

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Human personality and character are diverse and complex. When appearing in front of others, people tend to present their best selves and conceal their darker aspects. According to Murphy (2024), humans present themselves in ways that are acceptable to observers. They may want to be friendly, polite, and smile to be accepted and liked by others. However, their feelings may be hurt, and they only put on a happy face to hide their actual pain. They may also have strong ambitions that are unacceptable in society, such as selfishness, greed, or cunning. According to Setiawan et al. (2022), individuals push themselves to a certain limit, where there is an element of pretense or falsehood in their appearance, because they want to present their best side at work. Behind the smiles etched on their faces, they may hide disappointment, sadness, anger, or even hatred, such as a presenter who always smiles when appearing on screen or on stage, or an idol who always looks cheerful in front of his fans. Even though they feel pain or anger, they must always present themselves to the wider public as looking good.

Human character is revealed in various ways. When someone displays their personality in public, they try to show their best side while hiding their dark side. According to Stein (2019), the human character typically presented to the social world is called a persona, while the human character or personality hidden or

suppressed is called the shadow. Moreover, when these two personalities clash, it can cause mental turmoil. As Stein (2019) notes, the conflict between the persona and the shadow can be seen as a crisis of individuation. The conflict between these two personalities can arise from external or internal social pressures. As Stein states, this can lead to depression, mental disorders, or excessive fear.

For instance, one case involves actor Kim Soo-hyun, who is currently a hot topic in the South Korean entertainment industry. According to Tempo (2025), Kim Soo-hyun is a South Korean actor under the agency GOLDMEDALIST and is reportedly the highest-paid actor in South Korea. He is not only famous for his acting but also for his work as a product model. According to MyDramaList (2025), Kim Soo-hyun has been dubbed the “Product Endorsement King” by various media outlets, earning the honorable title of “CF King” with an astonishing 35 advertisements in one year and becoming the face of 17 diverse products. This proves his positive image among both the media and fans. However, Kim Soo-hyun’s public image has recently been damaged by a controversial dating scandal involving the late actress Kim Sae-ron, who was still a minor at the time of their alleged relationship. Although Kim Soo-hyun denied these allegations in a press conference, more evidence has continued to emerge. According to Ardian (2025), on March 10, 2025, the late Kim Sae Ron’s aunt revealed that Kim Soo Hyun had been in a special relationship with the late actress since he was 15, through the Garosero Research Institute YouTube channel. Through the YouTube channel, it is suspected that Kim Sae-ron’s tragic death was related to her previous relationship with Kim Soo-hyun. An actor who usually appears friendly, cheerful, and kind in

front of the media and fans turns out to have a dark, difficult-to-imagine side. It appears this case illustrates the existence of a persona and a shadow associated with the Korean actor Kim Soo Hyun. This persona is characterized by an image of an actor who presents a cheerful, kind persona to the media and fans.

On the other hand, the shadow depicts evil traits and uncontrollable lust. This is evidenced by the news about the scandal of dating an underage girl, which also resulted in the victim's death. Due to the acceptance of these two personalities, actor Kim Soo Hyun is reportedly experiencing mental health problems. According to TOI Entertainment Desk (2025), sources close to Kim Soo Hyun have revealed that the actor is experiencing extreme psychological stress due to his current scandal. This demonstrates the rejection of two sides of the actor's personality: one that strives to maintain a healthy image and the other that tries to remain hidden.

The persona and the shadow are human personalities that are important to know. According to Jung (1968), the persona is the face we show to the world, and the shadow is the face we never show. Understanding the persona and the shadow helps us to know the deepest side of our character and the dark side more deeply, although it is risky to face it alone. According to Jung (1968), if we can see our shadow and are willing to risk knowing it, then a small part of the problem will be solved; at least we will have brought out the personal subconscious. Knowing the persona and the shadow will make it easier to understand someone's personality and character.

Personas and shadows can also be found in literary works, such as novels. In many novels, the main characters show their strong, positive side (persona) while

harboring a weak or negative side, reflected in the shadow. One example of the concept of persona and shadow is in the novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. According to Kurniawati (2015), in this novel, Dr. Jekyll is a prominent and famous London scientist known for his dinner parties, his excellent education, and the respect he commands from everyone he knows. At the same time, Mr. Hyde is another figure of Dr. Jekyll, who appears after drinking a magic potion. Mr. Hyde is a dark, evil, and cruel figure. Dr. Jekyll represents the persona he wears to interact with the outside world, while Mr. Hyde embodies all the shadows of forbidden desires, lusts, and repressed cruelty.

Rebecca F. Kuang is an American novelist who has published many fiction novels. One of her most famous works is *Yellowface* (2023), which explores cultural appropriation in literature. In this novel, Kuang reveals the psychology of the main character, June Hayward, who displays a strong persona and shadow, a white writer who feels marginalized in the literary world. After her best friend, Athena Liu, a successful writer of Asian descent, dies suddenly, June steals Athena's manuscript and publishes it under her name. June tries to be accepted in the literary world, adopting an identity that is considered "desirable" and trying to fit into the expectations and stereotypes of others. On the other hand, she often struggles with her dark side, such as dishonesty, unethical ambition, and racial issues.

Based on the above-mentioned justification, the writer is interested in analyzing the persona and shadow in the novel *Yellowface* (2023) by Rebecca F. Kuang. This is because this novel is exciting in terms of story and characterization.

Combining psychological and social elements, Kuang creates a colorful and engaging narrative, making *Yellowface* (2023) one of the top 10 Audiobooks of the Year, 100 Must Read Books of 2023, and Amazon's Best Book of the Year. The writer became interested in researching the story after discovering that the main character displays personas and shadows, and how the character navigates these personas. In addition, the writer found evidence of persona and shadow actions in everyday life, as reflected in news coverage of the case of South Korean actor Kim Soo-hyun, and of personas and shadows in literary works. In order to gather proof that personas and shadows exist in the novel, the writer used Carl Gustav Jung's archetype theory. Thus, this thesis is titled "June's Persona and Shadow in the Novel *Yellowface* by Rebecca F. Kuang."

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

The study analyzes the following questions:

1. How are the personas and shadows of the main character depicted in the *Yellowface* novel by Rebecca F. Kuang?
2. What are the effects of the persona and shadow on the main character in the *Yellowface* novel by Rebecca F. Kuang?

## **1.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The scope of this research is literature, specifically focusing on the novel *Yellowface* (2023) by Rebecca F. Kuang. This research focuses on the issues of persona and shadow of the main character in the novel *Yellowface*. June Hayward,

a white writer who strives to meet societal expectations and maintain her professional image while hiding her dark side, provides a rich and relevant context for exploring personality issues, particularly those of persona and shadow. To analyze the object of this research, the writer uses Carl Gustav Jung's Archetype theory (1968) because it relates to the issues found in the novel.

#### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

Based on the statements of the problem above, the objectives of this study are:

- 1) To describe the persona and shadow of the main character in the *Yellowface* novel by Rebecca F. Kuang.
- 2) To expose the impacts of persona and shadow on the main character in the *Yellowface* novel by Rebecca F. Kuang.

#### **1.5 Functions of the Study**

This research is expected to be useful both theoretically and practically for academics, scientific studies, and society.

- a) Theoretically, this research aims to improve our understanding of persona and shadow, specifically in Rebecca F. Kuang's *Yellowface*. The study also offers insight into the issues of persona and shadow that the main character, June Hayward, experiences and is impacted by.
- b) Practically, research aims to help readers and the public gain insight into their psyches and better understand their motivations, fears, and desires.

Individuals can strive for a more balanced and authentic way of life by recognizing and integrating aspects of their persona and shadow self.

## **1.6 Systematical Presentation**

This study consists of five chapters. The introduction is covered in Chapter 1. It comprises the following: background of the study, statement of the problem, scope and limitations of the study, objectives of the study, function of the study, and systematic presentation. Chapter 2 includes related studies, a literature review, and a theoretical framework. In this chapter, the writer describes previous studies related to the research, explains theories from the literature, and addresses specific matters regarding persona and shadow within the theoretical framework. The research methodology is covered in Chapter 3. The study's approach, data source, data collection, and data analysis were included. Chapter 4 presents the findings and discussion. This chapter addresses the central questions posed in Chapter 1, providing evidence of the issues studied, particularly the persona and shadow of the main character, and their impact on the main character. The evidence found is supported by the theory used, namely Carl Jung's Archetype Theory. Chapter 5 contains conclusions and suggestions. The conclusion summarizes the results of the research and analysis conducted in Chapter 4, including answers to the research questions raised in Chapter 1. Suggestions contain the writer's ideas and recommendations for future writers who wish to pursue the same research topic.