art school, but my father put me into college, intending eventually to make a civil servant out of me. This was the sentence passed on me and I, who have never been able to answer back, dumbly obeyed.*" (No Longer Human, 1958: 38). His reaction when his father pushed him to enter into college for a civil servant proved it. He did not refuse it even he

wanted to enter art school. Not only depicted from one reaction, Yozo's pessimist character also shown in his response when the women he liked was being harassed by other people. Those women are Tsuneko and Yoshiko. Tsuneko is a woman he met in the bar and he got in relationship with her. When his friend, Horiki, tried to kiss Tsuneko, he did nothing for her. This reaction also showed up when Yoriko, Yozo's wife, was harassed by a man in their house, Yozo just watched it and didn't take an action to help Yoshiko.

This novel use first person point of view so the character of Oba Yozo can be seen through his own speech. Yozo is someone who is dishonest to his true-self. He liked to pretend to be someone that he was not. It can be seen from the monologue of Oba Yozo, "*Before anyone realized it, I had become an accomplished clown, a child who never spoke a single truthful word.*" (*No Longer Human*, 1958: 12). Yozo preference to pretending to other is also can be seen through mannerism. This habit was shown since his childhood. When his father asked him what present he wanted, he pretended that he wanted a lion mask to make his father happy even he actually preferred to get a book. Yozo liked to act as a clown to gain affection from people around him because he thought that he is not like the rest of society. He thought that the only way to be received by people is pretending to be clown and make people laugh.

Seen from his past life, Yozo is described as someone who has trauma because he was being corrupted by his maid. As Yozo states, "*Already by that time I had been taught a lamentable thing by the maids and menservants; I was being corrupted*". (*No Longer Human*, 1958: 19). He was also experiencing displeasure when catching his maid being hypocrite to his family. This trigger Yozo's distrust to human being. Yozo explains that this incident of abuse has made him a habit of not telling the truth and has made him felt distrustful of humans. His disbelief was heightened when he found out that his servant was a hypocrite. They act nice in front of their father, but complain behind his back.

In discussing nihilism, Nietzsche classified two form of nihilism; active and passive nihilism. Active nihilism refers to the one who can overcome it. Besides, those who cannot overcome it is experiencing passive nihilism. A passive nihilist is unable to accept importance even when they look for it in higher goals, unchanging realities, or immutable

principles. The passive nihilist is then under the control of "unbelief." It is hard to create fresh meaning in this situation; instead, disappointment governs the mind.

Related to nihilism, some Yozo's characterization is match with a characterization of passive-nihilist such as pessimistic, like to pretend because the feeling of insecurity that make him thought he didn't like the others, and the last is the distrust of human being that he had made him alienated himself without finding better solution.

3.2 The idea of nihilism in Oba Yozo's character

Nietzsche's thoughts are often contained in short and random paragraphs that making it difficult to understand as a whole point. However, there are some characteristics of nihilist according to Nietzsche's thread. According to Nietzsche, nihilism is the recognition of a protracted loss of strength, the agony of "in vain," insecurity, the lack of any options to recover and to regain peace, and the sense of shame in front of oneself, as if one had deluded oneself for a long time (Nietzsche, 1968:12). Nihilist also identic to a person who believe in nothing and negate all meaning in life.

First, Oba Yozo felt insecure about himself. He felt it since his childhood as he states, *"All I feel are the assault of apprehension and terror at the thought that I am the only one who is entirely unlike the rest. It is almost impossible for me to converse with other people. What should I talk about, how should I say it?—I don't know".*(*No Longer Human*, 1958: 12) Nihilism according to Nietzsche is the recognition of insecurity. When a person feels insecure, they are experiencing emotional distress as a result of tension, strain, and conflict, as well as other tension-related symptoms like anxiousness. An insecure person sees the world as a dangerous jungle and believes that most people are treacherous and self-centered, feels abandoned and alone, is fearful and hostile, is generally unhappy and pessimistic, exhibits tension and conflict, tends to withdraw, is troubled by guilt feelings, and is typically neurotic and selfish (Maslow, 1942). Oba Yozo felt that he was not like the rest of people and it was hard for him to blend with others. His insecurity then become the trigger of Yozo's action to people. He liked to pretend and acted like clown to make people accepting him. He was afraid that if people know his true-self, they would hate him. He didn't confident about himself that he hide the things he actually like. Yozo's insecurity not only occurred in his childhood, but

followed him until his adulthood. Before attempting double suicide with Tsuneko, Yozo stopped to visit Tsuneko because he was poorer than Tsuneko. He felt insecure about it. His insecurity also pushed him to leave Shizuko and Shizuko child. Shizuko was a woman who saved Yozo when he was being abandoned to his family. Shizuko made Yozo work as a cartoonist in her publication. They became a family and for a while Yozo's life was normal. He earned money even just a bit and loved by Shizuko and Shizuko's child. But, he still felt insecure because his earning was not as much as Shizuko. Yozo was then tempted by Hoiriki's invitation to return to being an alcoholic. This situation was made worse when Shizuko's daughter told Yozo that she wanted his biological father back. Yozo sank deeper into alcohol addiction and felt unhappy with Shizuko and her child. Yozo then decided to leave the two of them.

Yozo was lack in gaining composure. The notion of lack according to Britannica Dictionary refers to the idea of missing or not having enough of something. So, lacking in gaining composure can be defined as the situation when one missing the chance to feel serenity. Oba Yozo came from honorable family. His father work in government. Yozo also described as a smart student. He had many servants in his house and he never experienced less food because they always served him enough food. However, Yozo states "*I wonder if I have actually been happy. People have told me, really more times than I can remember, ever since I was a small boy, how lucky I was, but I have always felt as if I were suffering in hell.*" (*No Longer Human*, 1958: 10). He didn't feel happy even though people said he was a lucky kid. He even felt unhappy and suffering. That the suffering of his neighbor who lacked food was nothing compared to his suffering.

Another characteristic mentioned by Nietzsche is the feeling of shame because the thought that one has been lying oneself all his life. In the beginning of the novel, Oba Yozo already states that his life is a life of shame, "*Mine has been a life of much shame. I can't even guess myself what it must be to live the life of a human being.*" (*No Longer Human*, 1958: 7). According to Cambridge Dictionary, the notion of ashamed refers to the feeling of embarrassed. So, feeling ashamed of oneself can be defined to the feeling of embarrassed about one own-self. Yozo felt ashamed of himself. He even considered himself unworthy of

being called a human. In the novel, Yozo as a child is depicted as someone who never answering people back because he felt incapable to do an arguments. Whenever someone criticize him, he would accept it. He would feel that he had been wrong in living his life all this time and felt he has been disqualified from the human being. This feeling of shame towards himself arises because of his inability to defend himself. He never refused something even though he didn't like it. He also didn't say what he liked. Shame also haunts him as he felt that one day someone would know his true nature and would tell everyone about his pretense; that he had deceived everyone and lived a life of pretense. Yozo felt that feeling of shame was worse than death. This happened twice, when his schoolmates realized that Yozo's silly behavior was made up and when a young policeman realized Yozo's feigned grief after Tsuneko's death.

A nihilist will not believe in anything. Nietzsche in his book *"The Will to Power"* describes nihilism as the most important values diminish themselves. The goal is lacking; "why?" yields no response (Nietzsche, 1968:2). Nihilism is the rejection of any sense of values or purpose that we may have previously held, including a belief in God. Oba Yozo didn't believe in anything. Oba Yozo was being corrupted by his maid, but he found that there is no point of telling anyone about the harassment that his maid did to him as he states, *"To appeal for help to any human being—I could expect nothing from that expedient. Supposing I complained to my father or my mother, or to the police, the government—I wondered if in the end I would not be argued into silence ,by the excuses of which the world approved". (No Longer Human, 1958: 20)*. He didn't believe in his father, mother police, or even the government. He couldn't ensure that they will not questioning about the truth. Yozo thought that it is useless to complain to people. It showed his distrust in human. It is still related with why he never told anyone about the harassment he get.

Last, a nihilist negate all meaning in life. Nihilism is understood as a view of life which assumes that life is worthless, meaningless and has no purpose. According to the most widely recognized interpretation, nihilism is a conviction that human values are "de-valued" because they lack objective validity. Nothing actually matters if there are no impartial standards. It is match with Oba Yozo's character. Yozo always want to say "nothing" if someone asked him

what he want, because he thinks that there is no different of wanting something. This happened when his father asked him what present he want, but he keep silent because he doesn't really want anything. This attitude of Yozo also occurred in his adulthood. Yozo had a relationship with a woman in the bar named Tsuneko. Yozo felt in love with Tsuneko because he felt safe and thinks that he didn't has to fake his act when being with her. Tsuneko also felt the unhappiness of life like Yozo does. They both then commit a double suicide. Tsuneko died, but Yozo still alive. However, Yozo couldn't really remember Tsuneko's real name. He was not sure about the memory of her even she was the one he loved and the one he committed to do double suicide. Yozo also thought that virtues or despicable traits are simply man-made. It was a standard created by another human being, and cannot be a standard of action for him. At the end of the story, Yozo suffered from a severe drug addiction after Yoshiko's abuse incident. Yozo was finally taken by his family to a strange place and lives with a servant. Later, he was given the news that his father had died. After hearing the news, Yozo really felt that there was no meaning in his life as he states, "*Now I have neither happiness nor unhappiness. Everything passes.*" (*No Longer Human*, 1958: 136). He felt that even his suffering now was meaningless.

3.3 Destructive effect of nihilism

Nihilism life of Oba Yozo give him a negative effect that lend him into several self-destructive behavior. Self-destructive conduct includes various ways of acting inflict harm on oneself. Self-destructive behavior is motivated by estrangement, low self-esteem, and rejection from others. Acts of self-destructiveness are linked to: suicide, irresponsible behavior, and self-injury. Numerous studies have found that a range of self-harming behaviors, such as self-mutilation, smoking, drinking, using drugs, joining violent groups, purposely hurting others, and eating improperly, can all be seen as kinds of self-destructive behavior (Fox & Hawton, 2005) . Nihilism, according to Nietzsche, is associated with feelings of insecurity, difficulty in achieving calm, and feelings of shame about oneself. This has been reflected in Yozo's character and actions, which eventually made him do things that were self-destructive.

After joining an art class, Yozo got to know the world of prostitution, alcohol, pawnshops, and left-wing organizations through his friend Horiki. Yozo felt these things could ward off his misfortune as a human though temporarily. Yozo who always felt that he would never find a feeling of security when he was with prostitutes because he didn't have to pretend or entertaining them.

The nihilism idea of Yozo drove him into attempting suicide. Suicide first used in the 17th century, the word "suicide" derives from the Latin sui (of oneself) and caedere (to kill). Suicide has several definitions. Suicide, according to Merriam Webster, is defined as the deliberate and voluntary taking of one's own life. Suicide is the act of intentionally taking one's own life to resolve an issue in one's life. Oba Yozo commit suicide to solve the problem in his life instead of trying to find a better solution. Yozo suffered after he was assigned to be the leader of a left-wing organization. He no longer attended college or art classes. Coupled with the incident Horiki harassed Tsuneko which made him close again with Tsuneko. Tsuneko expressed her wish to die. Yozo agreed to that after he felt he felt unworthy due to his poverty. Yozo's act of not doing anything when Yoshiko was being abused made him sank into suffering. He felt he had no power to forgive or not forgive Yoshiko. Yozo got stuck again with alcohol and started drawing pornographic cartoons.

Yozo suffered from living together with Yoshiko and their situation becomes awkward. Yozo hoped that someone would take him away from Yoshiko. That's when he started his addiction to drugs at the persuasion of a woman pharmacist. He told Yozo to stop drinking, and instead he gave Yozo a morphine to forget his sadness. Yozo's morphine addiction got worse and his debts increased. He decides to send a letter to his family and explain his desperate situation. This made things worse because his family did not reply to his messages. Yozo decides to try to kill himself again, but then Flatfish and Horiki come and he doesn't commit suicide. They sent Yozo to a mental hospital. That's what made Yozo declared himself a failed human.

Due to Yozo's inability to refuse other people's requests, insecurities, and a sense of shame towards himself, Yozo is trapped in alcohol and drug addiction, prostitution, as well as attempted suicide. As in the findings, Yozo used alcohol and prostitution as a way to ward

off the hardships in his life even though it was temporary. Yozo also felt safe around prostitutes because he doesn't have to pretend to be accepted. Insecurity also drives him to attempt suicide with Tsuneko. His character who didn't do anything for the things he liked, drove him into a more severe alcohol and drug addiction after the incident of his wife's abuse that made him have to go to a mental hospital and then be exiled somewhere by his family. What happened to Oba Yozo is a passive nihilism. Yozo devalue the old meaning but cannot find new meaning in his life that turns him into disappointment of life. This also being the reason of his self-destructive action.

4. CLOSING

Nihilism is a way of living where one sees everything is meaningless. A nihilist will devalue old values in order to make a new values according to what they believe as a truth because they doesn't believe in the values that human has made. However, those who cannot overcome nihilism will not find a new meaning according to them, instead they will be fulfilled by disappointment of life. This what Nietzsche call as passive nihilism, and the same goes for Oba Yozo. He is experiencing passive nihilism that drives him into doing several self-destructiveness.

Oba Yozo experienced three phases of nihilism as a psychological state which started from his childhood. Disappointment towards society, especially the people around him makes Oba Yozo question the meaning of life and makes Yozo lose his sense of purpose in life. Furthermore, Yozo displays a rejection of the domination of a particular group and thought. Where he considers good and evil are standards made by humans themselves. From this, Yozo has concluded that the world does not have the concept of "unity". Finally, Yozo enters the third state where everything in his life becomes meaningless. Everything just passed and there was no reason or purpose for his life.

Nihilism idea occur since Yozo's childhood where he doesn't feel belong to human being. The lack on finding meaning has brought him into suffer. This because the distrust he has to another human being that made him locked his true-self. He likes to pretend and the more he pretend, the more he feel ashamed of himself. Moreover, he never told what he really

want and lead him into more and more suffering. In the end, he kept doing that until he risk himself by doing several self-destructive behavior.

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