

## IDENTITY CHANGE OF CHARACTERS IN GASTON LEROUX'S THE MYSTERY OF THE YELLOW ROOM

Iham Gusti Permana

English Literature, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Surabaya

[Ihampermana@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:Ihampermana@mhs.unesa.ac.id)

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyajikan gambaran tiga tokoh yaitu Ballmeyer, Joseph Jaspine, and Nona Mathilde Stangerson. Penelitian ini mendeskripsikan hubungan identitas ketiga tokoh yang tergambar dalam cerita. Penelitian ini juga mendeskripsikan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan seseorang mengubah identitas. Teori yang digunakan adalah teori penokohan oleh Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, yaitu teori Definisi langsung dan Penyajian tidak langsung, dengan menggunakan dua pendekatan metode, yaitu pendekatan intrinsik dan ekstrinsik. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dua tokoh utama laki-laki mengalami beberapa kali perubahan identitas, sedangkan satu tokoh perempuan tidak mengalami perubahan identitas.

**Kata Kunci:** *Mistery, Yellow, Room, Identitas, Identity Change, Tokoh*

### Abstract

This research aims to present a description of the three characters' identities named Ballmeyer, Joseph Jaspine, and Nona Mathilde Stangerson. It describes the relationship between the identity changes of the three characters depicted in the story. This research also describes the factors that cause a person to change his identity. The theory used is meth, namely the theory of direct definition and indirect presentation, using two method approaches, intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The conclusion of this study shows that the two main male characters experience several changes in their identities while one female character does not experience changes in identity.

**Keywords:** *Mystery, Yellow, Room, Identity, Pergantian Identitas, Characters*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans always and will never stop developing to process themselves continuously, because humans are often influenced by the surrounding reality. Abraham Maslow explained that the human desire to change is a process of building a personality for others. The building of personality is self-development, which is a process that will never end. Therefore, as social beings, humans in themselves have an identity that differentiates them from others, at least with that identity humans can identify themselves. Someone who wants to show a new personal identity usually will leave his past identity, then appear with different attitude and behavior. Humans' identity has is not only one but can be more and the human's identity is different from one and others. Thus, identity is a process that involves humans as a whole in the historical span of their personal life, which is a sequence of an incident of past and future behavior.

In the book *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Demokrasi, HAM & Masyarakat Madani* (Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2000), it is said the function of humans identity is for interaction because, in every interaction, each individual takes a position and based on that position an individual can interact with each others. The pattern of a human's identity is determined by the attributes used by humans, which are the characteristics of all individuals involved in an interaction that is recognized and made sense to the actors involved in the interaction. These attributes can be in the form of striking characteristics of an object or human body, patterns of action, or the language used.

When we talk about identity, it will also be associated with psychology. The concept of identity in psychology according to a leading psychoanalyst, Erik H. Erikson in *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, refers to an awareness of personal continuity which is essentially inseparable despite changes during the developmental phase. In addition, Erikson also argues identity is essentially

psychosocial because identity formation has a reciprocal relationship with oneself in society (1980: 38-40). Because people generally believe each human has its character, and that character acts or undergoes change.

The word "identity" is taken from the latin language term "idem" which means "the same". StellaToomey defined identity as a self-reflection which comes from family, gender, culture, ethnicity and human social interaction. An individual has his or her own identity which is different from one to another. In a certain case, a person perhaps has more than one identity. The multiple identities are not activated at the same time. Identities are not something which is static. It is something that is always continuously changing depending on circumstances.

One aspect related to identity is the way society perceive a person. Expectation within neighborhood sometimes shape a person's behavior expected by others towards something according to their position in a system. Identity is a very important aspect in social conditions both internally or externally and are stable. Expectation will be applied in a certain social situations. Identity becomes important when it is associated with other people, communities and political views .(<https://rinawahyu42.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/teori-peran-rhola-theory/>).

*The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is a story written in 1907 and published in the L'illustration series, then in 1908 was published as an Edition by Pierre La Fitte and has 309 pages. The novel has been translated into several languages, one of which is *Bahasa Indonesia* by Preti Prabowo published on Visimedia in 2013. The novel *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is worked by Gaston Leroux, a famous serial writer on French newspaper Le Matin. Gaston Leroux was born in Paris on May 6, 1868, and died in Nice on April 15, 1927.

*The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is a story written in 1907 and published in the L'illustration series, then in 1908 was published as an Edition by Pierre La Fitte and has 309 pages. The novel has been translated into several languages, one of which is *Bahasa Indonesia* by Preti Prabowo published on Visimedia in 2013. The novel *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is worked by Gaston Leroux, a famous serial writer on French newspaper Le Matin. Gaston Leroux was born in

Paris on May 6, 1868, and died in Nice on April 15, 1927.

*The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is the first novel by Gaston Leroux's which tells the tragedy of a murder that occurred at Château du Glandier in Paris. This case brings Joseph Rouletabille (Joseph Jaspine), a young journalist who also works as an amateur detective, competing with Frederic Larsan (Ballmeyer), a professional detective who tries to uncover the true identity of the killer. The mystery of this crime takes place in a closed room, in a Yellow Room. It is called the yellow room because it is a very small room in the Château and has one barred window and one door with yellow walls. The room seemed to be very closed off from outside life. The room is occupied by a beautiful woman named Miss Mathilde Stangerson, the only child of Professor Stangerson, a famous scientist. The woman almost became a victim of murder from a dual role actor with more than one identity to serve as an alibi for a crime to be committed. And to solve the mystery of this closed room requires a detective who will uncover this case.

Based on the existing stories, the writer wants to analyze the change of identity the characters using the theory of characterization by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, namely the theory of direct definition and Indirect Presentation by using two approaches methods, intrinsic and extrinsic.

The intrinsic approach is used to direct the writer to the object studied through characterization theory, while the extrinsic approach is used to explore literary works through the perspective of the identity change of characters in literature. From the story, the writer raises the issue of identity change of the existing characters based on the actions of the story characters as research material.

The writer is interested in analyzing this novel in terms of identity because the identity of the character in the novel change, so the researcher is directed to explore the character more by looking at the present and then looking back at the past.

The goal is to find out the reason of the change the identity of the characters based on the actions of the character with intrinsic and extrinsic approaches.

### **Action**

Action can express the character and symbolic figures may indicate a feeling of character. Actions

can be divided into two types, namely: Actions which are habits that often doing by characters or that have become routines for characters, and which are actions at one time. Actions at one time tend to give rise to dynamic aspects of the characters, who often take a role in the story. Although it does not reflect a concrete quality, it does not make the presentation a weakness. Instead, it is deliberately intended as a dramatic effect that gives the impression that the characteristics shown in quality more important than quantity, which refers to the routine character. The two types of actions can be grouped into the categories of action as follows:

- **Act of Commission** or deed action, which refers to something the character does.
- **Act of Omission** or unlisted action refers to an action the character failed to do or something that should be done by the characters but didn't do.
- **Contemplated Act** or shape action, which is an action that the character is not aware of.

### Speech

The character's speech, both in conversation and silent activity from the character's mind. The style of speech can indicate the origin, status, and profession of a character, as well as to characterize the character.

### External Appearance

External appearance refers to the physical characteristics of the characters, both those shown as they are or confirmed by the narrator.

Analysis at the stage of the identity change relationship of the character relates to the elements of the relationship of identity change, such as a positive and appropriate body image, a realistic ideal self-image, a positive self-concept, high self-esteem, and satisfactory role performance. Each element is aware of each of these characters to accept their identity change.

According to Marcia (1993) in *Social Psychology: Me, We, and Us*: The formation of self-identity requires two important elements, **exploration** and **commitment**. The term "exploration" refers to a period in which a person tries to explore various alternatives and giving great attention to beliefs and values that are needed in the selection of alternatives. Meanwhile,

"commitment" refers to making decisions about a task or ideology, and determining various strategies to realize these decisions. Based on the two elements above, in the formation of self-identity, individuals will experience a crisis period identity before determining what identity-related commitments they would live in the future (2016: 37).

According to Erik Erikson's personality development stage theory, there are eight stages of the development of identity development. One of the development out of those eight stage is called "the adolescent usually occurs to an individual age range between 12 to 18 years old. There two main factors that a person tries to achieve in development stage which is identity vs role confusion. Strong identity can be achieved if a person is able to find his or her identity through social interaction and environment. Meanwhile, the failure of finding identity can lead to role confusion.

Not only self reflection or the by-products of family, culture, ethnicity and social interactions which is related to personality, but identity can also means looks for example eye color, skin color, clothing and more. Therefore, it is important to underline that the individuality of each person is what makes everyone different and unique. The fact that identity evolves makes it impossible for an individual to have same or exact same personality or looks from time to time. There is always a reason, a person changes his or her identity. In some cases, to cover something he or she does.

On motives change of identity of the characters the analysis concentrated on the character because of their life history of each character. Analyzing the characters in the novel will make us understand some of the problems that exist in the novel. Analysis at this stage is the last stage of the novel analysis. However, the most important is the combined result of the overall analysis at each stage, which will take us to a deep understanding of the novel.

The character according to Schmitt and Viala is built on two things called (who) and (what). Who refers to psychological and social explanations while what is behavior or action. Viala explains in the book *Savoir Lire* (1982:99) that characterization is a collection of physical characteristics, moral and social which are a combination from who and what. This is what

forms the characterization portrait to answer the reader's question who is the main character or who is the antagonist and protagonist in a novel and what is the terms character and characterization.

Characters are fictional individuals who experience events or behavior in various story events. Characters are generally in the form of humans, but can also be in the form of animals or human objects. (Sudjiman 1988:16)

The characters in the story are formed from elements that are imitated from real life. Therefore, the character is a cross between the author's imagination and reality. Characters can be grouped as follows:

- 1) The main character or central character is a character who has the potential to move the plot. The central character is the center of the story, the cause of conflict. The characteristics of the main character or central character are:
  - a) Characters who are prioritized in the storytelling in the novel. He is the most telling, both as the character in the case and known incident.
  - b) Characters who are often commented.
- 2) Supporting characters who play a role in the development of the story, but are not important as the main character. This character does not have a big influence on the development of the plot. The characteristics of supporting characters are who supporting the main character and who are given perfunctory comments.

Furthermore, Rimmon-Kenan explained to define and describe a textual character must collect various clues from the character which are shared with a collection of textual units. If necessary it will be done by taking the conclusion of characteristics. According to him, two methods can be used in analyzing, namely: *Direct Definition dan Indirect Presentation* (1989:59-66).

*Direct Definition* is planting figures refer to the quality of characters by using adjectives, abstract nouns or other nouns, or part of speech, which is produced only by the most important voice in the text, the narrator.

Meanwhile, *Indirect Presentation* is the presentation of characters where the character traits tend to be displayed and shown in various ways, such as through action, speech, external appearance, and environment. Therefore, the quality of individual characters seems implied,

which ultimately urges the reader to make their own decisions. As already described, this novel has three main characters. The table below illustrates the general picture in the form of physical description, actions, and figures of speech.

## 2. METHOD

In this study, analysis mystery of the yellow room novel is carried out in three stages (connected with two elements that form direct definition and indirect presentation): description of the character, a correlation between identity of the character, and the motive for changing the identity of the character. The analysis in these three stages is related to each other, and the correlation between them will help in a full understanding of the novel being analyzed. Analysis at the stage of character description is the first analysis step. The theory of characterization by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan is used to help the writer in analyzing at the state elements of the personality, such as action, speech, and external appearance. It means the description of the behavior that comes from one's actions and can be shaped or tends to be shown in various ways. The type of this research is qualitative because the data are collected qualitatively or based on the proposed problems. This method contains explanation, narration, and description of literary work which becomes the data sources of this study.

## 3. RESUKT AND DISCUSSION

The work on the analysis of the mystery of the yellow room begins with an overview level of character imagery. Thus the quality of a work is determined by how the author creates the story alive because the identity of the characters and each character have different characteristics. As the story character stated by A. Viala & Schmitt in *Savoir Lire* book, that:

“The participants in the action are usually the characters in the story. Very often it is human; but a thing, an animal, or an entity (justice, the dead, etc.) can be personified and then considered as characters.”  
(Schmitt & Viala, 1982: 69).

Another perspective, the notion of character is put forward by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in his book *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1989).

*“Character, as one construct within the abstracted story, can be described in terms of a network of character-trait. These traits, however, may or may not appear as such in the text.”(Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan, 1989:59).*

Table 1 Overview of the things contained in the characters

Character	Character's Physical Description	Character Behavior
Ballmeyer	Gray hair, muscular body, small and round eyes, and assertive and elegant.	1. Smart
		2. Efficient
		3. Persistent
Joseph Jasphine	Young, Childish face and humor.	1. Smart
		2. Careful and Thorough
		3. Amateur
		4. Like Challenges
Mrs. Mathilde Stangerson	Pretty face, Blonde hair Blue eyes, White skin and graceful	1. Coward, Easy panic
		2. Devoted
		3. Introvert (Closed)

Source: Novel *The Mystery of The Yellow Room*.

The description of the table above is in the form of something that can be understood from the description of the character that was examined. First, the character of Ballmeyer is described as a manly and honorable character, although Ballmeyer is a middle-aged man in general, he looks like an adult man who is still in his thirties. If he wants something, Ballmeyer will do anything to get it, Ballmeyer is very clever when he executes the victims he wants to kill.

The second character, Joseph Jasphine is a character who is shown as a boy-faced man with a good sense of humor, Joseph Jasphine also has the passion and courage to get what he wants to know, his desire for information as a journalist, often leads him to events- horrific criminal events not only that, Joseph Jasphine is also able to observe what is happening around him with his intelligent brain (quick to understand the situation). Then the third character, Miss Mathilde

Stangerson is described as a charming woman with natural beauty accompanied by her filial piety to her father. Miss Mathilde Stangerson is also categorized as a very introverted woman (closed) for men because Mathilde has very sad memories of the past and until now Mathilde is still traumatized by a relationship even though Mathilde Stangerson is engaged to Mr. Robert Darzac but Mathilde Stangerson doesn't believe it if the relationship will last. Then, an analysis of the stages of the relationship between identity associated with the disclosure of the mystery of the attempted murder in the yellow room. There are three disclosure processes which will be described as follows.

#### Initial disclosure

The initial revelation of the mystery of the yellow room was carried out by the character Frederic Larsan. Frederic Larsan is Ballmeyer disguised as a detective, and Ballmeyer is notorious for being a criminal. He's collecting evidence of the attempted murder of Miss Mathilde Stangerson. Based on the evidence he had gathered, Frederic Larsan suspected that one of Miss Mathilde Stangerson's housekeepers had committed the murder. However, detective Frederic Larsan detained all the assistants in the Château for questioning. From the initial disclosure, the identities of the characters can be seen from the following table.

Table 2 Overview of the Mystery Disclosure Process

Disclosure I	
Character	Identity
Frederic Larsan	Detective
Mrs. Mathilde Stangerson	Victim
Assistant	Perpetrator

Source: Novel *The Mystery of The Yellow Room*.

The table above shows that Frederic Larsan is a detective whose role is to uncover cases of attempted murder in the yellow room. With the victim Ms. Mathilde Stangerson and Ms. Mathilde Stangerson's assistant as perpetrators. The relationship between the identity and the role

of the three characters from the previous results found that:

1. In the character of Miss Mathilde Stangerson, the identity of the character does not change.
2. In the character of Ballmeyer there is a change in identity.
3. In the character of Joseph Jasphine, there is a change in identity.

For more details can be seen in the table.

Table. 1. 4 An overview of the relationship between identity and role in the story

Character	Identity	Role
Mrs. Mathilde Stangerson	Mrs. Mathilde Stangerson	Professor Stangerson's son
		Jean Roussel's wife
		Scientist
		Fiance of Mr. Robert Darzac
		Victim
Ballmeyer	Jean Roussel	Rich MMS Husband
	Frederic Larsan	Detective
	BallMeyer	Victim of yellow room manipulation
	Joseph Jasphine	Journalist
Joseph Jasphine	Rouletabille	A journalist who investigate the MMS murder case

source: Novel *The Mystery of The Yellow Room*.

From the table above, it can be seen that a change in the identity of Ballmeyer's character resulted in a change in role, while also a change in identity that occurred in Joseph Jasphine's character did not result in a change in role, but a change in the identity of Miss Mathilde

Stangerson's character did not occur but resulted in a change in role.

Through the analysis at the motive stage, the identity changes and the roles of the characters are seen very clearly in the stories and case disclosures. Several motives were found for the three characters from changing identities and roles. All of these things are included in the description of the life problems experienced by each character are as follows.

- a. Ballmeyer's motives for changing identities and roles are based on Ballmeyer's love for his wife, Miss Mathilde Stangerson, and Ballmeyer's diversion of attention is made to meet Miss Mathilde Stangerson.
- b. The motive for the changes made by Joseph Jasphine's character is because of the self-esteem he must uphold for the insults given by his leadership, and the sense of wanting to protect the victims of crime.
- c. The motive for the change made by Miss Mathilde Stangerson's character was based on a threat from Ballmeyer, namely Miss Mathilde Stangerson's husband, who she avoided and covered up a past secret between Miss Mathilde Stangerson and Ballmeyer.

## CONCLUSION

After describing the results of the research that the author did with the title Identity Change of Characters in Gaston Leroux's *The Mystery of The Yellow Room* in 1907. So the conclusions that can be drawn are (1) for the description of the characters, things are found in the form of the information shown by each character in the story and case disclosures are as follows: (a) Character description Ballmeyer has gray hair, muscular body, small and round eyes, but firm and elegant. Likewise, Ballmeyer's behavior is shown to be smart, efficient, and persistent. (b) The characteristics of Joseph Jasphine's character description are young, childish-faced, and humorous. Joseph Jasphine's behavior shown is intelligent, thorough and thorough, amateur, and likes challenges. (c) Description of Miss Mathilde Stangerson's character traits, namely beautiful, blonde hair, blue eyes, white skin, and graceful. The behavior found

is easily panicked or timid, devoted to his father, and introverted (closed). (2) From all characters, the identity change can be found (a) In Frederic Larsan's character, his identity in the story changes from Ballmeyer to Frederic Larsan and Jean Roussel. Likewise in the disclosure of the case, his identity changed from Frederic Larsan to Ballmeyer. Frederic Larsan's identity changes from a detective to a victim, which distinguishes him from Miss Mathilde Stangerson. Her identity change also changes because her attempt in solving cases. (b) In the character of Miss Mathilde Stangerson, the identity does not change in the story and the disclosure of the attempted murder case in the yellow room. Ms. Mathilde Stangerson identity remains because she attempts to uncover the victim-to-perpetrator case. (c) In Joseph Jaspine's character the identity changes in the story but the case disclosure does not change. (3) Based on the finding of the identity change motive and the role of the three characters, it shows that there is a factor behind a person being able to change his character to become someone else. Not because of incitement because there is a history of personal life that makes him dare to display a new personal identity and leave his past role.

Thus, apart from being a literary work, the novel can also be placed as a historical record. Like other literary works, the novel is a means of expressing emotions that can be quite touching. The novel that has been discussed in this study provides insight to the reader that there are other sides in life, where humans experience misery, bitterness, and a crisis of self-confidence that can bring enormous fear to oneself in the future.

This analytical work shows that the literary work discussed here is an embodiment of what happened in a part of the history of human life. Through this work, we can also know that the creation of a novel cannot be separated from how humans react to experiences that occur in their lives. Following the saying that experience is the best teacher, people's opinions are indeed influenced by the circle of time and where they live.

## REFERENCES

- Erikson, Erick, H.1983. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: InternationalUniversity Press.
- Hidayat, Komaruddin dan Bashori Khoiruddin. 2016. *Psikologi Sosial: Aku, Kami, dan Kita*. Jakarta: Erlangga. Hidayatullah, Syarif. 2000. Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Demokrasi HAM & Masyarakat Madani. Jakarta IAIN Jakarta Press.
- Leroux, Gaston. 1907. *The Mystery of The Yellow Room*. USA.Ebooksgratuits.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. 1989. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary,poetics*. London and New York: Meuthen.
- Schmitt dan Viala. 1982. *Savoir Lire*. Paris: Didier.
- Sudjiman, Panuti. 1988. *Memahami cerita Rekaan*. Bandung: Remaja Rosda Karya.