

## THE MEANING OF TAKAKI NORIKO'S NICKNAME AS THE DEMON OF TRUTH IN ZETTAI SEIGI BY AKIYOSHI RIKAKO

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### ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative research uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and the structural approach of literature which aims to analyze the connection between the meaning of the nickname and the character portrayal of one of the characters in the novel, namely Takaki Noriko. Results of this study shows that the author through Reika's point of view gives the nickname 'Demon of Truth' to Takaki Noriko to describe her cold, indifferent, and cruel character in her actions when enforcing the law. Takaki Noriko does not care about any norms, as long as it does not violate the law. 'Demon of Truth' as Takaki Noriko's nickname reflects a character who is cold, cruel, and has no tolerance.

**Keywords:** Semiotic, Structural, Characterization, Novel, Mystery

### INTRODUCTION

Zettai Seigi is a novel by Japanese writer Akiyoshi Rikako. In this novel, Akiyoshi Rikako raises the mystery genre about the friendship of five girls. This novel was published in November 2016 and then translated into Indonesian with the title 'Absolute Justice'. This novel tells the story of four girls who were best friends during school. One day Yumiko, Kazuki, Riho, and Reika, had a new student in their class, Takaki Noriko. Takaki Noriko is initially portrayed as a sweet girl who tries to follow all the rules and laws to be a good example and morally acceptable. It turns out that Takaki Noriko has a very rigid attitude toward the truth in the eyes of the law or regulations, slowly Takaki Noriko's obsessions toward the law are increasingly visible. Finally, the other four characters, namely Yumiko, Kazuki, Riho, and Reika, each gave a nickname for Takaki Noriko. Which one of the nicknames is 'Demon of Truth'. Takaki Noriko as one of the characters portrayed in the book, plays an important role as a guide for the storyline. As Nurgiyantoro (2019) explained in his book, a character refers to the person, the actor of the story. Without characters, there would be no actors to enact the story.

There are still relatively few studies that use Zettai Seigi novels as their research objects. A few examples of research using the novel Zettai Seigi as its object, namely the Pengaruh Struktur Kepribadian pada Tokoh Reika dalam Novel Zettai Seigi by Prasetyo (2021) which describes the personality structure of Reika's character and its influence

on the character's self. The results of this study state that Reika's personality structure and its influence are divided into three elements, namely id, ego, and superego which tend to be dominated by Reika's ego.

Second, Konflik Sosial Takaki Noriko dalam Novel Zettai Seigi Karya Akiyoshi Rikako (Kajian Sosiologi Sastra) by Dewi (2021) is a study that approached this novel sociologically. This study reveals that Takaki Noriko's social conflict is a personal conflict which appear from how each individuals have different way of thinking.

Next is Konflik Batin Tokoh Imamura Kazuki dalam Novel Zettai Seigi Karya Akiyoshi Rikako Kajian Psikologi Sastra by Muhammad (2020). This research analyzes the inner conflicts of one of the characters, which is Imamura Kazuki. The results of this research explained that Imamura Kazuki's inner conflicts are formed of approach-avoidance conflict and avoidance-avoidance conflict.

Fourth, Motif Pembunuhan oleh Tokoh Yumiko dalam Novel Zettai Seigi Karya Akiyoshi Rikako by Anisa (2020) focuses on the motive of Yumiko to murder Takaki Noriko. This study shows that the main motive of the murder is that Yumiko felt unsafe while in the presence of Takaki Noriko. The urge to feel safe pushes Yumiko's conscience to murder Takaki Noriko.

Lastly, the research entitled Analisis Perilaku Psikopat Tokoh Takaki Noriko dalam Novel Zettai Seigi Karya Akiyoshi Rikako by Lidya (2019) which results are that the character Takaki Noriko has a psychopathic personality disorder due to her unhappy and constrained childhood. This is reflected in the behavior of Takaki Noriko's character when she succeeds in getting what she wants, she always smiles like she is feeling ecstasy.

Previous researches mostly approach this novel psychologically. Not only that, some of the previous researches also focuses on side character of the novel. This shows that the previous researches are looking at novel as a reflection of society. The researcher feels that not a lot of attention is given to novel as a literature itself, especially the main character Takaki Noriko. The researcher feels the need to study Takaki Noriko semiotically, specifically about the meaning of the nickname given to Takaki Noriko and how the nickname reflects the characterization of Takaki Noriko in the novel.

Nurgiyantoro (2019) explains that novels have parts and elements that are interrelated and interdependent. Reviewing this, the researcher feels that the nickname given by Reika, the 'Demon of Truth', has a connection with the characterization of Takaki Noriko. The nickname 'Demon of Truth' will be analyzed semiotically to find the connection between the meaning of the nickname and the characterization of Takaki Noriko. As one of the elements that make up a literary work, characterization plays an important role. Jones in Nurgiyantoro (2019) states that characterization is a clear description of a person shown in a story. Method used in this research is descriptive qualitative to analyze the topic of the research to deeper length. Descriptive qualitative method focuses on getting to know, learning, analyzing the object of research, which for this research is a novel. Researcher must know the inside and the outside of the novel to get better understanding of it. Then, the data collection process is supported by literature technique and read and note taking technique.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics is a branch of science that discusses signs and all things related to signs. The branch of science was originally developed in two places, namely in Europe and in America with each of its figures who did not know each other. Ferdinand de Saussure is one of the scientists with a linguistic background who developed semiotics in Europe, while in America, the developer is Charles Sander Peirce who has a philosophical background.

Jafar Lantowa, in his book argues that semiotics is the science of signs that have a function to clarify the meaning of a text, especially literary works (Lantowa et al., 2017). Jafar also explained that semiotics comes from the Greek vocabulary, Semeion, which means sign. The researcher concludes that semiotics is a branch of literature that discusses signification, where the sign has a function in clarifying the meaning of a literary work.

Semiotics as a branch of science that deals with signs certainly cannot be separated from meaning, especially the meaning of the sign or everything related to the sign. Roland Barthes (in Lantowa et al., 2017) divides meaning into two parts, namely connotation and denotation. Roland Barthes did not limit how he defined connotation meaning.

Roland Barthes (in Hayati Nurul Khotimah, 2022) states that myths are in the second order of the semiological system, then signs are in the first order in the system and become a marker in the second system. It can be concluded that signs in the linguistic system become signifiers for the mythical system, and the unity between signifier and signified is referred to as "signification". In addition, Barthes also distinguishes the mythical system from the nature of language, then describes the signifier as a form and the signifier as a concept.

This research approaches its object structurally. According to Parmin (2019), structuralism is an approach that serves as a perspective on what will be revealed through literary works, while theory is a knife to dissect the analysis. Parmin also argues that this approach focuses on ways of thinking about the world, especially on responses and descriptions of structures. In this approach, structural analysis is more emphasized considering that literary works have a complex structure that is interrelated, so it must be directed at interpreting the connection between elements.

Teeuw (in Parmin, 2019) stated that the structural approach aims to uncover and explain thoroughly, carefully, in detail, and as deeply as possible about the connection between all elements and aspects of literary works that produce a comprehensive purpose. It can be concluded that literary works must be interpreted as a whole through their elements, namely intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

## METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is grouped into qualitative descriptive research methods. According to Basrowi & Suwandi (2008) Qualitative research methods enable researchers to empathize with subjects and understanding their daily experiences. This approach involves researchers to immerse themselves in the context of the natural phenomena which they study and recognizing the uniqueness of each phenomenon because of its varying contexts. Qualitative research aims to comprehend contextual conditions through detailed and comprehensive descriptions of natural settings, trying to capture the essence of what occurs within the studied field.

Every research activity must always follow a gradual process. The stages of this research use the method proposed by Creswel (2008), the special stages of qualitative research include:

### 1. Problem identification

The researcher must start what is the target of the research, meaning that it concerns the specification of the issue/phenomenon to be studied/researched.

### 2. Literature review

In this section, researchers must look for materials or reading sources related to the phenomenon to be studied, so that researchers must be able to find novelty or advantages of their research with previous research.

### 3. Determining research objectives

Researchers must identify the main purpose of their research.

### 4. Data collection

The researcher must pay attention to selecting and determining potential objects/participants, to reach the participants' ability to be actively involved in the research.

## 5. Data analysis and interpretation

The data that has been obtained by researchers is then analyzed or interpreted to produce new ideas or theories.

## 6. Reporting

Researchers make a report on the results of their research with a description style because it uses qualitative methods so it requires extensive description in the report and must position the reader as if he were a person involved in the research (Sugiarto, 2015).

Material objects are concrete elements that are the focus of analysis in research. Material objects include real objects, events, or entities that can be physically observed, measured, or analyzed. In this research, the material object that becomes the source of research data is a mystery genre novel by Japanese writer Akiyoshi Rikako published in November 2016, namely the novel *Zettai Seigi*.

The data collection technique used is a literature study. A literature study is a data collection technique by collecting data sources from research reports, scientific books, journals, articles, and also websites related to research.

Sugiyono (2016) argues that data collection techniques are the most strategic step in research because the main purpose of research is to get data. Without knowing the data collection technique, the researcher will not get data that meets the specified data standards.

Data collection techniques are the most important step in research. The techniques used by researchers in data collection are the reading and note-taking technique and the literature technique.

### 1. Literature technique.

Sukmadinata (2010) explains that the literature technique is an activity that tries to examine the theories supporting the research, both theories that are related to the field of science under study and methodology. The data that are used in literature study is empirical therefore data studies from previous research could be used as a reference. In this case, the study utilizing the literature technique involves selecting a book to serve as a theoretical basis to conclude the research findings.

### 2. Read and note-taking technique

According to Sudaryanto (in Faruk, 2012) read and note-taking technique is a technique that is used to conclude the facts that exist in the research problem. The steps this technique carried out are:

- a. Reading the research object, which is *Zettai Seigi* Novel by Akiyoshi Rikako
- b. Studying the interference book and doing data processing.
- c. Using primary and secondary data.

Through these techniques, researcher can collect various relevant data in the process of preparing the report. Starting from the literature study in finding supporting theories that can be used by researcher to support all claims and opinions that researcher presents in this study. Then the read and note-taking technique will be used in the process of collecting data from the researcher's material object, namely the novel *Zettai Seigi* by Akiyoshi Rikako.

The analysis technique is a way and stage carried out in processing the data that has been obtained in the data collection process. During the data analysis process, accuracy is something that must be prioritized to reach an acceptable conclusion. Sugiyono (in Fairus, 2020) states that data analysis is a process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation, by organizing data into categories,



breaking it down into units, synthesizing, compiling into patterns, selecting important ones and those to be studied, and making conclusions, so that they are easily understood by oneself or others.

The data analysis technique that will be used in this research is the interactive data analysis model from Miles and Huberman. According to Miles & Huberman (in Hardani, 2020), there are three types of activities in data analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions.

### DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of research on Takaki Noriko's character in the novel Zettai Seigi by Akiyoshi Rikako are presented. The data is explained based on the sample studied to fulfill the purpose of this research. The approach to the sample is based on Roland Barthes's semiotic theory which focuses on the aspects of denotation, connotation, and ideology. The collected data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Interpretation

Denotation	Connotation	Ideology	Data
Cruel	The Demon of Truth	A person who takes refuge behind the truth to commit cruel acts	「産みたくないのであれば、おろすしかないんじゃない？」範子が静かに言った。(222:16)
			けれども範子がそう発言したことが意外で、驚いた。(223:1)
			「相手は同い年、そして未婚だったんでしょう？ だったら別に、法律を犯したわけでも何でもないもの。堂々とむねを張っていればいいのよ」(223:8)
			そのたびに範子に泣きつくと「悪いなんて思う必要はないの。ちゃんと法にのっとったことをしただけなんだから」と言い聞かせてくれた。(224:4)

			「罪と言っても民法上のことだし、もちろん刑法上の犯罪ではない。けれど、不法行為であることにはまちがいないわ」(237:8)
			「だから、昔から何度も言ってるじゃない。中絶は違法じゃないでしょう。罪じゃないのよ」(237:16)
			そういう基準だったの？ 範子のものさしでは、胎児の尊い命が失われようが、合法でありさえすれば関係ないということ？(238:3)
			中絶は罪ではない。麗香は悪いことをしていない。罪悪感を抱く必要はない... (238:7)
			「わたしが税務署に告発するから」にたり、と範子が笑った。(240:11)
			「わたしは正しいことをしているだけよ。それなのに、どうして怒るの？ おかしいのは麗香でしょう？」(241:16)

As stated by Roland Barthes in his theory of semiotics, the nickname 'Demon of Truth' given by the character Reika is considered a connotation meaning, where the denotation meaning of the nickname is 'cruel' in upholding the truth. Then, based on the data found, the nickname 'Demon of Truth' can be interpreted as someone who takes refuge behind the truth to commit cruel acts, ideologically. The actions of Takaki Noriko's character who is 'cruel' in upholding the truth, namely:

1. Heartless

The first data quote, "「産みたくないのであれば、おろすしかないんじゃない？」範子が静かに言った。" found on page 222 line 16, can be translated as "'If you don't want to give birth to it, there's no other way but to abort it,' Noriko said calmly." This quote depicts Takaki Noriko's character who is cold and does not show much

expression when she is asked for advice by Reika, who became pregnant during high school. Using Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book as a reference, it can be concluded that the author portrays Takaki Noriko's character through one of the dramatic techniques, which is the conversation technique.

The characterization of Takaki Noriko is reinforced by Reika's reaction, "けれども範子がそう発言したことが意外で、驚いた。" The second quote on page 223 line 1 translates to "But she was surprised, not expecting Noriko to say that." The second quotation again depicts Takaki Noriko's cold and indifferent character. Reika had already intended to terminate her pregnancy, but she didn't expect Takaki Noriko to just agree and easily advise her to terminate her pregnancy. From the explanation of Nurgiyantoro (2019) in his book about character portrayal, it can be concluded that this quote portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the technique of other character reactions.

"中絶は罪ではない。麗香は悪いことをしていない。罪悪感を抱く必要はない..." the eighth quote found on page 238 line 7 is a fragment of Reika's inner voice which translates to "Abortion is not a crime. Reika didn't do anything bad. There's no need to feel guilty." This quote again depicts Takaki Noriko's heartless, cruel, and indifferent character. The author reaffirms through Reika's inner voice the meaning of Takaki Noriko's words. Takaki Noriko feels that if the law allows something, then no matter how bad it is in the eyes of others, it is permissible, not a 'sin'. Referencing Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book, it can be concluded this quote portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the conversation technique.

## 2. Law-abiding

The third data quote, "「相手は同い年、そして未婚だったんでしょ？ だったら別に、法律を犯したわけでも何でもないもの。堂々とむねを張ってればいいのよ」" on page 223 line 8 translates to "Your partner is the same age and not married, right? Then it's not against the law or anything. You can puff out your chest." Based on Reika's point of view, this quote paints Takaki Noriko as someone who can support her friend in difficult times. However, Reika doesn't realize that Takaki Noriko is saying this because she's only upholding the law legally. Based on Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book, it can be concluded that this quote portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the conversation technique.

The fourth data on page 224 line 4, "そのたびに範子に泣きつくと「悪いなんて思う必要はないの。ちゃんと法にのっとったことをしたんだから」と言い聞かせかてくれた。" translates to "However, every time it happened and she cried to complain to Noriko, Noriko would say, 'You don't have to feel guilty. You did everything according to the law.'" In this excerpt, through Takaki Noriko's reaction, the author reiterates that Takaki Noriko is not trying to support her friend, but is simply trying to do everything according to the law. In this part of the novel, Reika does not yet realize the true meaning and purpose of Takaki Noriko's words. From the explanation of Nurgiyantoro (2019) about character portrayal in his book, it can be concluded that this quote portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the expository technique which is a description from the author and conversation technique.

The sixth quote on page 237 line 16, "「だから、昔から何度も言ってるじゃない。中絶は違法じゃないでしょう。罪じゃないのよ」" translates to "That's why I told you so many times, right? Abortion is not against the law in Japan. It's not a crime." This quote emphasizes the character of Takaki Noriko who only tries to uphold the truth of the law legally. Takaki Noriko explains that no matter how bad abortion is morally, as long as it's not against the law, it's perfectly acceptable and Takaki Noriko would support it. Using Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book as a reference, it can be concluded that the author portrays Takaki Noriko's character through one of the dramatic techniques, which is the conversation technique.

## 3. No tolerance

"「罪と言っても民法上のことだし、もちろん刑法上の犯罪ではない。けれど、不法行為であることにはまちがいなわ」", the fifth quote located on page 237 line 8, translates to "Even if I call it a sin, I mean it's a violation of the Civil Code, certainly not a criminal act as stated in the Criminal Law. But, there's no mistaking it, it's

an unlawful act." Through her dialog, Takaki Noriko's character blatantly explains that she only focuses on the legal righteousness of the law. Takaki Noriko reiterates the meaning of the word "sin" that she uses. She emphasized that the meaning of 'sin' is an act that violates the law and cannot be justified, no matter how small. Referencing Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book, it can be concluded that the author portrays Takaki Noriko's character through one of the dramatic techniques, which is the conversation technique.

The following quote, "そういう基準だったの？ 範子のもものさしでは、胎児の尊い命が失われようが、合法でありさえすれば関係ないということ？" is the seventh quote found on page 238 line 3. This quote is Reika's inner voice which translates to "So that's the basis? In Noriko's rules, as long as it's not against the law, it's okay to kill an innocent fetus?" Reika begins to understand what Takaki Noriko meant when she was in high school. This quote emphasizes Takaki Noriko's character who is cruel, heartless, and indifferent to norms or the feelings of others. The most important thing is that it is legal and lawful. Using Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book as a reference, it can be concluded that the author portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the stream-of-consciousness technique of Reika's thoughts.

The ninth quote on page 240, line 11, "「わたしが税務署に告発するから」にたり、と範子が笑った。" is Takaki Noriko's dialog that translates to "'Because I'm going to report it to the taxman.' Noriko laughed crisply." This quote depicts Takaki Noriko's character who seems to be evil without any tolerance. Takaki Noriko is willing to ruin her friend's good name, just because of a trivial violation of the law, namely not reporting the donation tax on the money received by Reika. However, Reika's character did not consider it a donation because the money was a gift from her mistress. Based on Nurgiyantoro's (2019) book, it can be concluded that this quote portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the conversation technique.

The tenth quotation data found on page 241 line 16, namely "わたしは正しいことをしているけだよ。それなのに、どうして怒るの？ おかしいのは麗香でしょう？" is Takaki Noriko's dialog which translates to "I was just doing the right thing. Even so, why are you angry? It's Reika who's weird, right?" This quote depicts Takaki Noriko's cruel and intolerant character. No matter how bad what happened to her friend, Takaki Noriko's character will only focus on the legal truth, if something is not right then she will justify it legally. From the explanation of Nurgiyantoro (2019) in his book about character portrayal, it can be concluded that this quote portrays Takaki Noriko's character through the technique of conversation.

Based on the data quoted above, the nickname 'Demon of Truth' given by Reika to Takaki Noriko aims to illustrate that Takaki Noriko is someone who is like a devil in upholding legal truth. Takaki Noriko does not care about social, religious, or other norms, as long as it does not violate Japanese law, such as abortion, then it is allowed and not a 'sin'. However, if the act violates the law even slightly, such as lying, Takaki Noriko, like a demon, will do everything in her power to punish the person, no matter the consequences.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The results of this study show that the nickname 'Demon of Truth' given by Reika to Takaki Noriko has the purpose of describing Takaki Noriko's cold, indifferent, cruel, and intolerant character through the denotation, connotation, and ideological meanings of the nickname, following Roland Barthes theory of semiotics. As Nurgiyantoro (2019) explained in his book, this can be seen from the interaction between Reika and Takaki Noriko and the author's narration in describing Takaki Noriko's character. The interaction between Reika and Takaki Noriko is in the form of dialog and character reactions.

This study only focuses on the meaning of the nickname and its connection with the characterization of Takaki Noriko in the novel *Zettai Seigi* by Akiyoshi Rikako. Future research is suggested to examine the connection between the meaning of Gentian flowers and Takaki Noriko's view of justice semiotically.



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