

The Persona Analysis of the Clown Persona in Osamu Dazai's *A Shameful Life*

Anwar Willy Andhika¹✉, Prayudias Margawati²

¹Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

²Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History:</i> Received 30 June 2025 Approved 08 July 2025 Published 31 July 2025 Keywords: character analysis, clown persona, Osamu Dazai, shameful life	Persona is one of Jung's archetypes, representing the mask or our other personality we make when we appear in front of people. The existence of personas is added to many forms of literature nowadays, especially in the character, which makes the story more complicated and enjoyable for the reader. Personas are given deep characteristics about the character's traits and psychological development. The novel " <i>Shameful Life</i> ," also known as " <i>No Longer Human</i> ," was written by Dazai Osamu and tells the life story of a man who lives as a clown to conceal his true nature from society. However, the clown persona that he is proud of and wears in his life becomes his prison for eternity. The qualitative research will be the main foundation of the paper's method, which will be filled with a combination of data processing and theory. The method has succeeded in giving a detailed description of the Clown person and its cause and effect. The clown persona is a persona that is possessed and created by the main character using the reference of a clown. The main character believes that, if he could always use a clown persona and entertain people, he would be accepted by the human society, but those beliefs will be crushed by his own persona.

© Copyright 2025

How to cite (in APA style):

Andhika, A.W. & Margawati, P. (2025). The Persona Analysis of the Clown Persona in Osamu Dazai's *A Shameful Life*. *Rainbow : Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies*, 14, 33-39. <https://doi.org/10.15294/rainbow.v14i.29660>.

INTRODUCTION

Every life has ways of finding or creating a story through social interaction. However, in the process of finding a story from this interaction, tools to preserve it are also needed. The famous way to preserve stories is to write them on paper, which is called literature. Literature can be found everywhere, and the most commonly known form is the novel. According to Tarigan, a story is a fictional work with a complex storyline, typically presented in book form, depicting imagined characters' lives. (Pradanti 2020,2). The novel is one of the

literary works that tells a story written by someone with many aspects inspired by human interaction in reality, such as conflict, religion, love, friendship, and family.

In the novel's story, the reader will encounter characters who play specific roles in each event within the narrative (Nurgiyantoro, 2018,). Characters are typically depicted with particular personalities or traits that reveal their specialty, as assigned by the author, which is referred to as characteristics. An individual's character is a collection of traits defined as relatively stable dispositions to think, feel,

✉ Corresponding author:

Email: : andhikawilly357@students.unnes.ac.id

p-ISSN: 2252-6323

e-ISSN: 2721-4540

and behave in specific ways in certain situations. Two classic examples are bravery and cowardice, the dispositions to think, feel, and act bravely in the face of actual or apparent danger (*I.W. Saud, 2022*). One of the characteristics that may reveal those traits of psychology is clown-like behaviour. Clown characteristics are based on the Clown, which is already familiar in reality and fairy tales. In the real world, circus clowns and street performers gather around traffic lights, while in fairy tales, they entertain the king or other noble individuals (*Kompas.com, 2023*). Clowns use attractive accessories to engage their audience without revealing their true faces. Moreover, they often employ jokes or engaging movements, such as silly faces, impressive dancing accompanied by cheerful music, and entertaining skills like juggling while dancing.

An example of this can be seen in the news on Kompas.com, written by Idon Tanjung and Ihsanuddin on March 29 (*Kompas.com, 2025*). The news told the story of a man working as a clown in Pekanbaru, known as "Si Botak." The man worked as a clown from noon to 23.00 to buy his family new clothes for the Eid Al-Fitr or Idul Fitri holiday. In one of the quotations from the interview, the man worked without rest and gave a little smile while being interviewed, indicating that he was hiding his true Self and presenting a suitable face for public consumption.

The psychological case like the clown characteristics, in reality, has become a reference in many literary works novels, one of them the novel *A Shameful Life*, a novel by Dazai Osamu that became one of the most famous novels in Japan during the pre-war era and is considered one of the best classic books in Japanese literature. The story revolves around a man's life, focusing on the main character's perspective on humans as he navigates life, adopting various personalities and engaging in amusing behaviour to maintain his place in society. However, the

Truth of his Clown's life is that he is dragging the main character into a life filled with despair and lies. In the story, the main character shows many signs of clown characteristics, which are primarily aimed at psychological factors, such as multiple personalities based on the target or opponent, attractive moves and behaviour, and imitating specific figures. The various personalities and characteristics revealed by the main character become the interesting factor in the novel, which also becomes the main discussion in this research, as referring to *Endraswara's* statement (*Asih Ria Ningsih, 2022*) that the character's psychology is one of the elements that has become the most popular discussion in the novel. The complexity of the clown characteristics of the main character has become the Author's purpose in finding the elements and the purpose of the existence of the main character's Clown Persona in *A Shameful Life*.

Character analysis is used as the primary tool to identify each character's characteristics in the novel, as the characters have a crucial relationship to the characteristic writing and their performance (*Titania Arisa Putri, 2023*). However, as the Author explained above, the supporting tools that function as a filter for the characteristics data and symbolism must be fulfilled to move beyond, and the *archetype theory* is suitable for this purpose.

The archetype theory provides a classification of personality based on descriptions such as age, function, and Influence. Based on Jung's terms, an archetype is the collective of human experiences that recur over time in the human collective mind.

Archetype Theory

Regarding archetype theory, many figures have emerged as their own and developed unique perspectives on the archetype itself. In Jung's terms (Jung, as cited in *Martin Tarzian, 2023*), the archetype represents aspects of human existence, such as symbols, characters, and situations, through human experiences. Then there is

Pearson, who said that the archetype is a deep structure of psychology that influences the social system. (Pearson, 1991). Although the figures differ in the archetype, the *root of both viewpoints originates from the human collective mind and symbol*.

The archetypes are one with the collective mind, which cannot be separated from the archetype in any human interaction (Jung in Mevia Anggraeni Puspita, 2020). Therefore, according to Jung, the archetypes symbolize every human collective mind, such as the Shadow, which represents the negative side of human beings; the Persona, the mask; the jester, the representative of enjoyment both given and found; and the Self, which represents the fullness of human beings.

The archetype theory will become the main guideline in the research "The Persona Analysis of Clown Character In Osamu Dazai's *A Shameful Life*," where the Author aims to reveal, understand, and strengthen the existence of Persona in the novel, where the Persona is something given to not only the characters but also one of the crucial foundations that creates the story. Persona, according to Jung, is the mask that individuals wear to hide their true selves from society. The term is well chosen because it refers to the masks actors wore in the early theater (Dyah Kurniawati, 2015). Moreover, the position of "Persona" as one of the main contributions to the characters' development and position in the novel is crucial, yet still unnoticed by some readers, which is the motivation of the Author to reveal the existence of Persona in "*Shameful Life*."

METHODS

The Author employs a qualitative research design to establish a deep connection with the object and to allow for flexibility in the data that will emerge during content analysis. According to Liebow (1933), Qualitative research could connect and support a variety of topics, which in this case is the main character's Persona.

The novel "*A Shameful Life*" is written chronologically by Dazai Osamu, serving as the primary material for the research, with other related reading materials acting as supporting materials that the Author processes as the research instrument. The data relations will be scoured (Faruk in Boy Pratama Sembiring, 2025)

Data analysis is a method where the Author attempts to find a way to organize and process the data that has been gathered. According to Moleong in *SENTRI: Jurnal Riset Ilmiah* (2022), data analysis involves measuring and organizing data into patterns, categories, and basic descriptions. The explanation of data analysis also becomes an integral part of the data collection process, and data analysis must be implemented intensively to obtain accurate data for the research. The Author uses this method to find and identify the elements of the main character's Persona. By applying the archetype theory, the Author will see the similarities, usages, and other elements that build the existence of this Persona in the novel, which finally leads to the main character's purpose behind his addiction to this Clown persona.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Oba Yozo is the main character in *A Shameful Life*, written in four chapters with two sub-chapters by Osamu Dazai. The story focuses on the viewpoint of the main character, Oba Yozo, who is not just the main character in the story; he is the story itself, where all the events and plot of the story are based on his viewpoint. Oba Yozo's characteristics are complicated; he has a persona inspired by the characteristics of a clown and an actor who works like the security system to hide his fear of people. However, Clown's appearance overwhelms him, leading to various issues related to his mischievous behaviour and other problems associated with the existence of his Clown Persona. Based on the data that is processed through data analysis and archetype Theory.

A. Clown Persona

In Jung's terms, the Persona refers to the mask people use to cover up their inner or true selves (Sujanto in Miftahul Janah, 2020, 145) and is an adaptation system that covers a person's true personality, allowing them to act like another Persona. In Jung's theory, the Persona is how individuals publicly represent themselves (Jung in Li Mingyue, 2023).

As it is said, the persona is another version of human personality shown to other people. The clown persona is the main character's other personality for public needs.

The clown persona develops a type of Persona that takes reference from many aspects of social interactions that the main character had done, leading to the development of various versions of the Clown adapting the main character's social interaction. The beginning of the Clown Persona can be seen in chapter one.

"That is when I hit upon the idea of the Clown. It was to be my final attempt at courting humanity. Even though I lived in abject terror of people, I couldn't abandon them entirely. So I used the single, tenuous thread of the Clown to retain my connection. On the surface, a grin never left my face, but on the inside, I was locked in a desperate struggle, walking on a tightrope, bathed in sweat, the danger of disaster ever imminent as I entertained them. (Dazai, 2018, p.5)."

In chapter one, the main character creates the foundation of his Clown Persona, so the main character must appear as a Clown and maintain a connection to other people. The result can be seen on page 6, where the main character declares that he succeeded in becoming the "Accomplished Clown" without realizing it.

"I found that, without realizing it, I had transformed into an accomplished Clown. Before I knew it, I had become a child incapable of uttering a single word of Truth. When I look at my family photographs from that time, everyone is wearing a somber expression, but I alone—without fail—have my face twisted into a peculiar grin. This is one example of my childish method of clowning.. (Dazai, 2018, p.6)."

The novel quotation reveals the basic method that the main character uses, which takes the reference from the Clown. The main character shows the reader that he will become the Clown in any situation to hide his true feelings and maintain his bond with his family, which is the Clown Persona's result of its first development.

Besides the first result of development to maintain his connection in social interaction, the other result is that the Clown Persona becomes the social tool and system that keeps the main character's mental stability. The clown Persona works as a communication tool and interaction by adapting the social interaction done by the main character. The main character's social interactions develop based on the people around him. In the first

chapter, we see the main character forming the first development in his childhood.

In chapter two, the clown persona significantly contributed to the main character's social interaction as a social tool. The Clown Persona enhances his social Influence and connection through other people's thoughts about him.

"I became so adept in my performance that I was forever making my classmates laugh..... I could even make the military drill instructor, with his barbaric shouting and voice like a thunderclap, collapse in laughter with the greatest of ease (Dazai, 2018, p.14)."

The clown persona works by doing something connected to happiness that influences other people through their viewpoint about the main character, a funny and humorous kid.

The final development of this clown persona is a security system to maintain the psychological balance of the main character. According to Jung, achieving psychological well-being requires balancing social demands and our authentic identity. Ignoring the Persona means failing to see society's significance while neglecting our inner Self, which leads to being controlled by society like a puppet. (Feist and Feist in Dyah Kurniawati, 2015: 43). The development could be seen in chapter two, where the main character is seen as the woman as a threat.

"I started thinking of Tsuneko much as I thought of the girl from my boarding house or the "comrade" from the women's teacher's collage. I came to see her as a threat, and though she was far away, I lived in constant terror of her. To make things worse, I could not help thinking that, should I run into a woman I had once slept with, she suddenly explode in furious rage. The prospect of meeting my former love was thus extremely disagreeable to me, and I kept a respectful distance from Ginza. (Dazai, 2018, p. 35-36)"

The main character was confused thinking about the women he slept with without his knowing, which is taken care of by the clown persona that sees those as a threat and suppresses the main character's inner wish to see the women, leading to his decision to keep the distance from Ginza where he meets the woman. The decision taken by the main character results from the final development

of Clown Persona as the security system that maintains the main character's psychological balance.

B. The Impact of Clown Persona

The Clown Persona has made a significant contribution, even strengthening its position in society as someone with multiple skills and kindness; the Clown Persona also impacts the main character. Dazai Osamu seems to want to not only give the novel a tragic ending but also give the reader a presentation of the good and bad sides of the Persona through the Clown Persona itself. The impact itself appears along with the results of its development, which can be seen along with the development of the clown persona.

The first impact is in the first chapter, where the main character is afraid of his family and his family's expectations of him.

"What is more, I never talked back when scolded by my parents, not even once. The smallest scolding seemed to me a deafening thunderclap, and it knocked me down with such tremendous force that I thought I might go mad. Far from being able to talk back, such scoldings were like the pronouncement of some profound "Truth," echoing down the generations and across endless ages. Since I lacked the strength to embody that Truth, even at that age, I had already begun to suspect I might be incapable of living among humans. I could not argue with others, nor could I stand up for myself. If someone criticized me, I thought the other person must be right, utterly and entirely; I must have made a terrible mistake; it couldn't be clearer. I endured such attacks in meek silence, but on the inside I writhed in agony, near mad with terror.

I would do anything as long as it made people laugh; it did not matter if I could make them laugh. I reasoned, they might not care that I didn't really fit into their "lives". (Dazai, 2018, p.7)"

The first impact appears in the form of fear of critics and compliments from the other. The main character develops a fear of his family, especially his father's expectations. The fear towards his parents and family turns into an anxiety that is processed by the Clown personality. Any situation that threatens the organism can be considered anxiety (Yosia Puri Saputro, 2019). According to Jung,

Anxiety is one factor that develops a true personality (Jung, 1957). However, the main character is trapped in fear of his family's expectations, which strengthens the position of the clown persona, which is already beneficial to the main character.

The Second impact is that the main character becomes too passive. The existence of the clown persona indeed strengthens his position as a happy and kind kid. The position made by the Clown Persona never gives him a chance to appear in public with his true personality, which traps the main character in his own Clown Persona. The impact of this could be seen in chapter two when he falls into the world of liquor and prostitution.

"It didn't take me long to discover that liquor, cigarettes, and prostitutes were wonderfully effective ways to banish my fear of people, if only temporarily. It got to the point where I began to think that selling all I owned would not be too high a price to pay to continue these pursuits.

To me, prostitutes were neither human beings nor women but more like lunatics or idiots, and I could find solace in their embrace. (Dazai, 2018, p.25)"

The introduction of liquor, drunkenness, and prostitution symbolizes his tired condition as a clown. However, during the main character's underworld journey, he is trapped in a group of terrorists and loses his family's trust. Yet his Clown Persona has already built his image among his underworld friends, called "Comrade," who give him no choice except to appear using his Clown Persona and work for them.

"along with the girl at my boarding house, I had no choice but to see this "comrade" every day, and, unlike the other women I'd known, there was no way to avoid them. Before long my anxiety took over, and I was running myself ragged in my attempts to keep the both of them happy. I felt trapped, unable to move so much a finger. (Dazai, 2018, p.32)"

The last impact that also led to his tragic downfall was his problems with women. The author of the book, Osamu Dazai, portrays the Woman Character with negative imagery and the source of disaster caused by the misuse of the clown persona, which is related to the main character's problematic relationship with women.

"It was morphine. She said it wouldn't be as bad as the liquor, and I believed her. What's more, it had gotten to the point where even I had to come

to think there was something unclean about the way I drank. (p.77)

"Right? And ever since I started taking the medicine, I haven't touched a drop. Thanks to you, I'm feeling much better. I'm not going to spend my whole life drawing lousy cartoons, you know. I'll stop drinking, get my health back, work hard, and one day I'll become a famous painter, you'll see. This is a critical time for me. Please, I'm begging you. Here, I'll give you a kiss. At that, the woman burst out laughing. "You're hopeless, you know that? Don't blame me if I get addicted, though."

She thumped across the floor with her crutches and took the drug from a shelf. (Dazai, 2018, p.78)"

Once, I even showed up in the dead of night, pounding on the shop door. When she came tottering out on crutches, still in her nightclothes, I grabbed her, kissing her, and pretending to cry.

Wordlessly, she handed me a box. By the time I realized that the drug was just as vile as shōchū—no, even worse. (Dazai, 2018, P.78)"

The novel Quotations reveals his disadvantage with women. When he has a relationship with women, it will weaken the main character both physically and mentally, which also has an impact on the main character's decision. So, we see that the relationship between women and the main character is a drug business, where the main character is addicted to morphine, which became an illegal drug during the time in the novel. However, the quotations also reveal that the woman is not the only one to blame but also the main character, because the main character uses the Clown Persona to persuade the woman in any way, including kissing, which concludes that the main character's downfall by the woman is not from the woman only but also from his Clown Persona that takes over his true personality. This scene also identify the main character depression and denied towards the world, where the main character turn away from the reality of the morphine that he consume and the relationship with the women who sold the drugs, yet after the main character relize it he didn't stop and keep the relationship of his self-destruction, which is created by his addiction sung clown persona.

CONCLUSION

The existence of the Clown Persona has significantly contributed to the novel's story. Its existence has made the reader understand the characteristics of the main character, Oba Yozo, and his conflict with the world, while on the other side, the author of the book, Osamu Dazai, gives a complex presentation of what the clown persona should be like. Using the archetype theory the author has reveal that the clown persona is a type of persona that gathers many elements from social interaction that are connected to creating joy for others, but because of its influence, the main character lost his individualism and was trapped in the clown persona like a prison in the form of a doll played by another human. The story in "*A Shameful Life*" has reminds both the reader and the Author to maintain the balance inside our unconscious, where we need to reveal our true Self at some point and not become addicted to the mask that could become our safest place.

REFERENCES

- Janah, M., Mahyudi, J., & Murahim; (2020). *Tipologi Kepribadian Tokoh Utama dalam Novel Introver Karya M.F. Hazim*. Jurnal Bastrindo. <https://bastrindo.jurnal.unram.ac.id/index.php/jb/article/view/35>
- Kurniawati,D., (2015). Jung's archetypes of Persona and Shadow in wilde's picture of dorian gray and stevenson's dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. *Tell*. <https://journal.um-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/Tell/article/view/232>
- Kompas.com. 2023. " Kompas.Com: Mengenal Sejarah Badut, Karakter Konyol dalam Sirkus dan Pantomim" Last modified October 29, at 14.30 WIB <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2023/10/29/143000665/mengenal-sejarah-badut-karakter-konyol-dalam-sirkus-dan-pantomim?page=all>.
- Kompas.com. (2025). " Kompas.Com:Perjuangan "Si Botak", Badut di Pekanbaru Jualan Balon demi Baju Lebaran Anak" Last modified March 23, at 05.52.WIB. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2025/03/29/055200678/perjuangan-si-botak-badut-di-pekanbaru-jualan-balon-demi-baju-lebaran-anak>.

- Mingyue, L., Krisyani, K.J., (2023) Psychoanalytic Study of Carl Gustav Jung: Persona in the Character Tang Xin in the Drama “Ni Hǎo, Shénqiāngshǒu” Episodes 1-15 by Lian Mu Chu Guang. IJCIS: Journal of Chinese Interdisciplinary Studies. <https://journal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/ijcis/article/view/25238>
- Nurdewi. (2022). Implementasi personal branding smart asn perwujudan bangga melayani di provinsi maluku utara. SENTRI: Jurnal Riset Ilmiah. <https://ejournal.nusantaraglobal.ac.id/index.php/sentri/article/view/235>
- Osamu Dazai.. 1948. A SHAMEFUL LIFE. Translated by Mark Gibeau. Stone Bridge Press.
- Pearson, C. S. (1991). *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World*. HarperElixir.
- P. Indah , & Mohamad I.R. Mohamad. (2020). Self-Concept as a Result of Borderline Personality Disorder Portrayed in Haruki Murakami’s Norwegian Wood. Journal Rainbow. <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/rainbow/article/view/37848>
- Pradanti, D.W., 2022. Fakultas dan Seni, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro., . Analisis unsur intrinsik novel “sesuap rasa” karya catz link tristan hubungannya dengan pembelajaran bahasa indonesia di sma. <https://repository.ikipgribojonegoro.ac.id/2019/>
- Prakoso, J. W. (2021). Anima and the animus personality of the main characters in C. J. Redwine’s Defiance, 2021. UIN-Malang. <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/41901/1/16320111.pdf>
- Puri Saputro, Y., Johana Ari Widayanti, M., & Purwanto, B. (2019). The Psychological Development of The Main Character of Becoming A Gang Leader Through Frustration; Reflections on Dashner’s The Maze Runner Article Info. Rainbow, 8(1), 20. <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/rainbow/article/view/29195>
- Puspita, A.M., (2020). Analisis Arketipe dalam Serial The Romance of Tiger and Karya Nan Zhen Kajian Psikologis Carl Gustav Jung. <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/manadarin/article/view/42091>
- Ria, N.A., Hermawan., Erlina, N., 2022, Psikologi Tokoh Utama dalam Novel Bidadari karya Pipiet Senja: Kajian Psikologi Sastra. Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra, 10(3), 2022. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jbs.v10i3.113458>
- Saud, I. W., Jusuf, H., & bin Tahir, S. Z. 2022. Main Character in the Novel Cover of Night by Linda Howard: Psychological Analysis. ELOQUENCE : Journal of Foreign Language, 1(2), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.58194/eloquence.v1i2.396>
- Sembiring, B. P., & Hartono, A. I. (2025). Hasrat Mimetik dan Keterlibatan Naratif: Identifikasi Karakter Abdullah dalam Cerita Pendek “Dolah” karya Haikal Riza. Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra, 13(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jbs.v13i1.127318>
- Shofa , H.A. (2023). The characters' archetype and relationship among the characters in the film fantastic beasts and where to Find Them. IAIN Surakarta. <https://eprints.iain-surakarta.ac.id/6003/1/196111060%20ASYIDA%20HS-THESIS%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
- Tarzian, M., Ndrio, M., & Fakoya, A. O. 2023. An Introduction and Brief Overview of Psychoanalysis. Cureus. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.45171>
- Titania, A.P., 2024. Gambaran watak tokoh dalam novel perempuan yang menangis kepada bulan hitam. Sastranesia. <https://doi.org/10.32682/sastranesia.v12i1.3483>.
- Yin, & Robert K. (2016). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. The Guilford Press