

Persona Used by the Characters in Novel *The Balance Project* by Susie Orman Schnall

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Abstract. The story of *The Balance Project* is a novel written by Susie Orman Schnall about the efforts of the characters to show the world about how to balance between work and life because they involve in the industry campaigning the slogan. However in fact, they still struggle to balance it. This novel shows the persona used by the characters to cover their real self to the world. The purpose of this study is to dissect the literary psychology of the characters in the novel *The Balance Project* by using the persona theory which is one of the four concepts of the structure of the collective unconscious in the human soul which includes persona, anima-animus, shadow, and self. The method used is descriptive qualitative using a literary psychology approach with the persona theory proposed by Carl Jung as a reference. The data collection techniques used are library research techniques and note-taking studies. The results of this study refer to the analysis of persona theory in the novel which includes two sources of persona, persona development, persona transformation, and persona integration process. In order to hide their real self, the characters use persona to show the world that they are good with balancing work and life. The characters use persona because they must meet the expectation from the society and their own ambition. The persona then develop and transform to meet it but eventually they will find the integration of persona and shadow when they have been able to accept themselves over their persona.

Keywords – Persona, Psychology, Novel

1 Introduction

The Balance Project is a novel created by Susie Orman Schnall about a loyal assistant Lucy Cooper who works for Katherine Whitney, who has a big company, a successful husband, and two adorable daughters. With the release of her book on work-life balance, Katherine becomes a hero to working women everywhere although actually her life starts to fall apart. Katherine says “I don’t know why I wrote a book about balance. I am the worst at balance. (Schnall, 2015, p.110) [1] his quote shows how Katherine uses persona to cover her weakness by pretending that she can balance her life while actually she cannot. Meanwhile Lucy herself sometimes also uses persona in her workplace or in front of her boyfriend, Nick. She uses persona for several reasons such as for getting a good resume when she can work for at least one year, although actually she is interested in working in digital media rather than working as a personal assistant. The other character, Theo, is Katherine’s husband. He cheats on Katherine and tries to cover it by pretending that he is loyal to his wife.

This research aims to find out about persona used by the characters in the novel by using psychology of literature influenced by psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung's persona as one of the collective unconscious consisting of persona, shadow, anima/animus and self (Stein, 2010, p.24) [2]. Stein (2010, p.103)[2] further explains about the meaning of persona as person-as-presented, not the person-as-real. The persona is a psychological and social construct adopted for a specific purpose. Jung was interested in how people come to play particular roles, adopt a conventional collective attitude and represent social and cultural stereotypes rather than assuming and living their own uniqueness. It is a kind of mimicry. There are four materials in persona: the two sources of persona, persona development, the persona's transformations and integrating persona and shadow.

2. Research Method

The object of the research is the novel "The Balance Project" written by Susie Orman Schnell. The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research meaning a research that describes the object of a research based on the facts appearing or as it is (Nawawi and Martini, 1996, p.73) [3]. Descriptive qualitative research tries to describe all of the existing symptoms or conditions, namely the state of the symptoms according to what existed at the time the research was conducted (Mukhtar, 2013, p.28) [4]. It consists of the stages of description, reduction, and selection. The research phase begins by observing the depiction of the characters and problems raised in the novel, continued by reducing the information obtained from the description stage and focusing on the problems raised in the theme, then ending it by connecting the data obtained with the theory used (Sugiyono, 2018, p.213) [5]

The approach in this study uses psychology of literature based on one of the collective unconscious in the human psyche including persona, anima-animus, shadow, and self, namely the theory of the persona. According to Stein (2010, p.103), persona is person-as-presented, not the person-as-real. Persona is a construction of social and psychology adopted for a particular purpose. Persona mediates between the inner and outer world, between the impressions generated by the unconscious and the stimuli of the external world (Singer, 1994, p.159-164) [6]. There are four materials in persona that will be discussed in the analysis: the two sources of persona, persona development, the persona's transformations and integrating persona and shadow.

3. Research results

The research of psychology of literature to discuss the research object of "The Balance Project" uses one of the collective unconscious of Carl Jung's theory of psychology including the two sources of persona, persona development, the persona's transformations and integrating persona and shadow. It analyzes the persona of the characters in the novel named Katherine Whitney and her husband, Theo and Lucy Cooper and her boyfriend, Nick.

3.1. Two sources of persona

Jung found two sources of the persona: "In accordance with social conditions and requirements, the social character is oriented on the one hand by the expectations and demands of society, and

on the other by the social aims and aspirations of the individual.”. The first, the expectations and demands of the milieu, includes such requirements as being a certain kind of person, behaving appropriately according to the social mores of the group, and often believing in certain propositions about the nature of reality (such as consenting to religious teachings). The second source includes the individual’s social ambitions (Stein, 2010, p.106)[2]. The characters (Katherine, Lucy, Nick and Theo) in the novel show some personas in their daily life because they have to meet their ambition to the expectation of their job or the people around them with their own aspirations. Here is the analysis about the two sources of persona on the characters of the novel :

Table 1. analysis about the two sources of persona on the characters of the novel.

Characters	Expectations and Demands of the society	Social aims and aspirations of the individual
Katherine	<p>Katherine Whitney is famous for his books about work-life balance. She is invited by many talk shows to talk about it.</p> <p>“So your bestselling book, The Balance Project, is celebrating its six-month anniversary today,” Matt says. (Schnall, 2015, p.4) [1]</p> <p>Because she is the writer of the book, so the readers expect her to be the be the role model of a balanced life.</p>	<p>In fact, Katherine still struggles to balance her life. Besides being a writer, she runs a multibillion-dollar company, a wife and a mother of two. She finds it difficult to handle all of them at once.</p> <p>Kath says, “...I am the worst on balance. The worst. I just can’t handle everything on my plate right now...”(Schnall, 2015, p.110) [1]</p> <p>From the quotation, although Kath faces some difficulties to balance her life, but because she writes the opposite, therefore people want to see her just like what she has written on her book.</p>
Lucy	<p>Lucy Cooper is Katherine Whitney’s assistant. Since she was in college, she has always wanted to work on websites. However when she applies to Katherine’s company, Green Goddess & Company, she is offered the job as Katherine’s assistant. She decides to take it because working in the big company like Green Goddess & Company may open many opportunities for her in the future. She then calls Emma, the HR of the company.</p>	<p>However, although the company offers her with paycheck and benefits when she is in terrible condition, she still wants to work in digital media.</p> <p>“I hope you don’t think me ungrateful. I realize it was a solid job offer with a paycheck and benefits in a terrible economy, but I was young. Right out of college. I had a digital dream. You can’t blame a girl with a digital dream. (Schnall, 2015, p.16) [11]</p>

	<p>....”This is Lucy Cooper. Thank you so much for the opportunity. I’ll take it.” (Shnall, 2015, p.17) [1]</p>	
Theo	<p>Theo is Katherine’s husband. Her book’s popularity makes the people think that Kath also has a happy family. One of the example is when Kath and Theo celebrate their wedding anniversary.</p> <p>Theo says, “.....Good news is we can celebrate our anniversary properly after all. I booked us the weekend at Glenmere Mansion.” (Schnall, 2015, p. 58) [1]</p>	<p>Kath does not know that Theo cheats on her with a red hair woman. Accidentally, Lucy sees it when she is asked by Kath to get her shoes from her apartment.</p> <p>Shit! Shit! My brain explodes. I stare at Katherine’s bed and the lively business going on within it ,,,,,(Schnall, 2015, p.101) [1]</p> <p>Theo begs Lucy to keep his affair as a secret to Katherine because he wants to tell her himself.</p>
Lucy	<p>Because of her acknowledgement about Theo’s affair, Lucy decides to protect her superior’s reputation by agreeing with Theo for not telling Katherine the truth which can ruin their marriage and reputation.</p> <p>“I just think – She just doesn’t need this right now, Theo. This would kill her...”(Schnall, 2015, p.104) [1]</p> <p>When she gets back to the office, Lucy tries to keep her expression even.</p>	<p>When Lucy is disappointed to Katherine about Katherine breaking her promise to get Lucy a better job in digital media in her company, Lucy wants to tell Katherine about Theo’s cheating</p> <p>....It’ll give me a chance to see Theo and Katherine together and maybe give me a chance to get Theo alone and tell him that I’m planning on telling Katherine about Red (Schnall, 2015, p.148) [1]</p>
Lucy	<p>Lucy has a boyfriend named Nick who has been in a relationship with her for about eight years. Lucy’s mother encourages them to get married soon and Nick also has mentioned about it several times but Lucy thinks they are still young and building their careers.</p> <p>....We’re enjoying our twenties. We’re building our careers. And we’re both good with that situation. At least I am...(Schnall, 2015, p.39) [1]</p>	<p>However when eventually Nick proposes her, Lucy says that she is not ready yet. It makes Nick so upset and decides to break with her for a while. Lucy is afraid about marriage because her parents used to have a terrible marriage before getting divorced</p> <p>“You know the marriage thing is not easy for me, “ I say (Schnall, 2015, p.45) [1]</p>

3.2. Persona Development

Persona development relates to the conflict in the ego between individuation or separation and social conformity which generates a good deal of the ego's basic anxiety. Someone wants to be free, unique and individual while also being accepted and liked by others and accommodating their needs and wishes. The ego does not deliberately choose to identify with a particular persona. People find themselves in milieus in which they have to survive, and most do their best to make their way ahead. One of the potential pitfalls of persona is over-identification with the persona. The individual becomes unduly concerned with pleasing and adapting to the social world and comes to believe that this constructed image is all there is to the personality (Stein, 2010, p.109) [2]

Because of the persona being worn by several characters in the novel, all of them do some pleasing things to assure the people that the persona worn by them is the truth. Before working with Katherine, Lucy works for Richie Cunningham, the CFO of Green Goddess. The work is boring and Richie is moody and mean to Lucy. However Lucy decides to keep his job for at least a year so that she can get a good resume when she works in the other place. As a consequence, Lucy has to bear it by obeying Richie's commands. ...I had a good attitude I did whatever Richie Cunningham asked me to do. I answers his phones politely, I fetched his turkey sandwiches on white extra mustard and coleslaw...(Schnall, 2015, p.17) [1]

When working with Katherine, Lucy is always busy and almost has no time for herself or her boyfriend. Sometimes Lucy also has to work at the weekend when Kath has some interviews to do or when Katherine asks Lucy to take care of her children when she has a date with her husband. Sometimes Lucy suddenly has to cancel her date with Nick because of her job.

"Oh, Lucy?"

"Yes?" I turn back to Katherine

"I'm going to need your help this weekend. []. The shoot and interview will be in my apartment from eight to five tomorrow, and we might have to do more on Sunday....". (Schnall, 2015, p.62) [1]

One day Lucy decides to tell Katherine that she wants to move to digital media department because her application is finally accepted. Katherine is sad that Lucy is going to leave her because Lucy is an assistant that she can rely on. Katherine lies to her by saying that it is selfish not to let her move so she offers to help Lucy by calling Joan and Ash in the digital media department that Katherine has given her permission to let Lucy join them. Although actually Katherine never tells the digital media department about it."I am devastated to think of not having you here. But that's totally selfish, and I respect the fact that you want to go in a different direction. What do you need me to do?" (Schnall, 2015, p.132) [1]

Some descriptions above show the efforts done by the characters to assure the people around them by pleasing them. The persona used by them develops their persona because they want to fulfill their needs and wishes while being accepted and liked by the others. They consider this as a way to survive because they still want to keep everything as it is although actually they want something else.

3.3. Persona's Transformations

The persona's transformation means that the persona can be and is modified many times in the course of a lifetime, depending on the ego's perception of the changed environment and its ability to interact with it. The competent ego meets each of these adaptational challenges with appropriate alterations in self-concept and persona self-presentation. People think differently of themselves, dress differently, cut their hair differently, buy different cars and houses depending on their age, marital status, economic and social class, and peer-group preferences. All of this is reflected in persona changes (Stein, 2010, p.111) [2]

The motivators of having persona are shame and guilty. The persona protects one from shame and the avoidance of shame is probably the strongest motive for developing and holding on to persona. Ruth Benedict's writings on shame and guilt cultures show that shame culture emphasizes persona more than do guilt cultures. Loss of face is the ultimate crisis. On the other hand guilt can be assuaged or redressed: the guilty people can pay the price and be restored in community (Stein, 2010, p.112) [2]. The explanations below are the examples of shame and guilty which transform the persona of the characters.

That day Katherine is going to be interviewed by People magazine. She tries to show the interviewers that her family looks perfect by holding a family photo with her husband and two children. However the preparation does not go smoothly. The dress that is supposed to wear is not delivered and the children refuse to change their clothes. Lucy tries to help her as best as she can, however Katherine is panicking and keeps being angry to Lucy by saying mean words quietly. Although the interviewers sense something wrong with Katherine's rude behavior, but everyone pretends that everything is normal....The day carried on like a dysfunctional family trying to convince their party guests that everything is normal...(Schnall, 2015, p.73) [1]. This commotion actually is a prove that Katherine's life is not balanced because she can't even control her emotion and family. She always seems to have everything all together because the workload is manageable and in the house, the children are young enough and she has assistants in the office and at house.

While Theo feels guilty to Katherine because he has an affair with another woman. Accidentally Lucy knows about it and Theo begs Lucy to keep it as a secret until he is ready to tell Katherine by himself. "I really don't know what to say. That was a huge mistake. I need you to not tell Katherine. If you let me handle this with her, I will." (Schnall, 2015, p.104) [1]. Because of his guilty toward Lucy, Theo tries to defend Lucy when Katherine is angry at her because Lucy leaks information about Katherine to a journalist. Theo persuades Katherine to let Lucy finish her explanation about her mistake before letting Katherine decide how to deal with Lucy's mistake.

Lucy leaks information about Katherine because she is disappointed that Katherine lies to her about getting a job in digital media. Katherine does not want Lucy to leave her so she never talks to digital media department about Lucy's job application. Then Lucy tells a journalist named Daniel that actually Katherine does not have a balanced life. The news becomes a headline on the front page that reads "America's Darling of Balance Is a Fraud". Katherine cries when she reads it and Lucy pretends that she knows nothing about it.

“Do you have any idea who the anonymous source is?” she asks. Brooke and Evan turn around to stare at me

“No, Katherine. I’m so sorry. I have no idea. It’s awful. Is there anything I can do?” (Schnall, 2015, p.164) [1]

Later, Lucy feels guilty about what she has done to Katherine. She tells her boyfriend that she feels awful after doing it. She tries to get Daniel to not to write the article but it is too late and now she is not ready yet to tell Katherine the truth “...I tried to get in touch with Daniel and that I told Ava immediately to make sure Daniel didn’t write the article...”. (Schnall, 2015, p.197) [1]. Eventually Katherine knows about it and she is really angry at Lucy.

3.4.Integrating Persona and Shadow

The discussion about persona will relate to shadows because there is a close bond between these two elements. The discussion includes "something that is displayed and hidden by someone". Shadow and persona are like twins in one body. As an analogy in one coin there are two different possible sides that portrayed to understanding shadows and persona. Integration hinges on self-acceptance, on fully accepting those parts of oneself that do not belong in the persona image, which is itself usually an image of an ideal or at least of a cultural norm (Stein, 2010, p.113) [2]. At the end of the novel, Katherine, Lucy and Theo are finally able to accept themselves. Speaking about Katherine in this novel, after the world knows about Katherine’s reality that she does not have a really balanced life, Katherine decides not to accept an award for her book. She confesses everything in her speech at the award event which becomes viral in social media. She sounds like she had any regret during that speech. She says in her speech that:

While I was trying to convince women that they can have it all, that it is so easy, that it simply takes commitment, and drive, and some well-proven strategies, I was having trouble in my life

What I’ve learned is that you can’t do all of it well at the same time. Sacrifices, sometimes big ones, must be made and it’s just a matter of deciding which sacrifices you are willing to make (Schnall, 2015, p.206) [1]

Then Katherine also forgives Lucy for being a source for Daniel. She realizes that because of Lucy’s mistake she is finally able to be honest to herself, her family and her readers. She says. “....And that speech totally liberated me. I’m free of lies. And I’m free to live my life authentically and in a way that’s better for me. And for my family.” (Schnall, 2015, p.235)[1]. Katherine also forgives her husband for cheating on her. Both she and Theo want to keep the marriage for themselves and their children.

The relationship of Lucy and Theo gets better after Nick gets sick and Lucy takes care of him. Then they talk more deeply about Lucy’s fear of marriage. Nick promises Lucy that he will not do the terrible things as Lucy’s father did. He promises to be a good husband for Lucy. Finally Lucy says yes when he proposes her. “And when you do, Nicholas Heston, I will say yes.” (Schnall, 2015, p.200) [1]

4. Conclusion

Novel *The Balance Project* tells the reader about how to balance work and life of the characters. Each of the characters tries to show the world that they can do it since they are the persons involving in the industry of campaigning work-life balance. But in fact, they still face some difficulties to do it since they have many things to do. In order to hide it they wear persona to show the world that they are good with balancing work and life. Persona according to Carl Gustav Jung as person-as-presented, so it is not the real self. The characters wearing persona must meet the expectation from the society and their own ambition. The persona then develop and transform to meet it but eventually they will find the integration of persona and shadow when they have been able to accept themselves over their persona.

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