

White Mask and Yellow Face of Olivia's Character In Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses*

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Abstrak

Ketika generasi kedua dari imigran China tinggal di negara multikultural seperti Amerika, mereka harus siap untuk menerima konsekuensi menghadapi kenyataan bahwa mereka terlahir untuk memiliki dua budaya. Generasi kedua dari imigran tersebut biasanya mengalami kesulitan untuk mengetahui kebudayaan mereka sebelumnya karena mereka menganggap dirinya sebagai bagian dari negara dimana mereka dilahirkan. Pengaruh dari dua kebudayaan, antara China dan Amerika membuat generasi kedua membentuk hibriditas identitas kebudayaannya. Bagaimanapun, hibriditas selalu dihubungkan dengan kekuasaan dua budaya yang memiliki kekuatan yang sama. Kedua budaya tersebut sangat kuat dan mengambil peranan dalam pembentukan identitas kebudayaan yang ganda. Dengan latar belakang seperti itu, maka permasalahan-permasalahan muncul seperti (1) bagaimana budaya Amerika dan China membentuk karakter Olivia dalam novel *The Hundred Secret Senses* karya Amy Tan? Dan (2) bagaimana hibriditas direfleksikan pada karakter Olivia dalam novel *The Hundred Secret Senses* karya Amy Tan? Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, hibriditas sebagai teori utama, konsep budaya, identitas budaya, nilai budaya China dan Amerika dan orientalisme sebagai teori pendukung. Hasil yang didapatkan akan menjelaskan bahwa generasi kedua dari imigran China yang tinggal di Amerika mampu mengetahui budaya orang tua yang dimilikinya melalui nilai-nilai budaya dari Negara tersebut dan pengaruh orang lain yang berhubungan dengan budaya orang tuanya.

Kata Kunci: identitas budaya, generasi kedua, pembentukan, kekuasaan, hibriditas.

Abstract

When second generation of Chinese immigrants live in the multicultural country like America, they have to be ready to accept the consequences to face the reality that they were born to be hybrid. Second generation of immigrant may get difficult to recognize their former culture because they supposed their self as the member of the country where they were born. The influence of the two different cultures, between China and America may trace the second generation to consolidate their hybrid cultural identity. However, hybridity is always connected with the power of two different cultures which has the same power. Both of cultures is very strong and take an action in the process of reshaping hybrid cultural identity. All those presumptively fact which are stated, arise the problem statements along with questionings, which are delivered to two main questions of (1) how does American and Chinese culture shape the cultural identity of Olivia's character in Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses*? and (2) how is Hybridity reflected in Olivia's character caused by American and Chinese culture in Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses*? This study uses descriptive qualitative method, hybridity as the main theory, the concept of culture, cultural identity, Chinese and American cultural values, and orientalism as the supporting theory. Last of all, the result describes that second generation of immigrant is able to recognize the parental culture that belong to her through the cultural values of that country and another's influence which is relates with the parent's culture.

Keywords: cultural identity, second generation, reshaping, power, hybridity

INTRODUCTION

In the year around the turn of the century, the existence of immigrants in United State becomes higher in every year. Immigrants have been coming there for the better part of the last 18th century. Every people from

any different nation come to United States of America because the one thing that they had in common was a strong believe that in America, life would be better. That is what thousands of Chinese immigrants have been doing over the last decade as they have fled their homes in China and sought shelter in the United State of

America. The assumption that west is a better part to live and it is different with the east creates the stereotype between west and east. The westerners supposed their self as the "self" who different with the "orient," the orient here means the east countries, as it is notion by Edward Said in his theory of Orientalism that "Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East" (Said, 1977:1). The Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient brought the immigrant who came to America should face the consequences of being accepted or rejected by the society, but the important thing is wherever people will stay in the new region they should have to adapt the culture of the place that they domicile.

In American society, the social process of two different cultures is become melted. Chinese immigrant brought their language with them, culture, social institutions, and customs. It makes the first generation of immigrant made lasting contributions to their adopted country and tried to become an integral part of the United States population. First generation of immigrant here means the first immigrant who stays in the new region, which is far from their homeland. However, the first generation of Chinese immigrant that stayed in America for many years should face the consequences in delivering new born of Chinese immigrant which is called as second generation.

Second generation immigrants in the United States refers to individuals born in the United States who have at least one foreign born parent. Unfortunately, in the matter of questioning identity, second generation of immigrant has a certain problem about their cultural identity in their domicile. This is caused by two factors, firstly is caused by the environment and secondly is caused by cultural values of their ancestry. For second generation of immigrant who American born, they are not purely American, because they influenced by the culture of their parents and by American culture. They synthesize the two cultures and create something new. It seems that there is no other choice left. They will get dilemma in deciding the cultural identity, what ethnicity they belong to, whether they should leave the old identity to accept and celebrate the new identity and lead them into the new term of culture which is called hybrid cultural identity.

The term "hybridity" has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha, whose analysis of colonizer/ colonized relations stresses their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. In his writing, Bhabha stated that "Cultural hybridity is not, then, something absolutely general. Hybridity may appear to go all the way down, in all cultures, but that would blur all difference into Indifference, making all hybridity appears the same". (Huddart, 2006:84). Nevertheless, the concept of hybridity has enabled to recognize the production of new identities and reshaping cultural identity.

The issue of hybrid culture and how second generation of immigrant differentiate their self from their parental culture in the united state, the respond given by Chinese immigrants about the way they express their selves publicly have been chosen as the reason to take Amy Tan's fourth novel titled *The Hundred Secret Senses* to reveal about the cultural identity of second generation immigrant of Chinese immigrant that trace her in to the hybrid cultural identity. The Hundred Secret Senses is a novel that tells the reader about Olivia's life experience in hybrid culture. Olivia is Americanized but influenced by Chinese culture, she was born and grew up in America, try to cut herself from the ancestral culture and deny her Chinese parental heritage. She supposed her self as an American because she was born in America. Thus, she tries to seek the differences between her born country and her parent's. Here, Olivia has a description of preserving as a Chinese Americanized who is in the beginning of her life supposed Chinese as the other, but in the last she can regaining her Chinese heritage by the journey to China. Relating to the background of the study above, statement of the problems formulated as follows:

1. How does American and Chinese culture shape the cultural identity of Olivia's character in Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses*?
2. How is Hybridity reflected in Olivia's character caused by American and Chinese culture in Amy Tan's *The Hundred Secret Senses*?

RESEARCH METHOD

A literary work can be defined as a branch of literature deals with the words as the raw material to create a picture, an idea or a story in a meaningful pattern. Among the three of the literary works (prose fiction, poetry and play) this study will discuss about prose fiction (novel, short stories, romance, and epic) since it is easier to recognize the meaning of the story it self than the other literary work. To find the reliable result, it needs a method that is based on the problem statements. This study uses descriptive qualitative method to reveal the problem that will be analyzed in the novel. It uses novel entitled *The Hundred Secret Senses*, Vintage Contemporaries Books edition written by Amy Tan. This book published in the United States by Vintage books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. Originally published in hardcover by G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York in 1995, ISBN: 0-375-70152-4. This book is the data source of this study. The data are taken from the words, phrases, dialogues and, quotations in the novel which are relevant to the analysis.

The first step is reading the novel, this step is use to collect the data that can be acquired the idea and make problem statements that want to be discussed. The close reading needs to be done more than once in order to get better understanding of the novel. Secondly, it comes to the step of collecting data. At this point, the data is collected through the narration and characters dialogue and action in the novel, which reflects the hybrid cultural identity in the form of quotation. Thirdly, it is the step of classifying data. The classification of the collected data is divided into two parts, first is about American and Chinese culture that reshape the character's cultural identity and the second is about the hybrid cultural identity that reflected in the character. Fourthly is related the cultural values of american and chinese culture that reshape the character. Next, find the quotations from narration, dialogues and behavior in the story that reveals binary opposition toward Olivia's differentiation from her parental culture. Last but not least to trace the hybrid cultural identity of the character, it is use Hommy K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity, and Edward said's orientalism. The last steps, summarize and report the results.

CULTURE

Actually everyone know what is culture because culture is the part of human life in society, it's all about the way they think, the way they react, and the way they create something. Culture has similar meaning to its society. It is basically about different. One is different from others because culture is represents the development of human tradition and custom which is increasingly developed in many years. Edward Said describes culture is like all those which is practices or can be simplified as something like the arts of description, communication, and representation. The existence of culture itself is an important because this is the identity of human, the people or the society who possess it. And sometimes, this identity when meets up with other identity, it will engage each other become melted because of its differences in ideologies, beliefs and custom.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural identity is not the identity that someone can get like the identity in their ID card but cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture. Somebody will

belong to the group what they should belong. According to Stuart Hall, one of the most renowned scholars in the field of cultural studies, cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning (Hall, *A Place Called Home*: 395). Defining one's identity is a central question for every individual, especially in alien or unfavourable circumstances. Also the main point is the interplay between cultural identity and new media. New media refers to new information and communication technologies, mass/social media and digital messaging, and is thought to trigger processes of cultural change

AMERICAN CULTURAL VALUES

American cultural values are varied and coloured each individual who live in United States. Multicultural environment in America makes every nation there should have to know the cultural values of their country. According to L. Robert Kohls, he divides the American cultural values into some chategories; they are personal Control over the environment, individualism, independence and privacy, future orientation / optimism, materialism. For all of the points, American way of thinking is also rational. They always think logically based on the rationality, they won't believe about superstition or the ghost story, for most American the concept of the world is rational in the sense they believe the events of the world can be explained and the reason of particular occurrence can be determined. American people are also pragmatics who believes that the world is composed by logic not ideas (Stewart, 1972). Moreover, Almost of the people's faith are Christian.

CHINESE CULTURAL VALUES

In the past, in China, most of the families kept a detailed record of their family history. Knowing about the family history people naturally feel more affectionate towards their family relation. Only those who love their families also love their country. History may become one of the important ways to introduce the heritage parental culture to the next generation. Most of people learn to expand their love towards their race, towards all people including heaven, earth and all things to finally realize that people of this world are really of one big family. Therefore, the concept of universal harmony is entirely possible in Chinese culture. They identify with the dominant national culture and have a sense of history and tradition that dates back over one thousand years and includes many artistic, cultural, and scientific accomplishments. When the communists took over in 1949, they worked to create a sense of national identity based on the ideals of equality and hard work. (Kung,

Chin. 2007. Traditional Chinese Culture and a Harmonious Society)

Chinese culture shapes the Chinese people become loyal, it is desirable for a Chinese to apologize with a smile, which indicates humbleness and embarrassment. A belief in "a smile can kill anger" could account for the phenomenon that the Chinese smiles when he/she wants to apologize. China is for the most part an extremely homogeneous society composed of a people who share one language, culture, and history. The original name of the family becomes the important part of Chinese culture. Instead, every Chinese name is filled with rich and special meanings. Chinese cultural values are also can be seen in the matter of Chinese traditional culture. It discuss about the development of believe and faith of the Chinese. In China, Mahayana Buddhism is particularly common. In this form of Buddhism the path to liberation involves religious ritual, meditation and devotion. Later on, Chinese people are believe in the world of yin about the life after death and they also believe in superstition

HYBRIDITY

When someone trapped in the two different cultures, he or she will face the problem in deciding their cultural identity. Hybrid culture occurs as the solution of cultural identity crisis whether somebody unable to left the old identity and celebrate the new identity, but they will take both. It is not existed to the physical characteristics of human beings in particular factors such as the colour of skin, hair and eyes, but goes beyond these physical features (Fajar, 2008). The mixed cultures and identities are regarded more powerful in destabilizing racial hierarchy, although the combination of races has been also considered as an effective way to deconstruct it. Accordingly, rather than looking at the physical features to identify to which race someone belongs, it is more useful to examine the tradition, customs, language, political thought of people from different ethnic backgrounds and how these cultural elements affect the formation of hybridity which questions identity. (Yusri Fajar, *The Dialectics between the West and East: Cultural Hybridity in Contemporary Asian British Fiction*)

The term 'hybridity' has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha. He has developed his concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity (Bhabha 1994; Bhabha 1996). For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonized (the Other) within a singular universal framework, but then fail producing something familiar but new. Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems

are constructed in a space that he calls the 'Third Space of enunciation' (1994: 37).

Hybridity occurs when two separate races or cultures mix together. It usually faced by migrant who immigrated to the other country. The process of being hybrid can be seen from the cultural identity of the migrant. The first generation of the migrants may face hybrid culture but they still able to maintain their old culture because there is a memory about homeland but for second generation of migrant, it will be different because the second immigrant will reject their parental identity in the beginning because they suppose to be born in the new region when their parents have been stayed. To accept and get their old identity, second generation have to learn and seek their parent's identity. However, seeking about the origin of parental culture make the second generation of immigrant may think that they are absolutely different with their parental culture. Thus, it can make the border line and stereotype among cultures which are drawn to the orientalism perspective, about the way the "west" see the "east"

ORIENTALISM

Orientalism is the term which describes about how the west see the east, Moslem or non Moslem about the language, attitudes, culture or even the way of the east thought. These expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial managing and colonial styles that become the distinguish between west and east. The assumption that west is a better part to live and it is different with the east creates the stereotype between west and east as the self and other. The westerners supposed their self as the self who different with the orient, the orient here means the east countries, as it is notion by Edward Said in his theory of Orientalism that "Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East, China and Japan mainly (Said:1977)."

ANALYSIS

Olivia is the main character in this novel, "*The Hundred Secret Senses*", a second generation of immigrant from Chinese descent who was born in America. In the beginning of her life stages she is Americanized as same as her father. Olivia doesn't know anything about Chinese because her father never told her about that. Olivia is supposed herself as pure American because her live is not different wit the other American family. She is a good Christian. She goes to the church every week. She believes in Jesus as the other American in the society which almost of the people's faith are Christian. Her American identity is reshaped by her

mother that believes in the power of God and Jesus. Besides, American life style in the dressing way is very fashionable, a girl like Olivia appearances is very essential although she just going outside. The way American express their feeling with many rational reasons makes Olivia become rationalist and pragmatist, she always think logically based on the fact and do not believe anything that cannot be proved and explained by logic. Story about ghost and superstitions is uncommon thing and taboo for American society. That is what Olivia has experienced when her half sister, Kwan told her about her ability to see dead people. American way of thinking, a glamorous and free lifestyle makes American like going to the bar just for chilling and chatting with their friend. They will enjoy the spare time that they have to pay the busy time in a whole day. It can not be avoided that cigarettes and alcohol become a good friend to killing the time. Olivia is always does fun thing with her friends without knowing the effect that may be happen in the next day. After several months they had been closed, Olivia and Simon decide to get married. In her marriage, equality among family is the important thing that she should share with her husband. According to American cultural values, every people have equal opportunities; people are important as individuals, for who they are, not from which family they come (Kohls, 1984). Olivia who absolutely a woman from a modern American family tries to make her self independent, not only just hangs her life on her husband's shoulder. With all the abilities and knowledge that she has, she becomes a photographer, designer, desktop typographer and paste-up artist while Simon is the copywriter, client manager, print buyer and accounts receivable department. In the matter of aesthetic, they treated each other with careful respect on what they have in their job (Tan, 1995: 111). Though Olivia is influence by American culture, it can not be avoide that Chinese culture is also shaped Olivia's character. Basically, Olivia's cultural identity which is shaped by Chinese cultural values is triggers when her half sister from China, Kwan arrives in America. Kwan tries to teach Olivia about everything related to Chinese culture. She tries to bond Olivia's Chinese heritage by delivering some stories from China. Thus, through their bedtime, Olivia absorbs Chinese culture including its language unconsciously. Language is one of the elements that can affect someone's identity faster. By sleeping together in the same bedroom, sharing and listening about Kwan's stories Olivia can't avoid that Chinese culture begin to affect her identity. Thus, only her in her American family who become the one that learn Chinese.

When the two different cultures, American and Chinese Culture become melted in somebody's character, hybridity occurs as the result of two

different cultures which are melted and create the new one. It is the essential concept in post colonial theory which is reveals redefinition and reconstruction of culture and identity. Hybridity always connected with the power of colonize and colonizer. Both of colonize and colonizer have strong relation to reshape the identity. Thus, if the power of those two kinds of cultures between colonize and colonizer's cuture have the same power, it will create the cultural hybridization. Cultural hybridization makes people can't decide what culture that belongs to them, they feel confused to recognize the original culture and the host culture. Therefore they will take both. It means that they can have two cultures as their cultural identity.

Actually hybridity is a way to bridge the confusion of an individual to get the suitable cultural identity that they will have. Olivia's hybrid culture is begin when her father's daughter from China come to America as the last message from her father in his last breath. Actually American cultural values doesn't make a sense about the superstition or *karma*, but because of Chinese cultural values that already planted in Olivia's father, he become afraid if someday the soul of her wife in China will come to bother his American family's life. Olivia is experiencing hybrid cultural identity in her life. Hybrid cultural identity like the two side of the coin, although it is different actually it is unity Olivia Laguni / Olivia Bishop and Olivia Yee are the same person. Olivia Laguni / Olivia Bishop are Olivia Yee and Olivia Yee is Olivia Laguni / Olivia Bishop. Being trapped in the two different cultures, China and America makes her realize to take both cultures. The names of the character are the representation of her hybrid culture. Olivia Laguni / Olivia Bishop represent her American identity while Olivia Yee represents her hybrid identity, between American name "Olivia" and Chinese name "Yee".

It takes along time for Olivia to decide which one of the names that suitable with her. In her entire life, Olivia's curiosity about the real identity that belong to her can be seen toward her statement "As I think more about my name, I realize I've never had any sort of identity that suited me, not since I was five at least...(156)." and since her father dead, there was additional name behind her name "Laguni" because her mother remarried to Hawaiian, named Bob Laguni. Olivia feels uncomfortable with the name Laguni as her last name. She neither likes nor wants her step father Bob's last name Laguni, because laguni means "Lagoon" or orphan.

Before Olivia decides to change her name, she try to make sure that she is inherit the Chinese blood. In the beginning of the Kwan's arriving, she seems to deny her parental culture by making some differences between her and Kwan. In the

beginning of the novel, Olivia try to introduce Kwan that she is her sister by giving her difference. She try to assure and make the border between her and Kwan that I'm a normal with two eyes which are only have function to see what is exact thing based on the rational thought not such absurd things that Kwan see. Olivia's statement that shows her sister have *yin* eye makes her hurries to confirm her American identity by saying that Kwan is only her half sister. The American culture was presented as normal and competent, while Chinese culture was depicted as deficient. Olivia seems to make Kwan realize that she never be like her although she learn English. By making some differences between her and Kwan, Olivia identify that she is never be the same with her sister, Kwan. It can be looked out in the table bellow:

Olivia	Kwan
Communicate by using english	Communicate by using pidgin english
Rational and normal	Irrational and abnormal
The woman is slim and skinny	Fat and chubby
Materialism, living in a great building, apartment	Poor, filthy face, living in village and overpasses
Honorable, paying for high class girls	Being marginalized
Everyone has each privacy in their family	No boundary among family

Table 1. Binary opposition

Thus, Olivia's differentiation through her sister makes her realize that she is truly different with Kwan, except their genetic relation. Olivia is shaped by American way of thinking and Kwan is always relating everything with an irrational reason. But, as the time running, Olivia's curiosity about her Chinese identity appears in her mind and begins to seek her Chinese heritage instead of being American.

Olivia's regaining of her Chinese heritage to reveal her hybrid identity is begin when she know that her father's name is not the real name for her Chinese descent, since she feels unfit with the identity that belong to her, "Laguni" and Bishop. By going to her ancestral country, China, she wish that she can find her real family's name. But, her trip is colored with some spiritual journeys in her ancestral country. Before going to China, Olivia only know about China through Kwan's story. But now during her journey to china make her know further about her Chinese heritage. Begin with her task for journalist needed from a travel magazine, "*Lands Unknown*", "which Olivia and Simon had proposed before they are separated. Olivia must go to china to make a journal about the unknown island in China. That's opportunity not only become the bridge for Olivia in regaining her Chinese heritage but also as the solution of her marriage with her husband, Simon, being divorce or just stay by his side forever. In this

case, Kwan's character is very strong to assure Olivia that going to the parent's homeland is very important thing for all Chinese descent.

Little by little, Chinese cultural values are trigger to bond Olivia's Chinese identity. But, In China Olivia always becomes an alien, tourist and outsider. Although Olivia had learned about Chinese language, she is lack of Chinese vocabulary. As American who travels to China, she try to use Chinese word when there is a miscommunication. Like in the situation when she ask the stewardess to give her a slice of lemon. Olivia try to use Chinese word, but in the contrary the choice of the word that she uses makes her become so embarrassed. All of the people in the plane laugh at her suppose it as a joke. That's the second time that Olivia feels ashamed since her traumatic experience for being called as "Dumb Chink."

Olivia's regaining of her Chinese heritage is still continues. Next is the time for her hunting the other photograph for magazine's article. She chooses Changmian as the object of land unknown which is save a beautiful landscape inside. Olivia becomes so proud of the country of her ancestry. Although she never visited changmian before, but she feels that she has already here. May be, it is because of Kwan's story about Changmian that she usually heard. Changmian which is known as curse village is not true. Moreover, there are so many potential landscapes that can be commercial if it is develop as tourism object. Olivia's journey to the Changmian is coloured by the tragedy of tragic accident that is happen in the middle of the journey. Here, the fighting of argument between American way of thinking in Olivia's self and Chinese way of thinking are appear. Chinese believe that if the driver drives the car uncontrolled and obviously crashed. The driver is fault and should take the responsibility. Chinese treat human more humanism. Because there is always responsibility behind the fault or the guilty that they have done. May be the effect is not now, it may be happen in the next cycle of life which is called karma in Buddha's faith.

Chinese image of nature is also make influence Olivia in defining her identity, Olivia's images of nature in china make her Chinese identity slowly consolidate. But her American identity is not erased. What she had in her mind now is everyone have their own cultural values where they were live and enjoy their spare live. Through Kwan, Olivia knows about her father's cultural background which already kept for more than twenty years. By seeing the image of the dragon in the sky, Olivia seems compromise her Chinese culture. The image of the dragon has undergone a series of changes over the centuries becoming more and more mighty and beautiful. In China dragon is the symbol of live power. It is held in high esteem for its dignity and power for good. The people in China have belief that they are descendent of the dragon, a tradition that is firmly

embedded in their culture and one that is encountered across all aspects of Chinese society and in the minds of its people.

In the end of the story, Olivia doesn't change her name, she stay with the name "Bishop" behind her name, only her baby that added by the Chinese name. Thus, it becomes evident that second-generation Chinese American is determined to rediscover the meanings of their original names as a step towards mending their fractured Chinese identity. By adding family's name behind the first name is one of the solution for Chinese immigrant to be honor with their parent's culture because Chinese name is an essential element of Chinese identity. Therefore Olivia's hybrid cultural identity is revealed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the recent analysis of the data, the result can be concluded that hybrid identity occurs as the solution of cultural identity crisis because every human has identity, but if the identity is mixture together and blend to make something new, they will confuse to decide which culture they will belong to. First of all, cultural identity reflects the historical experience of the past and shared cultural code in which somebody belongs to the certain ethnic. In post colonial criticism, identity is always connected with the power of home country and host country. In the other word the reshaping of identity occurs as the result of colonize and the colonizer's culture which is mix together because identity is a process of recognizing the self. Hybrid cultural identity makes the identity become unique because new culture does not erase the values of the home culture, but simply adds to them to create a new. Thus, hybridity is considered as the bridge for the host and home culture. Secondly, in Amy Tan's *The Hundred secret senses* Olivia as the main character of the novel is experiencing a hybrid identity. She trapped in the two different cultures, between American and Chinese culture. Her identity is reshaped by American and Chinese culture. In the beginning, Olivia sure that she is an America by assuring her self that she do everything that the other American modern families does. She is a Christian, going to the church every Sunday and speaking only English. But the arriving of her sister, kwan make everything changing. Kwan introduces Chinese cultural values to Olivia, including the superstition and the life after dead. Olivia who born as American, always think in rational way, which is different with kwan that think everything based on the feeling and senses. Through story telling and share the same bedroom, olivia's picture about china is triggers shadowing her life. History may become one of the important ways to introduce the heritage parental culture to the next generation. Most of people learn to expand their love towards their race, towards all people including heaven, earth and all things to finally realize that people of this world are really of one big family.

As a second generation of immigrant, Olivia always supposed her self to be more American than Chinese. She make differentiation between her and Kwan, how Chinese image in the eye of an American. One day, Olivia has a trip to china to make an article for travel magazine, she use this occasion as the chance to look for her father's real name because actually "Yee" isn't her father's last name. Although Olivia believes and supposed herself to be more American, once when she has a trip to china, Simon and Kwan, she begins to feel much closer to her Chinese heritage, and in the storytelling tradition of all Tan's novels, She turns out to be always fascinated by the exotic natural landscapes, by the acculturation daily provided by her half-sister. Olivia learns about her family's past while talking to residents of the village in which Kwan grew up. In the beginning of the trip, Olivia feels like an outsider and stranger in the new country. Based on Bhabha's hybridity, Bhaba urges into this space in an effort to open up the notion of an international culture "not based on exoticism or multi-culturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity". Besides, journey to China is also become the bridge for Olivia and Simon, in fixing the problem of their marriage. Olivia is able to confront her difficulties with Simon as a result of the trip. In the end, Olivia does not need to change her married name anymore. Nevertheless, the impulse to discover her Chinese identity remains as she names her newborn baby "Li" after her half-sister Kwan never come back. Thus, it becomes the evident that second-generation of Chinese Americans are determined to rediscover the meanings of their original names as a step towards mending their fractured Chinese identity, because Chinese name is an essential element of Chinese identity. And the last, cultural identity that belongs to some one is not just the identity in the identity card, but cultural identity is belonging to the ethnicity they will belong. Second generation of immigrant may face cultural identity problem because they never taught about their parent's former culture. Therefore, through the cultural values, the memory of the dream, visit the ancestral country the identity will be bond. And then mix together become a new term of cultural identity, "hybrid culture."

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