# NEGOTIATING IDENTITY OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL *YELLOWFACE* BY R. F. KUANG

**THESIS**

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## THESIS

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**2024**

# STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that my original work is the thesis titled **"Negotiating Identity of the Main Character in the Novel *Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang."** With the exception of the works that include any materials previously written and referenced as references, I do not incorporate any previously written or published works by other authors. I now assume all responsibility for any objections or claims that may arise.

Malang, 1 Oktober 2024
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# APPROVAL SHEET

This to certify that Alia Fadila Kaimuddin's thesis entitled **"Negotiating Identity of the Main Character in the Novel** *Yellowface* **by R. F. Kuang"** has been approved for thesis examination at Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.).

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## MOTTO

"I feel like the possibility of all those possibilities being possible is just another possibility that can possibly happen"

**Mark Lee**

# DEDICATION

I proudly dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mr. Iyan and Mama Ida, who have patiently and lovingly let me study far away from them. In every step I take, they are always there with their unceasing prayers, irreplaceable material support, and their time to simply ask how I am and make sure that I am okay. Their unconditional love has been an invaluable strength, and I can never express how lucky I am to have them as parents. They are the best people in my life, and I dedicate all these achievements to them.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيْم

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# ABSTRACT

This study explores the complex process of identity negotiation carried out by the main character, June Hayward, in *Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang. June was a white writer, who took Athena's work. This study investigates two problems. The first is how June negotiates her identity as a Chinese writer, and the second is how June constructs her identity as the owner of "The Last Front". This study uses the literary criticism method to analyze the main character in *Yellowface* by R.F. Kuang. Data collection was carried out through the study of literary text documents, by reading repeatedly, taking notes, and underlining relevant parts. Data analysis focuses on the development of the main character, June Hayward to Juniper Song, using Stuart Hall's theory of identity negotiation. This process includes in-depth reading, identifying important elements, and drawing conclusions related to the research problem. This analysis reveals that in negotiating her identity, June uses two key aspects, namely interactive process, agency, and resistance. June interaction with Athena made she decided to takes Athena's manuscript, edits it, and publishes it under the pen name "Song of Juniper". June resists the suggestion of using a sensitive reader and maintains her ability as a writer. The researcher found four main elements in June's identity construction: culture, historical context, power and hegemony, and hybridity and fluidity. June uses the concept of "keeping face" from Asian culture for personal gain. Her friendship with Athena shapes her understanding as a Chinese writer. Criticism and public opinion influence her identity construction and the pen name "Juniper Song" shows the blend of different backgrounds in June's identity.

**مستخلص البحث**

**كايمودين، ف. أ** كوانغ. (2024). التفاوض على هوية الشخصية الرئيسية في رواية *Yellowface* لـ ر. ف. أطروحة جامعية. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية.

المشرف: د. هـ. موندي راهايو، م. هوم.

*الكلمات المفتاحية*: الهوية، التفاوض على الهوية، بناء الهوية، الرواية

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تستكشف هذه الدراسة العملية المعقدة للتفاوض على الهوية التي تقوم بها الشخصية الرئيسيةJune، كاتبة بيضاء، استولت على عمل أثينا. June لـ ر. ف. كوانغ. كانت *Yellowface* ، في روايةHayward على هويتها ككاتبة صينية، والثانية هي June تبحث هذه الدراسة في مشكلتين. الأولى هي كيف تتفاوض هويتها كمالكة لـ "الجبهة الأخيرة". تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهج النقد الأدبي لتحليل رواية June كيف تبني لـ ر.ف. كوانغ. تم جمع البيانات من خلال دراسة وثائق النص الأدبي، عن طريق القراءة *Yellowface* المتكررة، وتدوين الملاحظات، وتسطير الأجزاء ذات الصلة. يركز تحليل البيانات على تطور الشخصية الرئيسية،June Hayward إلىJuniper Song ، في التفاوض على باستخدام نظرية ستيوارت هول في الهوية. تتضمن هذه العملية القراءة المتعمقة، وتحديد العناصر المهمة، واستخلاص النتائج المتعلقة بمشكلة البحث. June العملية، وهما جانبين رئيسيين. يكشف هذا التحليل أنه في التفاوض على هويتها، تستخدم التفاعلية، والوكالة والمقاومة. تأخذ مخطوطة أثينا، وتحررها، وتنشرها تحت اسم مستعار "أغنية العرعر". اقتراح استخدام قارئ حساس وتحافظ على قدرتها على كتابتها ككاتبة. كما تقاوم النقد والروايات التي تحاول June ترفض الثقافة، والسياق التاريخي، June: الإضرار بسمعتها. وجد الباحث أربعة عناصر رئيسية في بناء هوية مفهوم "الحفاظ على الوجه" من الثقافة الآسيوية لتحقيق June والقوة والهيمنة، والتهجين والسيولة. تستخدم مكاسب شخصية. تشكل صداقتها مع أثينا فهمها ككاتبة صينية. يؤثر النقد والرأي العام على بناء هويتها. يظهر مزيج الخلفيات المختلفة في هوية "Juniper Song" الاسم المستعار June.

# ABSTRAK

**Kaimuddin, F. A.** (2024). Negotiating Identity of the Main Character in the Novel *Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim.
Advisor: Dr. Hj. Mundi Rahayu, M. Hum.

*Kata Kunci: Identitas, Negosiasi Identitas, Konstruksi Identitas, Novel*

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Studi ini mengeksplorasi proses kompleks negosiasi identitas yang dilakukan oleh karakter utama, June Hayward, dalam novel *Yellowface* karya R. F. Kuang. June sebagai penulis kulit putih, yang mengambil karya Athena. Penelitian ini menyelidiki dua masalah. Yang pertama adalah bagaimana June menegosiasikan identitasnya sebagai penulis China dan kedua bagaimana June mengkonstruksikan identitasnya sebagai pemilik "The Last Front". Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kritik sastra untuk menganalisis novel *Yellowface* karya R.F. Kuang. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi dokumen teks sastra, dengan membaca berulang, mencatat, dan menggarisbawahi bagian-bagian yang relevan. Analisis data berfokus pada perkembangan karakter utama June Hayward menjadi Juniper Song, menggunakan teori negosiasi identitas Stuart Hall. Proses ini meliputi pembacaan mendalam, identifikasi elemen-elemen penting, dan penarikan kesimpulan terkait masalah penelitian. Analisis ini mengungkapkan bahwa dalam menegosiasikan identitasnya, June menggunakan dua key aspek, yaitu interactive process dan Agency dan resistance. Ia mengambil naskah Athena, mengeditnya, dan menerbitkannya dengan nama pena "Song of Juniper". June menolak saran penggunaan sensitivity reader dan mempertahankan kemampuannya sebagai penulis. Ia juga menentang kritik dan narasi yang mencoba merusak reputasinya. Peneliti menemukan empat elemen utama dalam konstruksi identitas June: budaya, konteks historis, kekuasaan dan hegemoni, serta hibriditas dan fluiditas. June menggunakan konsep "menjaga muka" dari budaya Asia untuk kepentingan pribadi. Persahabatannya dengan Athena membentuk pemahamannya sebagai penulis Tiongkok. Kritik dan pandangan publik memengaruhi konstruksi identitasnya dan nama pena "Juniper Song" menunjukkan perpaduan latar belakang yang berbeda dalam identitas June.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, researcher explains about this research, including its background, previous research, research question, significant of the study, and definitions of keyterms.

## A. Background of the Study

Identity is a concept that concerns an individual's beliefs and understanding of who they are, including physical features, personality traits, behaviors, history, experiences, and relationships with social and cultural environments. It helps guide a person's actions, decisions, and understanding of themselves and the world they represent. According to Rahayu (2014, p. 27), Identity is something that is produced, mediated and performed through interactions between individuals and society between who we are and how we want people to see us, and also the structures as well as institutions beyond our control that influence how others see us. Identity is something that is not static but dynamic (Hall, 1990, p. 51). Identity is something that is always in the process of formation, not something that has been formed and has been finished. Hall also defines identity as fluid, ever-changing and influenced by cultural representations. It is not a permanent self-definition, but a shifting position. As a never-ending process, identity is constantly negotiated and redefined in various historical and cultural contexts.

In addition, according to Hall, human identity always undergoes a process of negotiation with the systems of representation present in culture (Hall. 1990, p.

52). Negotiation is the process of reaching an agreement. In The Discourse of the Commoners Represented in the Javanese Version of the Abu Nawas Story, Rahayu (2022, p. 15) proves that anyone can negotiate. In identity, negotiation is done to help individuals adapt and adjust to a new environment. In other words, identity is a project that is continuously worked on and always negotiated in various social interactions and cultural representations. Identity according to Hall is not stable and singular, but rather plural and always transforming with a negotiation process according to context. So identity is a never-ending process of meaning production, not an essential definition of who we are.

For example, someone who used to work as a doctor can decide to quit and switch professions to become a lecturer after years of work. A negotiated identity from doctor to lecturer. Negotiating identity that occurs is the process of developing and understanding a doctor's self-identity when moving to become an educational institution or lecturer. This includes adaptation to the new work context, the new role that must be taken, as well as the influence of the environment that previously worked as a doctor must experience changes in their understanding and behavior as an educational institution. Another example, a Chinese immigrant living in Indonesia may identify himself as an Indonesian after years of settling and assimilating into the local culture. His national identity was changed from Chinese to Indonesian. Negotiating identity that occur show that Chinese individuals living in Indonesia experience changes in understanding and behavior that ultimately lead to a change in identity from Chinese to Indonesian.

Negotiating identity does not only occur in one's original identity, but can also occur when someone takes, borrows, is adapted or used from other groups in the process of negotiating identity. According to Rahayu (2015, p. 1), the portrait of a person stands for strong and clear identity of the person depicted, whereas a portrait of an individual in a group tends to blur the identity of the individual. This means that there are many possibilities for someone to take or borrow someone else's identity because their identity becomes blurred. Based on Carey (2009, p. 19) in his book entitled Communication as Culture, he wrote that in today's modern pluralistic society, people can determine their identity by borrowing or imitating the styles, values, and perspectives of other groups in order to be accepted. Carey shows that people can borrow other people's identities in the process of social adaptation and negotiation of their own identity. Meanwhile, (Sen, 2006, p. 30) in his book Identity and Violence, Sen writes that one's cultural identity can be an eclectic combination of elements drawn from different traditions. That is, identity can be formed from elements that are taken from other cultures. This proves that a person can negotiate their identity by taking, borrowing, or mixing their own identity with others.

In literary sociology, Swingewood and Laurenson (1972, p. 11) says that in general literary works are seen as representations of people's lives, in the sense that novels or dramas reflect a small part of a larger social life. Literary works often take the same things as real phenomena and situations in society. In the novel *Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang, it tells the story of two famous authors, June Hayward and Athena Liu, who should be on the rise. They were awarded number 1 at Yale University

the same year they started publishing. But June had never even published a book with a hardcover, and Athena was an author who wrote in multiple genres. June believed that no one wanted to hear stories about ordinary white girls. After witnessing Athena's death in an unexpected accident, she acts impulsively. At the same time, she takes Athena's new work, The Last Front, an experimental novel about the unknown role of Chinese workers in the British and French wars during World War I. After editing and submitting Athena's novel to a publishing agent as her own work, June was given permission to change her name to Juniper Song, thus creating an ambiguous picture of the author's ethnicity. According to her, no matter who the narrator is, the story of The Last Front is still worth telling. June remains under Athena's surveillance, and there is new evidence that threatens her success. June realizes how far she will go to protect what she thinks she is entitled to. This novel speaks of racism, diversity, and cultural appropriation from an in-depth first-person perspective, not only within the publishing industry, but also about the erasure of Asian-American voices and history by white Western society.

In accordance with Stuart Hall's understanding and concept of identity (Hall, 1990, p. 51), June experiences a process of negotiating identity from June Hayward to Juniper Song. This research uses Stuart Hall's concept of negotiating identity through a sociology of literature approach. The reason researcher use Stuart Hall's concept of negotiating identity is because the concept suitable and relevant to analyze the process of forming and changing the identity of June's character who is dynamic, plural, and influenced by socio-cultural factors. The use of a literary sociology approach so that the discussion is contextualized or the author can relate

June's identity and character development to the socio-cultural background of the society that surrounds her. The purpose of combining the two frameworks of thought is to explore the variety of identities and characters of June's characters, as well as their relation to the existing socio-cultural situation. In addition, this research can be interdisciplinary and innovative, so that it can add new scientific contributions.

In addition, with the extensive discussion on negotiating identity, the researcher determines the object and theory that will be the research material in this paper because the object in this novel has not been studied much. Moreover, Stuart Hall's negotiating identity theory is considered an empty research gap and can be filled with research on the negotiating identity theory. Therefore, the researcher tries to do some research related to negotiating identity in other novels.

As the researcher has said above, previous research in this thesis still has not started research using this object. However, researcher found several references from previous studies, which are related to the theory of negotiating identity. The reason the researcher took the research from before, is because the references related to negotiating identity support and are relevant to the points that want to be discussed in this study. First, Jeannita Kirana (Kirana, 2018, p. 1) uses Stuart Hall's concept of domination strategy and negotiation strategy in her research *Negotiating Identity in the Novel of Everything I never Told You*. This research is to reveal that James' attempts to present his identity as an American will inevitably use dominance strategies and negotiation strategies. The research founded that James employed dominance strategies by denying his family background, and became an

American by grooming American women and also forcing his children to act like Americans. In addition, she uses negotiation strategies by having an illicit romantic relationship with a Tianghoa girl and eating Chinese food. James dominates and negotiates his identity to become fully American because Tianghoa Americans are a minority group that tends to get higher social discrimination.

The second, Mutahajjidah Nafilah Muradina's thesis entitled *Social Identity Construction in the Main Character of Black Panther Film* (Muradina, 2019, p. 1). Her research focuses on the social identity that emerges in the main character of the film Black Panther. She used a qualitative method with data in the form of dialogues to research. She used Tajfel and Turner's concept to analyze her findings. The findings show the construction of social identity shown by the main character according to his social conditions. There are three groups that are known from different social aspects, namely social activities, behavior, and interactions shown by the main character in the film. The main characters are categorized mostly based on their nationality because the film is mostly about black people in Wakanda.

Third, there is *Representation of Immigrant's Social Identity in Minari Movie* (Azzahra, 2021, p. 1) from UIN Malang as well. Anisa Azzahra used Bonny Norton's identity questions to examine the social identity of immigrants and also to analyze the first and second generations of Korean immigrants. She transcribed the film to analyze the data and to see the determining factors shown by the immigrants. The results found three different social identities among the first and second generations of Korean immigrants. The first generation (Korean and American social groups) showed that they maintained their social identity as members of the

Korean social group, and two different identities were found in the second generation (both social groups). The first child showed that he was a member of both social groups, the second child was a member of the American social group. She found that the two children had different knowledge and experiences that influenced their social identity.

Fourth, *The Cultural Identity of the Main Character of the Film Greek Book* by Syarif Hidayat, Ledya Juliandina and Rusydi M. Yusuf (Hidayat et al., 2022, p. 1). In this research, they applied Stuart Hall's identity theory to Don Shirley, the main character in the movie Greek Book. Although Shirley is an African-American character, he still has difficulty adjusting to American culture and experiences racism. Using a descriptive qualitative method, they found that Don Shirley initially adopted a white cultural identity due to the influence of racism in his thoughts, words and actions. However, it was not a guarantee that he would be accepted in society. Therefore, he eventually accepted himself and negotiated his African-American identity.

Fifth, *Identity Negotiation of Pakistani-American Muslims in Ayad Akthar's Homeland Elegies* by Muhammad Latif Busyeiri (Busyeiri, 2022, p. 1). He uses Bhabha's postcolonial concept, Said's orientalism theory, and William's cultural theory, to investigate how first and second generation Pakistani-American Muslims negotiate their dual identities in Ayad Akhtar's Homeland Elegies. Using analytical descriptive method, the results show that the main character's identity negotiation is influenced by several internal and external factors, such as family, social environment, and Islamic values taught by his family. Ayad's first generation

proved to be more open and critical of American, Pakistani and Islamic culture. Ayad's character is shown with hybridity, he does not feel he belongs to Pakistani culture and Islam because he is more influenced by his social work environment, namely American colleagues. The second generation such as Sikander's character is in the form of obsessive mimicry, when he imitates everything American and also believes in bigoted or racist values. Fatima's character shows ambivalence and an active dislike of all things American, favoring Pakistani-Muslim culture. In the end, Ayad finds his American identity, Sikander regains his Pakistani identity, and Fatima maintains her own identity.

Sixth, Syifa Aulia whose research title is *Identity Negotiation of the Main Character in Zadie Smith's Swing Time* (Syifa, 2022, p. 1). She also used descriptive qualitative method with Peter J. Burke's identity theory, Jeanne M. Brett's negotiation theory which was also combined with George Simmel's theory of conflict in social interaction. The result of her research findings is that the main character manages to define herself that her identity cannot be separated from her Jamaican physical characteristics, which also cannot be separated from her who is an English society. The protagonist shows that in herself the characteristics of black and white women can reflect her identity as a Black-British person.

Seventh, relating to gender (Novelly et al., 2020, p. 1) entitled *Identitas Sosial Tokoh Laki-laki dalam Novel Presiden Karya Wisran Hadi* by Yustitiayu Novelly, Samsiarni, and Emil Septia. Their research is descriptive. They used Hogg and Abraham's concept of social identity to examine the social identity problems faced by the male character Minangkau in the novel President by Wisran Hadi. The

results showed that there are 3 social identity problems experienced by the character. First, the misidentification experienced by the 4 Mamak of Bagonjong House, second, the social comparison they experienced, third, the mobility experienced by the four. The three problems that arise, they make changes and movements to find solutions to the problems they face.

Eight, there are studies that examine other genders, namely *Pakistani-American Muslim Woman Identity Negotiation as Reflected in Diaspora Literature* by Nur Asiyah (Asiyah, 2020, p. 1). However, this study uses different data, namely a novel written by diaspora literature entitled Saffron Dreams by Shaila Abdullah published in 2009. This research also uses descriptive qualitative and also uses postcolonial theory based on Bhabha's hybridity, Tomey's concept of identity negotiation. The results showed that Pakistani-American Muslim women negotiate their identity by adopting American culture and forming a hybrid identity. From leaving her veiled style of dress, changing her name to an American name and hiding her religious identity. In addition, they negotiate their identity by building an American house with Arabic nuances. In assimilating culture to get a job, Pakistani-American Muslim women have to struggle more because of the stark cultural differences and ideals they espouse.

Ninth, there sis a journal that discusses identity negotiation in a collection of novels by exophonic writers. The title of the research is *Identity Negotiation in the Age of Global Migration in Exophonic Novels* by Moh Zaimil Alvin (Alivin, 2021, p. 1). This analysis uses Homi K. Bhabha's identity negotiation theory on novels written by exhoponic writers: Khales Hosseini's The Kite Runner published

in 2003, Elif Shafak's The Bastrad of Istanbul published in 2006, and Mohsin Hamid's The Relucant Fundamentalist published in 2007. Exophony involves the creation of literary works in a language different from one's first language, showcasing the author's ability to express themselves artistically in a non-native tongue. The results of which reveal that identity negotiations often occur in the context of power relations and sometimes hegemony.

The Last one is from Eka Nurcahyani and Muhammad Sulthon Kamil with the title *Identity Negotiation of Chines America's Twoness in Lisa Ko's The leavers: Postcolonial Approach* (Nurcahyani & Kamil, 2021, p. 1). This study aims to examine the negotiation of Tianghoa-American bilingual identity as depicted in the novel. To investigate the main character Deming Duo's process of negotiating his identity as a Tianghoa-American, the researcher uses Bhabha's postcolonialism, Said's orientalism, and Dubois' concept of togetherness. The results revealed that Deming's identity negotiation is influenced by family, society, and place of residence. There are differences in parenting and prejudice of American society towards Chinese descendants. Second-generation Chinese immigrants often imitate the dominant culture in order to assimilate into society. The ambivalence of the American culture that is embraced contradicts the original Chinese values. Until finally Deming's character succeeded in hybridising conflicting Chinese and American identities because hybridity succeeded in balancing his identity.

In addition, the problems that the researcher discuss in this thesis certainly focus on several research questions. These research questions will be the basis and purpose of the researcher in preparing this research.

**B.  Research Question**

Based on the background of the study and focus research described above, the author's questions for this research are:

1.  How does June negotiates her identity in Kuang's *Yellowface*?
2.  How does June constructs her identity as the owner of The Last Front in the Kuang's *Yellowface*?

**C.  Significance of the Study**

This research has two benefits, namely theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research contributes to Stuart Hall Studies, especially in the development of negotiating identity in deviation. This research adds a new discussion in R. F. Kuang's latest novel entitled *Yellowface*. Practically, this research is expected to contribute to a new study of the novel *Yellowface* and become a unique reference for future researcher who are interested in analyzing either the novel with this interesting story or about the study of negotiating identity that will be discussed in this study.

**D.  Focus of the Study**

In this study, researcher analyse the novel *Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang because it raises issues of identity. June Hayward's character in this novel is an ordinary white girl who takes her friend, Athena's manuscript after she dies. June has to face conflicts related to her identity after she took Athena's work.

**E.  Definition of Key Terms**

The terms used in this research are defined as follows.

1. Identity are characteristics or traits that are inherent to someone or something. Identity can be personal, social, or cultural. Identity is a process that continues to develop throughout a person's life because identity is dynamic, can always change at any time and also adjusts to the individual's environment (Hall & Gay. 1996).

2. Negotiating identity is a process carried out by individuals to form their identity by always constructing and reconstructing their identity. This process occurs through social interactions with others and the environment (Hall et all., 2003, p. 234).

3. Constructing identity focuses on how identity is shaped and framed by social structures, cultural discourses, and broader power relations in society. This is ongoing because it has no fixed core (Hall, 1997, p. 15).

4. The interactive process is how individuals actively interact with their social environment and form their identity (Hall & Gay. 1996. p. 6).

5. Agency and Resistance show that individuals can make their own choices and resist imposed identity constructions (Hall, 1996, p. 13).

6. Cultural elements focus on how cultural elements shape identity in society (Hall, 1997, p. 25).

7. Historical context is where history emphasizes its role in shaping categories and understanding of identity (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

8. Power shows how power and dominance influence identity formation (Hall, 1986, p. 45).

9. Hybridity and Fluidity in identity construction, both describe how identity is shaped by a broader social cultural mix (Hall, 1990, p. 235).

# CHAPTER II

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the research entitled Negotiating Identity of the Main Character "June" in the *Yellowface* Novel by R. F. Kuang. This research uses the Sociology of Literature approach and Stuart Hall's Identity concept.

## A.  Sociology of Literature

The sociology of literature according to Wellek and Warren is the study of the social aspects of culture in the context of the written arts, especially in literature (Wellek & Warren. 1956, p. 95). The problem of literary studies has implications or is a social problem because literature is a social institution whose medium is language and has social functions or uses that are not entirely personal (Wiyatmi, 2013, p. 27). They identify several social aspects that play an important role in understanding literature. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren say that there are three types of sociology literature, namely sociology authors, sociology literary works, and sociology readers. In their book Theory of Literature (1956, p 109-110), Wellek and Warren explain that sociological authors think about things like social status, social ideology, and other issues related to the author as a writer explore the meaning and purpose of literary works. Finally, reader sociology investigates how readers are influenced by literary works.

Author sociology is a field of literary study that focuses on the author as the creator of literary works. In sociological authorship, the author is considered a social being whose existence is influenced by his social status in society, his

ideology, his position in society, and his relationship with readers. The author's intervention is very important in the creation of literary works. The literary work determines the author's perspective on the world described. The facts described are often not as they happened, but as the author expects. According to Wellek and Warren, sociological author studies include social status, social ideology, cultural background, and the author's social position in society (Wellek & Warren, 1956, p. 109-110).

The sociology of literature is a field of study that examines literary works in relation to social issues. This field examines literary works as a mirror of society, focusing on the content, motivation, and other things implied in literary works. In relation to social issues, sociological literary works examine literary works as a mirror of society. Reader sociology is one model of literary sociology study that focuses on the relationship between literary works and readers (Wellek & Warren, 1956, p. 109-110). The areas of study include the problems of readers and the social impact of literary works, as well as the extent to which literary works are determined or dependent on the social setting, social change and development.

Reader sociology is a field of literary study that focuses on the relationship between literary works and their readers. The focus of this research includes the social issues and impact of literary works, as well as the extent to which literary works are determined or dependent on social settings, changes, and developments.

In this study, the novel "*Yellowface*" by R.F. Kuang is used as a literary sociology perspective. This novel has rich potential to be analyzed through the

perspective of literary sociology, namely telling about the complex dynamics in the publishing industry and contemporary American and Chinese society. Kuang shows the power structure, social hierarchy, and racial tension in the literary world through the story of June Hayward, a white writer who takes over and publishes the work of her deceased friend, Athena Liu. The novel shows how the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the writers affect the reception and assessment of their works, reflecting prejudices by society in the publishing industry.

From the perspective of literary sociology, the novel *Yellowface* can be considered a critique of capitalism in the book industry and how this industry manipulates identity for financial gain. In addition, the novel illustrates how public opinion and social media influence a writer's identity and narrative. Therefore, "*Yellowface*" not only functions as a literary work, but also as a representation and critique of modern social reality, especially those related to race, identity, and power in the process of creating and consuming literary works.

**B.  Stuart Hall's Identity Concept**

Stuart Hall, in his book "Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79" (2003, p. 53), that identity is a characteristic attached to a person or something that distinguishes it from others. Hall also mentions that identity is something fluid and always changing because it is shaped by many factors. These factors can come from culture, history, and social interaction. Identity not only consists of permanent traits such as ethnicity, religion, and gender, but is also influenced by life experiences, social relationships, and personal growth.

People often discover and change the components of their identity through a process of self-exploration, contemplation, and adaptation to changes in the environment and daily life. As such, identity can change over time in reaction to personal development, shifting ideals, and a fuller awareness of oneself and the surrounding world.

Hall's concept of identity is rooted in the idea that identity is not a fixed, innate essential but rather a dynamic and evolving process of identification. In the essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990, p. 225), Hall introduces two different concepts of cultural identity. The first concept views cultural identity as a stable, unchanging, and continuous "unity" of individuals within a cultural group. This concept is based on the belief in a "one true self" that connects individuals based on shared culture, history, and heritage. Hall proposes a second concept that he believes is more applicable in today's world. This second concept of identity are about "becoming" as well as "being."

In order to understand identity, Hall presents the two concepts of "becoming" and "being" (Hall, S. 1990, p, 225) as certainty and flexibility. Understanding identity as "being" is an attempt to understand who we are in a particular situation. It includes more fixed and unchanging aspects of identity like ethnicity, gender, and family history. Furthermore, "being" can also refer to established and fixed characteristics like one's career, interests, and core values. In contrast, identity as "becoming" emphasizes how a person's or a group's identity constantly develops and shifts as a result of interaction and negotiation within a

social and cultural context. It acknowledges that cultural identities are dynamic and ever-producing, ever being created and altered within the context of how culture, history, and power relation.

According to Hall (Hall et all., 2003, p. 53), identity is not predetermined from birth but rather one that is constantly negotiated, constructed, and reconstructed through interactions with others and our position in different cultural systems. This statement implies that one's identity is never fully formed but is constantly evolving.

In addition to another concept in his work, "Who Needs Identity?" (1996, p. 4), Hall elaborates further on this concept by stating that identity is shaped by various discourses, representations, and narratives surrounding individuals. Identity is also temporary and can change as individuals define different cultural contexts and power relations.

Hall's concept of identity has profoundly influenced various fields as it challenges fundamental notions of identity and encourages a more contextualized and in-depth understanding of how identities are formed, talked about, and transformed. Stuart Hall's approach to identity emphasizes that the fields of culture, history, and power relations are fluid, complex, and in constant conversation. He challenges the idea that identity is something fixed, stable, and unchangeable. Instead, identities are always "becoming," shaped by the way individuals interact, speak, and perform within a particular cultural context.

## C. Negotiating Identity

Negotiation is an interactive process in which two or more parties attempt to reach an agreement or mutually beneficial solution through discussion, talk, and the exchange of views. Stuart Hall describes identity negotiation as a dynamic process in which individuals actively reach agreement about their understanding of themselves in relation to the wider social and cultural context (Hall & Gay. 1996, p. 6). He explains how individual and group identities are formed, maintained, and developed through the dynamic interaction of broad social, cultural, and political elements.

In his book Questions of Cultural Identity (1996, p. 17), Hall underlines how social interaction causes identity. In addition, Hall emphasizes that the role of agents is very important in the process of cultural identity formation, which is formed through the ever-changing interactions between individuals, groups, and social institutions. Individuals and groups can be active in debating and rejecting cultural identities assigned by dominant forces, not just passively. The process of identity formation requires this resistance.

Hall explains in his book Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices (1997, p. 25) that the process of representation is interactive because it involves an exchange of meanings between cultural producers and consumers. He also discusses how individual and group agents can challenge and transform dominant cultural representations by using different cultural practices and narratives. Cultural identities are negotiated and formed through resistance to dominant representations.

From the explanation above, the ke elements of identity negotiation are as follows:

1.  Interactive Process

    Hall views identity formation as something that is never unified and is increasingly fragmented in modern times. Identity is never singular but diverse, constructed across a range of discourses, practices, and positions that are often intersecting and opposing (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Hall also views identity as an interactive process, where identity is actively constructed through interactions with others and society as a whole, rather than given or imposed. Individuals and groups talk about the cultural and social norms around them. They take up, change, reject, or reinterpret these norms as part of their identity formation. For example, a young woman from an American immigrant family may negotiate her identity through interacting with media representations of her culture, talking to her family members, and having social and educational experiences.

2.  Agency and Resistance

    Hall highlights that identity is not an essence but rather a position in which identity is a source of resistance and a place of oppression (Hall & Gay. 1996, p. 17). For Hall, the agency and resistance of individuals in negotiating their identities is an active process that involves the agency of individuals' ability to act independently and make their own free choices. This means that individuals can reject, reinterpret, and recreate identities determined by society. These two concepts are interrelated and emphasize aspects of agency and the ability of individuals or groups to negotiate and fight for their own identity. Agency provides space to

choose, express, and shape identity according to one's own will, while resistance allows individuals to resist or reject identities imposed by others. For example, by creating alternative representations through art, music, or social media, a group of young activists can challenge the dominant narrative of their identity and assert their agency in shaping their own identity.

**D.  Constructing Identity**

Stuart Hall said that identity structure is how identity is formed and framed by social structures, discourses, cultures, and power relations in society. Hall asserts in his book Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices (1997, p. 15-17) that representation is a social construction that shapes our understanding of the world and is not a representation of objective reality. In his book, Cultural Identity and Diaspora (1990, p. 222), Hall states that diasporic identity can describe how individuals and groups identify and shape their identities. A person's historical experiences and how they shape their identities in a broader historical context also influence these cultural shifts.

In the explanation above, the key aspects that can be taken as identity construction are as follows:

1.  Cultural Elements

Hall emphasizes that cultural representations, such as those found in the media, literature, and popular culture, can shape individual identities. As Hall argues, representation is making meaning with language, and these representations can support or challenge existing identities, causing a process of identification (Hall, 1997, p. 25). Identity is shaped by the "tools" provided by religion, language,

and tradition. These elements are major influences that individuals accept, change, or reject as part of their negotiating identity. For example, a movie that portrays a particular ethnic group in a stereotypical or negative light can influence how members of that group see and discuss their identity, either by rejecting or accepting the representation.

2.  Historical Context

According to Hall, identity has a historical background. Cultural identities are defined as identifiable points or unstable seams made in historical and cultural discourses (Hall, 1990, p. 235). The history of a place and its people, especially events such as colonization or migration, plays an important role in how identities are constructed and negotiated. The negotiation of identity is influenced by the legacy of historical factors and ongoing social, political, and economic conditions. For example, the historical legacies of slavery, segregation, and the struggle for civil rights have shaped the identities of African Americans in the United States. These factors influence the way they construct their identities in modern society.

3.  Power

Antonio Gramsci's concept of power refers to the ways in which dominant groups in society maintain their power and influence through the creation and dissemination of particular cultural representations and discourses. This concept influenced Hall's thinking about identity negotiation. The power in question is based on leadership and persuasion, not simply command or coercion (Hall, 1986, p. 20). The identities available to individuals, especially those from subordinate or

marginalized groups, can be shaped and limited by these dominant representations. Identity negotiation also involves power disputes. In situations where power is unequal, dominant groups impose certain identities on other groups. Identity negotiation can therefore be a form of resistance to dominant narratives and an attempt to reclaim or reshape one's identity. For example, mainstream media often maintains dominant standards of beauty, success, and masculinity. This can limit the identities of people who do not fit these standards, such as people of color or people with disabilities.

4. Hybridity and Fluidity

Identity as something that is not fixed and static, but is seen as something that is formed through dynamic and often hybrid diasporic experiences (Hall, 1990, p. 235). Both concepts, hybridity and fluidity, emphasize the ever-moving, changing, and negotiating nature of identity. Hybridity emphasizes the mixing and merging of different cultural elements in the formation of new identities, while fluidity emphasizes the fluid and changing nature of identity itself. Hall recognizes that identities are constantly changing, shaped by a variety of intersecting cultural influences. Individuals may embrace and negotiate multiple, sometimes conflicting identities. For example, a person with a mixed cultural or racial background may embrace and negotiate multiple identities at once, drawing from a variety of cultural influences and experiences. This can lead to a sense of hybridity and flexibility.

Identity construction refers to the process by which an individual or group's identity is formed and understood through cultural representations, signifying practices, and historical and power impacts. It is a process that involves constructing

meaning and understanding about oneself and one's group within a broader social

context.

# CHAPTER III

# RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss research methods and techniques that the researcher uses to collect data and analyze data in this study. The researcher divide this chapter into four parts, namely: research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis. Thus, readers will easily understand how this research was conducted.

## A. Research Design

The design in this study uses the literary criticism method, which is a very common method used to study literary works. From the perspective of Peck and Doyle (1993), literary criticism is a way of acknowledging, assessing, and interpreting a work of literature to find out the things that are often questioned in the work of literature. In literary criticism, some elements compose it, including how the relationship between the work and the writer. In addition, Abrams (2014) says that the work can be impacted by the perspective of the background so that the work is certainly connected to what is in the universe that determines the work and how the work creates its perspective on the artist as the creator and the audience as the audience of the work itself.

## B. Data Source

The source of this research as the object is the novel Yelloface by R. F. Kuang published on 25 May 2023 by Harper Collins. The novel has 329 pages.

## C. Data Collection

A document study of literary texts was used as a data collection technique in this literary research by conducting an in-depth review of documents in the form of literary texts that were the object of study (Ratna, 2013). The researcher found various ways to collect data for the review in the form of words, sentences, paragraphs, and conversations in the novel. Initially, the researcher read the book repeatedly. This aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the entire storyline. Then the researcher recognized the parts of the story, especially the depiction and discussion related to the purpose of the review and the theory used by underlining and taking notes. In conclusion, the researcher combined and described the data based on the topic of this research.

## D. Data Analysis

The next step, the researcher analyzed the data that had been collected by addressing the problems in this thesis. Furthermore, the researcher provided an analysis using the theory proposed by Stuart Hall regarding negotiating identity. The focus was on the development of the main character, June Hayward, into Juniper Song, as the owner of The Last Front in the novel *Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang. Finally, the researcher concluded the analysis in relation to the research problem of this study.

# CHAPTER IV

# FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher obtained and analyzed research data to answer research questions about the negotiating identity and constructing identity carried out by the main character of the Kuang's *Yellowface*, June. This research is divided into two, namely how the main character negotiating her identity as Chinese writer and how the main character constructing her identity as the owner of The Last Front in the novel *Yellowface*.

## A. Negotiating Identity of the Main Character

In this section, the researcher focus on the identity negotiation used by the main character, June, as a Chinese writer. According to Hall, there are two key aspects used to solve the problem of identity negotiation. The concept of identity negotiation refers to a dynamic and complex process, individuals actively negotiate their understanding of themselves in relation to the wider social and cultural context (Hall et al. 2003). Individuals can accept, reject, or modify the identity offered by society. The key aspects are interactive processes, agency and resistance. In this novel, the researcher found that June in negotiates her identity by carrying out an interactive process and using her agency and resistance.

## 1. Interactive Process

As explained in the previous chapter, the interactive process is a process in which individuals actively interact with their social environment and form their identity. Identities formed through interactions with others and society as a whole

are not given or imposed. This identity negotiation process is carried out by them in two directions where this process is broad and requires society to not only shape individuals but also vice versa. According to Hall, identity is not static, but is continuously formed and negotiated through complex interactions involving broad cultural and social aspects between individuals and their social environment (Hall et al., 2003).

June's identity was initially as a writer who felt insecure and marginalized, especially because she had not yet managed to gain recognition in the literary world. June began her writing career with enthusiasm while working at Teach for America. In between her work hours, she wrote her first novel, Over the Sycamore, a profound story of coming of age, loss, and sisterhood. This is in the following data.

> *I'd come home after work every day to meticulously draft the story I'd wanted to tell since my childhood. (Yellowface, p. 3-4).*

The data shows June's dedication in realizing her dream of becoming a writer. After finishing her novel, June tried to find a literary agent by sending her manuscript to almost fifty agents, but without success. Finally, she managed to get a small publisher called Evermore after sending her manuscript through an open call. This is in the data below.

> *The book was picked up by a small press named Evermore during an open call for submissions. (Yellowface, p. 3-4).*

In the above data, June experienced early success when her novel was accepted by Evermore with a ten thousand dollar advance, which seemed like a lot to her at the time. Unfortunately, Evermore went bankrupt before her novel was

printed, but the rights to her work were restored, and her literary agent was able to sell the rights to the novel to a major publisher for a twenty thousand dollar advance. However, despite the promising start, problems began to arise when the first printing of her novel was reduced, book tours were canceled, and support from the publisher dwindled. This is reflected in the data below.

> *My first print run was reduced from ten thousand to five thousand copies. (Yellowface, p. 3-4).*

In the data, it illustrates how her expectations began to decline. When the book sales were not as expected, with only about two to three thousand copies sold, June felt forgotten by her publisher, especially after her editor was replaced by someone who was not interested in supporting her book. This is in the data below.

> *I often wonder whether he's forgotten about me entirely. (Yellowface, p. 3-4).*

In the data, June feels that her feelings are neglected and she is frustrated with the situation that does not support her. Although June experiences these difficulties, people around her consider it normal in the publishing industry, which is full of challenges and difficulties for debut authors. This is in the data below.

> *That's par for the course, everyone told me. Everyone has a shitty debut experience. (Yellowface, p. 3-4).*

The data above reflects the harsh reality that new authors often experience in facing the realities of the industry. Finally, June wondered why some people, like Athena, could immediately achieve great success with their debut book, while she had to struggle to get recognition. This is in the data below.

> *So why, then, do some people rocket to stardom on their first try? (Yellowface, p. 3-4).*

The data shows June's deep questions about the unfairness of the distribution of success in the publishing world. She compares herself to Athena who made her debut and immediately became successful. This can be seen in the data below.

> *Six months before Athena's debut novel came out, she got a big, sexy photo spread in a widely read publishing magazine under the title "Publishing's Newest Prodigy Is Here to Tell the AAPI Stories We Need." She sold foreign rights in thirty different territories. Her debut launched amidst a fanfare of critical acclaim in venues like the New Yorker and the New York Times, and it occupied top spots on every bestseller list for weeks. The awards circuit the following year was a foregone conclusion. (Yellowface, p. 4)..*

In the data, Athena is described as having achieved extraordinary success in a short time since her debut novel Voice and Echo, which launched her as a rising star in the literary world. This makes June feel amazed and intimidated by Athena's achievements and talents. Through June's interactive process with Athena, she begins to negotiate her identity and transforms over time, gradually absorbing aspects of Athena's success and using their closeness to position herself in more prestigious literary circles.

In the beginning, June accidentally befriends a Chinese girl named Athena, because she used to live on the same floor at Yale. This is in the data below.

> ATHENA AND I ONLY BECAME FRIENDS BY CIRCUMSTANCE. WE LIVED on the same floor at Yale our freshman year, and because we've both known we wanted to be writers since we were sentient, we ended up in all the same undergraduate writing seminars. (*Yellowface, p. 2).*

On the data above shows that the two of them become friends because they lived on the same floor at Yale when freshman year. They end up become writers and they do not have a strong or long-term friendship. In the writing world, they are more like friends or colleagues. June constantly compares herself with Athena

because she is more successful as a writer. June is jealous of her success. She describe her jealous on the data below.

> Jealousy is constantly comparing myself to her and coming up short; is panicking that I'm not writing well enough or fast enough, that I am not, and never will be, enough. (*Yellowface, p. 8-9*).

So that data shows that June had jealous of Athena because she likes to compare herself with Athena. Because of her the jealousy itself, June decides to take Athena's manuscript that she finds when she is present at the scene of Athena's tragic death in an accident. This is in the data below.

> *At last, they let me go. It's four in the morning. An officer—at some point the police arrived, which I guess happens when there's a dead body—offers me a ride home to Rosslyn. We spend most of it in silence, and as we pull up to my building, he offers some condolences that I hear but don't process. I stagger into my apartment, rip off my shoes and bra, gargle some mouthwash, and collapse onto my bed. I cry for a while, great howling sobs to vent out this awful clawing energy in my body, and then one melatonin and two Lunestas later, I manage to fall asleep.*
>
> *Meanwhile, in my bag, tossed at the floor of my bed, Athena's manuscript sits like a hot sack of coals. (Yellowface, p. 20 and 21).*

The data shows that June consciously chose to take her friend's work to achieve her career goals. Because she was frustrated and disappointed with her career, which was not as popular as Athena's, June chose to take the opportunity she had to take Athena's script and make it her own work. Pada saat sebelum tragedy, June June was given the opportunity to read Athena's work, allowing her to take it secretly after the tragedy of Athena's death. This is in the data below.

> *What a bizarre, persistent metaphor. I know reading the pages will only fuel my jealousy, but I can't help myself. I pick a stack of ten or fifteen pages off the top and skim through them. Holy God, they're good. I'm not great at reading when I'm tipsy, and my eyes keep sliding to the end of every paragraph, but even from a sloppy once-over, I can tell this book is going to dazzle. The writing is tight, assured. There are none of the juvenile slipups of her debut work. Her voice has matured and sharpened. Every description, every*

*turn of phrase —it all sings. It's better than anything I could write, perhaps in this lifetime. (Yellowface, p. 14).*

In the data, June feels a mixture of admiration and envy towards Athena's work. June realizes that Athena's work has developed and improved since her debut, making June feel that Athena's writing is far better than what she could possibly produce in her life. This reinforces June's inferiority complex compared to Athena.

To make it her own work, June did research on the script, which tells about the history of the Chinese military and the contributions and experiences of about 140,000 members of the Chinese Labor Corps who were not appreciated. The following data shows this.

> *The whole process takes three editorial rounds over four months. By the end, I've become so familiar with the project that I can't tell where Athena ends and I begin, or which words belong to whom. I've done the research. I've read a dozen books now on Asian racial politics and the history of Chinese labor at the front. I've lingered over every word, every sentence, and every paragraph so many times that I nearly know them by heart—hell, I've probably been over this novel more times than Athena herself. (Yellowface, p. )*

To ensure that the manuscript is correct and accurate, June did what the data above explains. In addition, it helped June better understand what Athena wrote. June spent a lot of time understanding every word, sentence, and paragraph. She almost memorized the entire manuscript. This shows that June was more involved and committed to the manuscript than Athena. After doing research, she also edited Athena's manuscript, which is shown in the data below.

> *It's just a lark at first. A writing exercise. I wasn't rewriting the manuscript so much as seeing if I could fill in the blanks: I was only going to play around with one of the middle chapters—one that had so many unfinished scenes that you could only tell what it was trying to say if you were intimately acquainted with the writing, and the writer. (Yellowface, p. 29).*

In the paragraph, June describes her actions as something unplanned. The paragraph above contains the word "lark," which is a mere idle activity. This shows that June did the script editing activity because she was idle and felt that she was "just filling in the blanks," which she thought had many unfinished scenes. She also emphasized that her understanding of the script depended on her closeness to the original author, Athnea.

> *But then I just kept going. I couldn't stop. I feel so confident in my writing just then. I keep finding turns of phrases that suit the text far better than Athena's throwaway descriptions. I spot where the pacing sags, and I mercilessly cut out the meandering filler. I draw out the plot's through line like a clear, powerful note. I tidy up; I trim and decorate; I make the text sing. (Yellowface, p. 29).*

June shows confidence in her writing ability in the paragraph. June feels she has better writing and editing skills than Athena. After changing and perfecting Athena's script, she finds more suitable phrases, fixes the storyline, and reorganizes the text to make it feel more alive. She begins to take full control of the script. She believes that she has made the script more alive because of the major changes she made.

> *I'm going to take this and make it mine. It's not like I sat down and hatched up some evil plan to profit off my dead friend's work. No, seriously—it felt natural, like this was my calling, like it was divinely ordained.*
>
> *And then—who knows? Maybe I could get it published for her, too. (Yellowface, p. 29).*

According to the data, June claims that the work is hers because she has revised the manuscript. She admits that her actions are evil, but she feels this is a calling for her. She justifies her own actions. She even has the idea to publish the manuscript as her own work. To take this great opportunity, June chooses to publish the work for Athena. To make this work original and authentic, she chooses what

to add, remove, and retain. June edited "The Last Front" with her editor, Daniella after getting a publishing house.

Editing is part of the production before the work is published. Before a work is published, editing is done to ensure that the data and facts presented are clear, accurate, and do not violate applicable rules, and to help reduce errors made by the author in the manuscript (Smith, 2021). June and Daniella deleted some parts of the original writing of Athena. The following data shows this.

> *We soften the language.*
>
> *We also soften some of the white characters. No, it's not as bad as you think. Athena's original text is almost embarrassingly biased; the French and British soldiers are cartoonishly racist.*
>
> *Instead we switch one of the white bullies to a Chinese character, and one of the more vocal Chinese laborers to a sympathetic white farmer. This adds the complexity, the humanistic nuance that perhaps Athena was too close to the project to see. (Yeloowface, p. 43).*

In the data above June admitted that she and her editor had softened the language of the script. This was done to make the story more subtle and perhaps more acceptable to a larger audience. In addition, June changed the way white people were portrayed in the story. Here, the word "soften" suggests that the characters were "lighter" or less harsh in their behavior. Specifically in terms of racism. This was due to the fact that Athena's original script was too biased and overrepresented the French and British soldiers, making them look like racist caricatures. She used this as an excuse to justify the changes she made, making it seem like she was "improving" the original script.

In the quote, June also claims that she cut thousands of words that seemed to oppress white people and replace them with Chinese characters. She replaced

one of the Chinese worker characters with a sympathetic white farmer. She did this for the reason of having a humane nuance. Daniella, June's editor, liked some parts that were edited by June rather than Athena's original. This is in the following data.

> *Some of Daniella's favorite passages are the ones original to me. There's one part, for instance, where a poor French family wrongly accuses a group of Chinese laborers of stealing a hundred francs from their house. The laborers, determined to make a good impression of their race and nation, collect two hundred francs among them and gift it to the family even though it's clear they are innocent. Athena's draft only made a brief mention of the wrongful accusation, but my version turns it into a heartwarming illustration of Chinese virtue and honesty. (Yellowface, p. 46).*

According to the data above, June, with her own ideas, was praised and liked by Daniella. June felt more capable of creating this story than Athena. June proved that "The Last Front" was hers and more original than Athena. Her writing was more trusted because of its credibility. This negotiation of her identity was because she chose to maintain the capability of her more humane version of writing. According to her, editing was done because it was good and important. June wanted to appear non-racist by not siding with one party. She wanted more humanity nuance. June became a Chinese writer, but she did not fully supporting in China characters. June consciously chose the aspects of her identity that she wanted to change and maintain.

June's actions in editing Athena's original manuscript and publishing it under the pen name 'Juniper Song' illustrate a form of cultural appropriation Cultural appropriation based on Young, James O. (2008), is the use or appropriation of certain cultural elements (such as symbols, artifacts, manners, knowledge, or practices) by members of a dominant or different culture from their culture of origin, often without deep understanding, permission, recognition, or respect for

their original values and context.. This behavior exemplifies how June selectively adopts cultural elements associated with Chinese identity to reshape her public persona as a Chinese writer. By taking over Athena's work and changing key elements to fit her narrative, June attempts to blend her own identity with a culture she is not genuinely a part of, thereby appropriating it for personal gain.

The purpose of June's publishing house's name change was to make her name more appealing and in line with the trend of diversity in the publishing industry. The name "Juniper Song" is expected to be understood as a name that is likely of Asian descent, which could provide an advantage in a market that increasingly prioritizes authors of diverse backgrounds. The following data shows this.

> *As it turns out, they want to position me as "worldly." Jessica and Emily send us a longer email detailing their plans the next Monday: We think June's background is very interesting, so we want to make sure readers are aware of that.*
>
> *And they suggest I publish under the name Juniper Song instead of June Hayward. (Yellowface, p. 60).*

In the data above, June negotiated her identity by changing her name from "June Hayward" to "Juniper Song". "Song" is her middle name. June's agency hopes that this is a comeback and a new start as a writer. By adopting the name 'Juniper Song,' June appropriates a culturally ambiguous identity that aligns with Chinese heritage, despite having no real connection to it. This strategic choice of a name reflects her intent to project an image that fits her narrative, thereby appropriating cultural markers to legitimize her claim as a Chinese writer. June herself believes that she has never lied about being Chinese. This is in the data below.

*I never lied. That's important. I never pretended to be Chinese, or made up life experiences that I didn't have. It's not fraud, what we're doing. We're just suggesting the right credentials, so that readers take me and my story seriously, so that nobody refuses to pick up my work because of some outdated preconceptions about who can write what. And if anyone makes assumptions, or connects the dots the wrong way, doesn't that say far more about them than me? (Yellowface, p. 61).*

In the data, June's name "Song" looks ambiguous, but this is done so that readers can take it seriously, rather than refusing to read a piece of writing because of who is allowed to write what. If readers don't take it seriously, it will show that they are worse than her. Hall's thoughts about the possibility of a person's identity changing to achieve their life goals are in line with June's name change (Hall & Gay. 1996).

June also made changes to her clothing to look like an Asian writer, which fits her new name, "Juniper Song." During this process, she used a new profile picture that gave the impression of having a different ethnic background. June had a lot of money to do professional photo shoots with the support of her agency and publisher. June took good photos of Athena because she wanted to look beautiful like her. The following data shows this.

*This time I drop half a grand on a professional photographer in DC named Cate. We shoot in her studio, where she employs all sorts of lighting equipment I've never seen before, and which I can only hope will wash out my acne scars. Cate is brisk, friendly, professional. Her instructions are clear and direct. "Chin up. Relax your face a bit. Now I'm going to tell a joke, and just react however you want, just don't pay attention to the lens. Lovely. Oh, that's lovely." (Yellowface, p. 70).*

June spent a lot of money on professional photographers, as the data above shows. This shows how hard June worked to change her identity. It shows how important her appearance was to June in her attempt to construct an identity that would support her claim to be the author of The Last Front, Athena. Cate, a professional photographer, told her she had to pose well, and June, in her discomfort, showed that she did not have much experience

in the new world she was entering. In addition, June received blurry photos of herself. The following data shows this.

> *She sends me a selection of watermarked photos a few days later. I'm amazed by how good I look, especially in the photos we took outside. During golden hour I come off as nicely tanned, which makes me look sort of racially ambiguous. My eyes are cast demurely to the side, my mind full of profound and cryptic thoughts. I look like someone who could write a book about Chinese laborers in World War I and do it justice. I look like a Juniper Song. (Yellowface, p. 70).*

In the data, Cate as June's photographer, took her photo outside during the golden hour. So the photo looks ambiguous in showing her race. The photo was taken during the "golden hour" or beautiful sunbathing so that the skin looks "nicely tanned". In the photo, June looks like a person named "Juniper Song," who can write about the history of Chinese workers during the First World War. The yellow light from the golden hour hides her true identity as a white woman. June's yellow face becomes the theme of this novel.

According to Lee (2018), the "*Yellowface* phenomenon" refers to the practice in which white or non-Asian people adopt appearances, behaviors, and stereotypes associated with Asian culture, often for entertainment or business purposes. The practice demonstrates how media can influence public perceptions of race and identity and create social hierarchies based on skin color. As a result, the practice results in inaccurate and often demeaning representations of Asian cultures and reinforces racial stereotypes. The phenomenon is linked to the broader issue of colorism and white privilege, in which people with lighter skin often enjoy greater social advantages than people with darker skin. The term "*Yellowface*" is also used to describe the phenomenon.

By changing her name and new profile picture, June actively negotiates her identity. She consciously shapes her identity into "Juniper Song". June chooses which aspects she wants to adopt, change, and maintain. By carefully crafting her new photo profile to appear racially ambiguous, June engages in cultural appropriation, manipulating her appearance to align with the image of a writer knowledgeable about Chinese history. This visual appropriation serves to legitimize her narrative and project an identity that is not authentically her own. But June also maintains some aspects other than her writing style, namely the language she uses. June tries to master Chinese. This is in the data below.

> *I even try to teach myself Mandarin, but no matter how hard I try, all the characters look as unrecognizable as chicken scratch, and the different tones feel like an elaborate practical joke, so I give up. (Yellowface, p. 49).*

In the data above, June gave up on learning Mandarin. She did research by reading all the sources Athena used in the draft of "The Last Front" including the names of the characters Athena used. She refused to understand the Chinese characters Athena wrote in Mandarin. This means that June negotiated her identity by maintaining the language she uses, which is English, not Mandarin.

## 2. Agency and Resistance

This key aspect highlights the individual's ability to make decisions by challenging imposed identity constructions. According to Hall and Gay (1996), a person's desire and refusal to negotiate their identity is an active process that involves a person's ability to act independently and make free decisions. Individuals have the ability to reject, reinterpret, and create new identities that fit their identities in society. These two important elements are interconnected. Where

agency gives individuals the freedom to choose, speak, and develop their own identities. However, resistance allows people to reject identities imposed by society.

June menghadapi tantangan mengenai of "who can write" when she is about to publish "The Last Front". In the novel *Yellowface*, June is advised to follow the Sensitivity Reading by Candice Lee. Hal ini dikarenakan karya June berfokus pada pengalaman karakter asia, ada kekhawatiran dari penerbit bahwa sebagai sseorang yang bukan berasal dari latar belakang asia, June mungkin tidak sepenuhnya mampu menggambarkan budaya tersebut secara akurat. This method allows paid readers to read the manuscript culturally. This is done because more and more white writers are criticized for using racist tropes (Lee, 2020). The following data shows this.

> *Dear all, I want to emphasize again how important I feel it is that we get a sensitivity reader for this project. In this current climate, readers are bound to be suspicious of someone writing outside of their lane—and for good reason. I understand this would slow down production, but an SR would protect June from accusations of both cultural appropriation and, worse, cultural leeching. It would show that June meant to represent the Chinese diaspora community in good faith.*
>
> *Jesus Christ. Cultural appropriation? Cultural leeching? What is her problem?*

According to the above information, Candice Lee sent an email to the team to emphasize the importance of using a sensitive reader in the novel project "The Last Front". Saran ini menyoroti bahwa penulis seperti June, yang tidak memiliki pengalaman langsung dengan budaya yang digambarkan, perlu pengawasan ekstra untuk memastikan akurasi dan sesitivitas dalam karyanya. The concerns raised with June offended and frustrated her with words like "cultural appropriation" and

"cultural sucking," elements of another culture are taken or utilized without permission or deep understanding, often for personal gain.

> *I forward her email to Brett. Can you tell her to step off? I ask. Agents are wonderful intermediaries during heated exchanges like this; they let you keep your hands clean while they drive in the knife. I think I've made my stance pretty clear, so why is she still bothering me with this?*

Because of this data, June chooses to use her agent, Brett, to handle the issue. This shows how she uses the power and position of others to avoid direct conflict, maintain her image, and help others solve her difficult problems. She does not want to participate in deeper conversations about cultural issues.

> *Brett proposes that perhaps, instead of bringing in an outsider, we can have Candice do the sensitivity read instead. Candice responds curtly that she is Korean American, not Chinese American, and that Brett's assumption otherwise is a racist microaggression. (It is at this point that I determine Candice exists entirely to complain about microaggressions.) Daniella jumps in to smooth things over. Of course they'll default to my authorial judgment. Hiring a sensitivity reader is entirely my choice, and I've made it clear that I don't want one. We'll stick to the original production timeline. Everything is fine.*

Brett, as June's agent, believes that Candice Lee is a Korean American who is capable of performing this sensitivity reading task, as shown in the data above. This suggests that people do not understand or notice the differences between Korean and Chinese cultures. Candice responds emphatically, emphasizing that she is not Chinese but rather Korean American and that Brett's belief that all Asian cultures are the same is a racist microaggression.  According to Sue et al (2007), microaggressions are actions or statements that seem small or harmless but contain bias or prejudice, often related to race or other identities. Candice believes that a broader cultural insensitivity is evident in Brett's statement.

> *The following week, Candice sends me an email apologizing for her tone, on which Daniella is cc'd. It's not a real apology; in fact, it's passive-aggressive*

*as fuck: I'm sorry if you felt offended by my editorial suggestions. As you know, June, I only want to help publish The Last Front as well as we can.*

*I roll my eyes, but I take the high road. I've won my battle, and it never pays to bully a poor editorial assistant. My reply is succinct: Thank you, Candice. I appreciate that. (Yellowface, p. 64-65).*

The data shows that June uses her agency to change her life as a writer. With her new identity, "Juniper Song," she makes an active decision to claim the work and navigate the publishing world. Konflik yang dihadapi oleh June mengacu pada pertempuran emosional atau professional yang ia menangkan dengan mengendalikan reaksinya. Ia menggunakan agencynya dengan tenang dan menolak dengan sopan meski merasa terganggu. In contrast, as a critic, Candice Lee uses her agency to raise sensitive issues about representation. She critiques June's "The Last Front" for influencing public discourse and challenging the narrative that June has altered. Candice Lee's critique can be considered a form of resistance because she refuses to accept the narrative that June has altered and demands a more authentic and sensitive recognition of Asian culture through Sensitivity Reading. June's resistance is by rejecting Sensitivity Reading. She tries to maintain her position and avoid negative criticism from Candice Lee. June resists by using her editor, Daniella, and her literary agent, Brett.

Her new identity, "Juniper Song," June uses her agency to create an identity that she finds interesting and appropriate to the theme of Athena's manuscript, which is the history of Chinese miters during the first world war of the twentieth century. June takes active actions to control how she wants to be seen by others and to gain benefits from this new identity (Hall & Gay. 1996). June also shows resistance by defending her actions and trying to justify her choices. This reflects

June's efforts to negotiate her identity and resist narratives that seek to damage her reputation.

## B. Constructing Identity of the Main Character

In this section, the researcher was focused on the identity construction experienced by the main character, June, as the owner of "The Last Front" in Kuang's *Yellowface*. According to Hall, there are four key aspects used to solve the problem of identity construction. This concept of identity construction refers to interrelated and inseparable processes. Identity construction refers to the way in which identity is shaped and framed by social structures, cultural discourses, and broader power relations in society (Hall et al., 2003). The identity adopted or displayed by an individual is often influenced by how that identity is represented and understood by society. These key aspects are cultural elements, historical context, power and hegemony, and hybridity and fluidity. In this novel, the researcher found that the main character, June, uses these four key aspects in her identity construction.

## 1. Cultural Elements

As explained in the previous chapter, cultural elements focus on how to form identities in society. Hall emphasizes that cultural representations such as those found in media, literature, and popular culture can shape individual identities (Hall, S. 1990). June's friendship with Athena gives her access to knowledge about Asian cultures. One of them is the culture of "saving face".

A concept known as "saving face" originates from East Asian cultures, particularly Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. It refers to the importance of maintaining an individual's honor, reputation, and dignity in social interactions. This idea is used to regulate behavior and social interactions so as not to demean or embarrass others (Kim & Markus, 1999). The ability to maintain or enhance one's own and others' "face" is often the basis of an individual's identity in societies that value this idea. It can impact how they act, speak, and resolve conflicts.

June uses the "Saving Face" culture while teaching at the Young AAPI Writers Workshop in Massachusetts, She received a report from Peggy Chan in the form of complaints from several students about her attitude. June uses "saving face" to avoid the problems she causes. This is shown in the data below.

> "—and she's been asking if I can come visit, but I keep putting it off for work, and I thought, Well, she's not always going to be around . . ." I trail off, rather astounded by my brazen lie. My mother isn't sick at all. She's doing fine. "So perhaps it's the stress of that situation that is affecting my conduct, and for that I truly apologize . . ."

The data shows June talking to Peggy. To avoid her duties, she creates a lie about her mother being "sick." She says that her mother has been asking June to visit her, but she keeps putting it off because of work. June confirms her previous lie by saying that her mother will probably always be around, which strengthens her lie and gives her an excuse to stop working.

> "I understand." Peggy doesn't seem the least bit suspicious. If anything, she sounds eager. Perhaps she, too, has been secretly hoping I would quit on my own. I egg her along. "I'm sorry to leave the class . . ."

In the data, June continues to lie by saying that her mother's illness may have caused her to behave badly, and she apologizes for it. She uses this excuse to

explain or justify her behavior or actions that are considered unprofessional or inappropriate. Peggy sounds very enthusiastic and does not doubt June's lie. June even thinks that Peggy may really want to resign, which shows that June can sense that Peggy may feel burdened by June's presence or her work. As a result, this lie is a mutually desired solution.

> *"Oh, we'll figure it out. There are some local writers in the area. We'll have to find a substitute for tomorrow, so I might ask Rachel from the office to step in . . ." She trails off. "Anyhow, we'll deal with it. We'll tell the class you had a family emergency. I'm sure they'll be disappointed, but they'll understand."*

In the above data, Peggy quickly responded to June's resignation and began to look for alternative solutions, such as finding a substitute to fill in for the class. Peggy was even willing to tell the class that June had a family emergency, which shows that Peggy was very cooperative and even tried to cover up June's lie with a story that was acceptable to the class.

> *"Thank you, Peggy. That means a lot. I'm sorry for the inconvenience."*
> *"You take care, June. I'm sorry again."(Yellowface, p. 251).*

In the data, June responded politely, thanking Peggy for her understanding and apologizing for the inconvenience she had caused. This closed the conversation on a note that seemed full of gratitude and regret, despite the fact that it was a lie. In turn, Peggy showed genuine sympathy for June by expressing her regret again for the uncomfortable situation, but she did not know that this was just a trick from June. June uses an alibi that benefits herself in front of Peggy Chan, who is an Asian. This proves that June uses this "saving face" cultural information to gain personal and professional benefits without truly appreciating or understanding the complexity of the culture authentically. This can be seen in the data below.

> *That was agonizing, but at least I'm free. I once read somewhere that Asian people are so polite because they have this cultural concept of letting each other save face. They might be judging the shit out of you on the inside, but on the outside, at least, they'll let you walk away with your pride intact. (Yellowface, p. 252)*

The data above proves that June uses the Asian cultural element of "saving face" to her advantage in maintaining her image. This cultural concept influences the way June negotiates her identity in a social context. She tries to maintain a good reputation in the eyes of others and avoids situations that can damage her image as a teacher of a program teaching young writers to the Asian-American community and also as the author of "The Last Front".

## 2. Historical Context

History plays a significant role in the formation of identity. How past events, experiences, and narratives shape one's understanding of their own identity and that of others (Hall, S. 1990) is included in the historical context. After publishing "The Last Front," which she took from her deceased friend Athena, June became a Chinese writer. Indirectly, she also took on Athena's cultural experience, which informed her work.

With the experience of being a popular Chinese writer, June was asked to be an IP writer or Intellectual Property writer. She was asked to write about China. However, she was asked to write a story concept that would touch on China. This is in the data below.

> *"But the story idea—I mean, that's conflating so many different . . . like, are they serious? The one-child policy meets The Handmaid's Tale? They're not worried we're going to offend, like, all of China?"*

The data shows how June responded to the proposed idea, which seemed to combine the one-child policy in China with elements from The Handmaid's Tale, a famous dystopian film. June found the idea very controversial because it carelessly combined two different concepts, which could offend many people, especially the entire Chinese society. She expressed her concern that the story could be considered offensive and cause great controversy.

> *"Well, the book's going to be published in the West, Junie. So who really cares?"*

In the data, Brett seems to dismiss his concerns by saying that the book will be published in the West, so there is no need to worry about the reaction from China. This reflects a rather narrow and perhaps arrogant view, where the interests of the Western market are prioritized without thinking about the impact on the global audience, especially in China.

> *I can see Adele Sparks-Sato and Xiao Chen sharpening their claws. I'm not that up to date with Chinese politics, but even I can spot the land mines just glowing around this thing. If I write this, I'll be eviscerated for hating the PRC, or Chinese people, or men, or all three.*

June is aware, based on the above data, that if she accepts this project, she will receive harsh criticism from various parties, including Adele Sparks-Sato and Xiao Chen, who may be well-known critics or public figures. She is not fully versed in Chinese politics, but she is aware enough to understand that the concept of this story is full of "landmines" that could cause great controversy. This shows her awareness of the social and political risks associated with the idea. This shows that she will most likely be roundly criticized if she writes this story. June could be accused of hating all Chinese people and the People's Republic of China (PRC) at

once. This shows how controversial the idea of the story is and how careful she is in choosing a project that could endanger her name.

> *"Absolutely not," I say. "This is a nonstarter. Don't they have any other ideas? Like, I'm not opposed to working with Snowglobe per se, I just really hate this one pitch."*

Furthermore, the above data shows that June is adamantly against this story idea, calling it a "nonstarter" and unworkable. She indicates that she is willing to work with the party who proposed the idea, such as the studio or the publishing company Snowglobe, but she does not like this proposed story pitch.

> *"Well, they do, but they're tailoring their pitches to authors of the right . . . backgrounds. They're making a big pivot toward diversity this year."*
> *I snort. "Baffling that they want me, then."(Yellowface, p. 239).*

The data suggests that the companies Brett pitched to did have other ideas, but they were targeting writers with specific backgrounds—perhaps those that fit the story's themes or those that could be considered more "authentic" in their handling of the issues. This suggests that the companies are trying to increase diversity and inclusivity in their work, albeit in a way that may be inappropriate or forced.

According to the above data, June firmly refused to write the story. She realized that this would put her in danger. The industry chose her because of her interest in June's diversity, as she is a white female writer who writes about the Chinese Labor Corps. This shows that June's identity as a diverse writer is framed by the broader social structures in her society.

In addition, it is seen that "well, the book's going to be published in the West, Junie. So who really cares?" Because the book is a fusion of "The One-Child

Policy and The Handmaid's Tale" and will be published in the West, Brett feels it is okay to publish it. White people feel entitled to everything, such as the entertainment industry that insults Chinese people for their own benefit. Therefore, June refused the offer because she did not want to offend the Chinese themselves. This is in line with Hall, according to him, past narratives, events, and experiences shape the understanding of one's identity and others (Hall, S. 1990).

**3. Power**

Hall argues that it is important to understand these key concepts because they show how power and dominance can influence the formation of identity (Hall, S. 1997). Identity is not something given or fixed but rather the result of ongoing negotiation between individuals, groups, and broader power structures. June became a Chinese writer because the publishing industry accepted stories from writers who were rich in cultural uniqueness. This is in the following data.

> *So of course Athena gets every good thing, because that's how this industry works. Publishing picks a winner—someone attractive enough, someone cool and young and, oh, we're all thinking it, let's just say it, "diverse" enough— and lavishes all its money and resources on them. It's so fucking arbitrary. Or perhaps not arbitrary, but it hinges on factors that have nothing to do with the strength of one's prose. Athena—a beautiful, Yale-educated, international, ambiguously queer woman of color—has been chosen by the Powers That Be. Meanwhile, I'm just brown-eyed, brown-haired June Hayward, from Philly—and no matter how hard I work, or how well I write, I'll never be Athena Liu. (Yellowface, p. 5).*

The data shows that the industry has complex motivations for selecting and publishing works from a variety of authors. A "diverse" author is considered to have a background different from the dominant group. Asian-American author Athena in *Yellowface* incorporates diverse cultural perspectives and experiences into her work. Athena's popularity and success create a strong market for works that are original

and rich in Asian cultural representation. Therefore, June takes Athena's work because she knows that being a Chinese author has commercial value. In her attempt to capitalize on a publishing industry that is interested in this diversity, she intends to do so. Therefore, she may become a successful Chinese author like Athena.

In addition, public opinion is largely shaped by the media. Book critics are part of the media ecosystem that influences how readers view works (Johnson, 2019). When a work becomes popular and well-liked, it will also receive disapproval from people who dislike it or oppose it. June received criticism from critics, which made her book controversial. This is in the data when June used social media as a tool to promote herself and spread her story to introduce her book. By using Twitter and Goodreads, June built her image as a Chinese writer or a writer dedicated to writing about Asian culture. The following data is shown below.

*The majority of my reviews on Goodreads are five stars, but the one-stars are vitriolic. Uninspired colonizer trash, one reads. Another iteration of the white woman exploitation sob story formula: copy, paste, change the names, and voila, bestseller, reads another. And a third, which seems way too personal to be objective: What a stuck-up, obnoxious bitch. Brags too much about being a Yalie. I got this during a Kindle sale, and you can bet I made sure to get every one of the two hundred and ninety-nine cents I spent back. (Yellowface, p. 98).*

The data shows that June's work is considered to be just a formula for a white woman's story that is exploited repeatedly by changing the name and then becoming a bestseller. One of the criticisms she received was from a book critic, namely Adele Sparks-Sato. Adele herself reviewed June's writing and then brought up June's entity. This can be seen in the data below.

*"In The Last Front, Juniper Song misses an excellent opportunity to excavate a forgotten history and instead uses the suffering of thousands of Chinese laborers as a site for melodrama and white redemption," she writes. "She could have, for instance, interrogated the use of Christian missionaries to convince young, illiterate Chinese men to*

*work and die overseas, and who in France were largely recruited to keep the Chinese docile, tame, and cooperative. Instead she unabashedly praises the missionaries' role in converting laborers. The Last Front hardly breaks new ground; instead, it joins novels like The Help and The Good Earth in a long line of what I dub historical exploitation novels: inauthentic stories that use troubled pasts as an entertaining set piece for white entertainment."* (Yellowface, p. 100)

The criticisms that June received above suggest that the work reinforces the narrative of white power; specifically, June uses the suffering of Chinese workers as part of the story to depict white characters as either benevolent or in hiding. This demonstrates the narrative power that white writers have when they understand and tell history from their perspective. This critique suggests that Western hegemonic narratives continue to dominate historical representations, with stories from non-Western perspectives often ignored or simplified. June's work, "The Last Front" demonstrates how Western power and hegemony are created and reinforced.

June's writing in her work "The Last Front" has one moment that is a significant difference from Athena's script. Where Annie's character is described as a sheltered and fearful girl, she is a girl who views Chinese workers as scary and dirty people. This is in the following data.

> *Annie Waters—a character I'd expanded from Athena's draft, the seventeen-year-old daughter of YMCA missionaries—visits the laborers' camp alone to hand out Bibles and Christmas biscuits. The men, who haven't seen their wives or any women of their kind in months, understandably ogle over her. She's blonde, slim, and pretty; of course they can't get enough of her. One asks if he can kiss her on the cheek, and since it's Christmastime, she bashfully permits it.*

The above data shows how June changed the character of Annie Waters, a seventeen-year-old YMCA missionary daughter. In her changed version, Annie visits a labor camp to hand out Bibles and Christmas cookies, and the workers, who have not seen a woman for a long time, are attracted to Annie, who is described as a beautiful and attractive blonde girl. Because of the Christmas atmosphere, Annie

allows one of the workers to kiss her on the cheek. This scene is described by June

as something tender and touching.

> *I thought the scene was touching. Here we have people divided by language and race, who are nonetheless able to share a tender moment in the middle of a war. The scene also fixed an earlier gripe Daniella had with the novel, which was that it centered almost entirely on men. The era of the macho war story is over, she'd written. We need to start elevating female perspectives.*

In the data above, it is explained that June felt that this scene had a deep

meaning, showing that people of different languages and races could still share

loving moments in the midst of war. In addition, this change was also a response to

criticism from Daniella, who had previously complained that the novel was too

male-centric. Daniella emphasized the importance of increasing the female

perspective in the story, and this scene was considered an attempt to accommodate

that suggestion.

> *Athena's original draft didn't include the kiss. In her version, Annie was a sheltered, fidgety girl who thought the laborers were dirty, frightening thugs. Athena's Annie told the men a frigid "Merry Christmas" and left the biscuits at the edge of the barbed-wire enclosure, then skirted timidly away like the men were dogs that would break free of their leashes and maul her to death if given the chance. It's clear Athena was trying to point out all the racism the laborers suffered from people fighting on their own side. But there was already so much of that throughout the book.*

The data shows that June then compared her version to the original draft

written by Athena. In Athena's version, Annie's character is depicted as a very

guarded and nervous girl who sees the workers as dirty and scary people. Athena's

Annie simply says "Merry Christmas" coldly and leaves cookies on the edge of the

barbed wire fence before rushing away in fear, as if the workers were wild dogs

who would attack her if given the chance. This shows how Athena wanted to

highlight the racism that the workers experienced from people who were on the same side of the war.

> *It was starting to feel heavy-handed, repetitive. Why not include a scene that showed the potential for interracial love, instead? Can't we all get behind decrying antimiscegenation? This is, apparently, the most racist artistic choice I could have made. (Yellowface, p. 102-103).*

The data shows that June added this scene because she thought it showed humanity. Where people can come together and share a beautiful moment despite the conflict. Book critics and other readers responded to the scene. Author June acknowledged the possibility that the scene had been misinterpreted. She thought the scene was meant to show the possibility of love and understanding across races. However, the scene was heavily criticized for being racist and promoting stereotypes. In addition, June's criticism came from readers, who also had a significant influence on her work. There were from Kimberly, a YouTuber who graduated from UCLA, and Xiao Chen, a man who wrote harsh comments on the internet. The following data shows this.

> *From Xiao Chen: Do all white women think we're obsessed with fucking them??? Imagine the arrogance. Trust me, Juniper, you're not that hot.*

> *"For my next video," drawls Kimberly Deng, "I will be doing an Annie Waters makeup tutorial, featuring a turmeric face mask and white tears." (Yellowface, p. 104).*

Based on the above data, Xiao Chen's critique focuses on Juniper's story idea that non-white men, especially Asian men, are seen as sexually obsessed with white women. This reflects gender and racial stereotypes that often benefit white people. It also highlights power, where standards of attractiveness and beauty are often dominated by white and Western perspectives. Xiao's statement, "Trust me,

Juniper, you're not that pretty," challenges the dominant belief that white women are always seen as more attractive or desirable than other women.

Kimberly Deng uses comedy in her makeup tutorial videos to mock Juniper Song and Annie Waters. This reflects a form of resistance and critique to dominant narratives that benefit white people, especially in the media and popular culture. The "turmeric face mask and white tears" are symbols. The turmeric mask can refer to the exoticization of Asian culture, while the white tears reflect the grievances or pain that white people often express when faced with racial criticism (Smith, 2021). Kimberly's critique shows how cultural power often exploits elements of non-Western cultures for the satisfaction of white people. These two critiques demonstrate how Juniper Song's work not only contains representational inequities, but also reinforces and reproduces power structures that benefit white people and disadvantage non-white people.

## 4. Hibridity & Fluidity

Like subjectivity itself, identity is always evolving, never finished (Hall, 1994). The merging of elements from different cultures or identities to create something new and different is called hybridity. According to Hall, individuals in multicultural societies often combine elements from different cultures to shape their identities, creating hybrid identities. On the other hand, fluidity refers to the nature of identity, which can change and adapt over time in different contexts. This is emphasized by Hall, who says that identity is not permanent, but can change according to one's experiences and social environment. Individuals can use both to

combine elements from different identities (hybridity) and adapt them according to changing experiences and contexts (fluidity). Identity is an ever-changing and complex process, as both demonstrate.

June's hybridity, marked by her appropriation of Athena's identity and cultural background, highlights her attempt to construct an inauthentic hybrid identity through cultural appropriation. She addopt a new pen name. One of the actions that June took to show her hybridity and also fluidity was when June Hayward adopted the pen name "Juniper Song". The name "Song" sounds more Asian and was strategically chosen to suggest a different culture. This is in the data below.

> *As it turns out, they want to position me as "worldly." Jessica and Emily send us a longer email detailing their plans the next Monday: We think June's background is very interesting, so we want to make sure readers are aware of that.*
>
> *And they suggest I publish under the name Juniper Song instead of June Hayward. (Yellowface, p. 60).*

The data shows that Jessica who works in digital marketing and Emily who is a publicist, suggested June to publish her new work with a more global name. They traced June's background to find a new name that fits her background. This is in the data below.

> *They highlight all the different places I lived when I was little— South America, Central Europe, a half-dozen cities in the US that were stops on my dad's never-ending tour as a construction engineer. (Emily really likes the word "nomad.") They highlight the year I spent in the Peace Corps in my newly written author biography, although I never went near Asia (I was in Mexico, making use of my high school Spanish, and I quit early because I got a debilitating stomach virus and had to be medically evacuated).*

In the above data, it is clear how, in the newly written biography of June, all the places she lived as a child are highlighted as important points to build her image

as someone who is "nomadic" or moves around a lot. This nomadic life is meant to add an element of adventure to her public image. In addition, her year in the Peace Corps is emphasized, even though she never actually went to Asia—a detail that one might expect from someone with the name "Juniper Song." In fact, she was only in Mexico, using the Spanish skills she learned in high school, and even had to leave early due to a serious illness. This suggests that there is manipulation of facts in her biography to create a more interesting and culturally diverse picture, even if it is not completely accurate.

> *Nobody talks about the difference in how "Song" might be perceived versus "Hayward." No one says explicitly that "Song" might be mistaken for a Chinese name, when really it's the middle name my mother came up with during her hippie phase in the eighties and I was very nearly named Juniper Serenity Hayward. (Yellowface, p. 60 and 61).*

In the above data, June's new name, "Juniper Song", combines elements from two different cultures, as shown above. According to June, she got her name from her mother, who was once a "hippie", indicating that her name has both western and hippie connotations. Hippie is a term used to refer to someone who is associated with another culture. They oppose mainstream values and materialistic culture, support peace, free love, and spiritual exploration, adopt a communal living culture, use psychedelic drugs, adopt liberal and progressive ideas, and enjoy psychedelic rock and folk music (Davis, 2020).

The name "Song" is considered an Asian name, specifically Chinese. In the Chinese context, Song is a commonly known Chinese surname or family name. It is also the name of an important dynasty in Chinese history (Song Dynasty, 920-

1279 AD). In the Korean context, Song 송 in Hangul, 宋 in Hanja, is also a Korean surname. In the Vietnamese context, Tồng or Tống is the Vietnamese pronunciation of the Chinese characters, a common surname there although not very common (Lee, K. 2021).

The combination of her names is considered a hybrid identity that combines elements from two backgrounds. In addition, as a "world" writer, she uses her name to gain an advantage. This shows how the name June makes her accepted and respected in a community that is more concerned with diversity and representation. As a result, this name allows June to show a more diverse and multicultural identity in social and professional contexts, to make it easier for her to access various professional social spaces.

# CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This last chapter presents conclusions from the previous discussion and suggestions for the next researcher. In the conclusion session, it can be intended to assist researcher in summarizing the results of the discussion that has been carried out in the previous chapter. In addition, suggestions provide information related to research for academic purposes and future researcher who use relevant theories.

### A. Conclusion

After analyzing what the researcher is looking for, it can be concluded in several ways that June plays the role of the main character; she tries to negotiate her identity as a Chinese writer and also makes herself the owner of the last front through identity construction. First, June constructs her identity through interactive processes, agency, and resistance. She actively negotiates her identity through social interactions, especially with Athena. June adopts elements of Athena's identity as a Chinese writer by editing and refining her works, which are then published under the pen name "Juniper Song". However, June is selective in adopting this identity - shown by her refusal to learn Mandarin. As an agent, she also shows resistance by refusing to use sensitivity readers and maintaining her credibility as a writer.

Second, June uses four main elements in her identity construction: culture, historical context, power and hegemony, and hybridity and fluidity. She uses the concept of "saving face" from Asian culture for personal gain. Her experience of

befriending Athena shapes her understanding of identity as a Chinese writer. Criticism and public opinion also influence her identity construction. The hybridity and fluidity of her identity are reflected in her use of the pen name "Juniper Song" which combines elements of different backgrounds.

## B. Suggestion

Based on the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that Stuart Hall's negotiating identity theory is suitable for researching a literary work, especially on the object of the novel "*Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang". In line with that, this theory can also be used on several topics that discuss the same negotiating identity, useful as a reference to explain the perspective of negotiating identity itself. Therefore, the researcher suggests that Stuart Hall's negotiating identity theory can be used in several aspects that are more specific and have not been widely researched. In addition, the researcher also believes that future researchers should use several references in the academic sphere, and use the object of "*Yellowface* by R. F. Kuang" to analyze the problems of this novel in depth. For example, analyzing the internal conflict of the main character since the novel uses first-person point of view.

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**CURRICULUM VITAE**



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