



**THE GRIEF OF DIASPORIC SUBJECTS IN EMILY X.R.
PAN'S *THE ASTONISHING COLOR OF AFTER***

THESIS

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**KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN, KEBUDAYAAN, RISET, DAN
TEKNOLOGI**

**English Department
Faculty of Humanities
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2023



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Presented to the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember, as one
of the requirements to obtain the award of sarjana sastra degree
in English Study

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DEDICATION

This thesis is sincerely dedicated to:

1. My beloved parents, Fitri Sri Handayani and Novial Ahmad Hakim; Thank you so much for the unconditional love, incessant prayers, and endless support for me. I am truly grateful for everything you have done for me.
2. My dearest little brother, Farel; Thank you for always cheering me up and being a loving sibling. Your support means the world to me.
3. My grandmothers, Sulistyaningtyas and Lafifah Hanum; Thank you so much for the love, incessant prayers, and endless support. I could not have done it without you.
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MOTTO

“There’s no point in wishing. We can’t change anything about the past. We can only remember. We can only move forward.”

Emily X.R Pan



DECLARATION

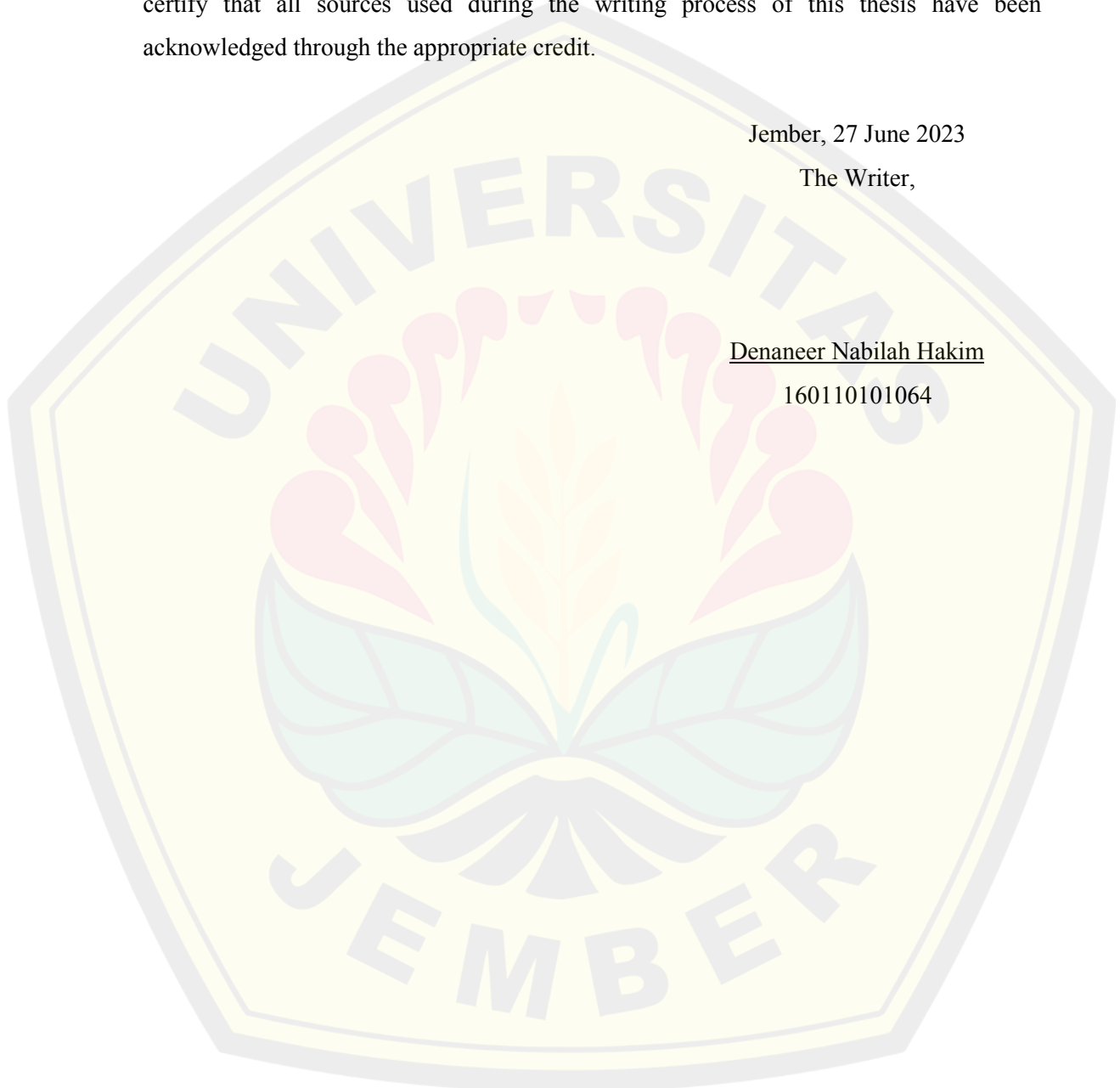
I hereby state that the thesis entitled “**The Grief of Diasporic Subjects in Emily X.R Pan’s *The Astonishing Color Of After***” is an original report composed by myself. I declare that this thesis has never been submitted for any other degree or publication. I certify that all sources used during the writing process of this thesis have been acknowledged through the appropriate credit.

Jember, 27 June 2023

The Writer,

Denaneer Nabilah Hakim

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SUMMARY

The Grief of Diasporic Subjects in Emily X.R Pan's *The Astonishing Color Of After*; Denaneer Nabilah Hakim; 160110101064; 2023; 42 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities; Universitas Jember

This research dealt with the grief of diasporic subject represented in the novel *The Astonishing Color of After* by Emily X.R Pan. The novel tells the story of Leigh Chen Sanders, a mixed-race Taiwan- American teenager who lives in United States with her mother Dory a Taiwanese immigrant, and her father Brian a white American. The novel starts with Leigh's statement that her mother has turned into a red bird, when in fact that she has died by suicide. The red bird gives Leigh a box full of letters in Mandarin from her maternal grandparents that she never knew. This sets Leigh's journey in Taiwan to find the red bird while also learning about her mother's side culture that has been hidden from her entire life. The novel sets mainly in United States and Taiwan. The story of the novel was shown in a chronological and reverse plot on Leigh's perspective two years before her mother's death, the present while she was in Taiwan trying to find the red bird and learning all of the Taiwanese cultures, and also shows some flashback of her mother's life before going to United States.

The terms diaspora which means displaced people who moved from their home to a new place with a new culture, not lonely this can cause a trauma or grief but can also make the younger generation affected by it. As unresolved grief can cause trauma that spans for generations to come, if it being left untreated. It is very common among many generations of immigrants in the United States, because they not only have to leave their home behind but also the life that they has built is gone too. The first part of this research shows how untreated or unresolved grief affect generation to come. Leigh a part of diaspora act as a bridge represent how the author, Emily X.R Pan who is a second generation of immigrant born and raised in the United States view the issue surrounding mental health problem among Asian American in the United States as an issue that needs to be solved.

The second part of this research deals with the grief by diasporic subjects represented in the novel through the main character. It was proven by using supernatural beings as a mean to show the conflict belief of Asian and West through the eyes of the main character, Leigh. She was an Asian-American born and raised in the United States. Growing up she has no exposure on Taiwanese culture, and only able to learn after her mother, Dory death during the first part of the novel. After which then believed that she has turned into a red bird.

The third and last part of this research focus on to show the author's critical point of view. It was proven using the author's, Emily X.R Pan's interview and relates it with her real-life experiences in dealing with grief as a part of diaspora and the trauma that affects her generations of immigrant.

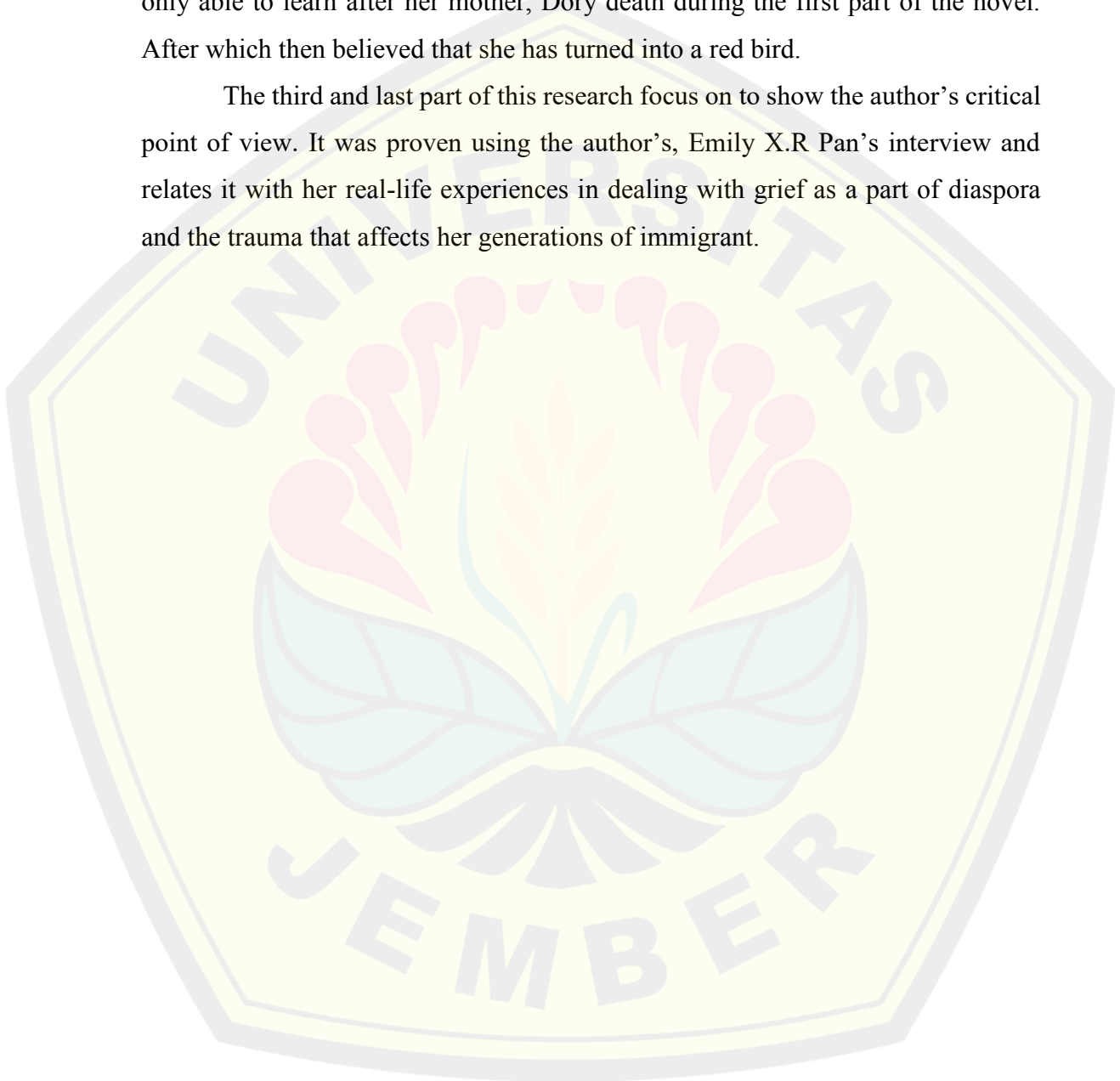
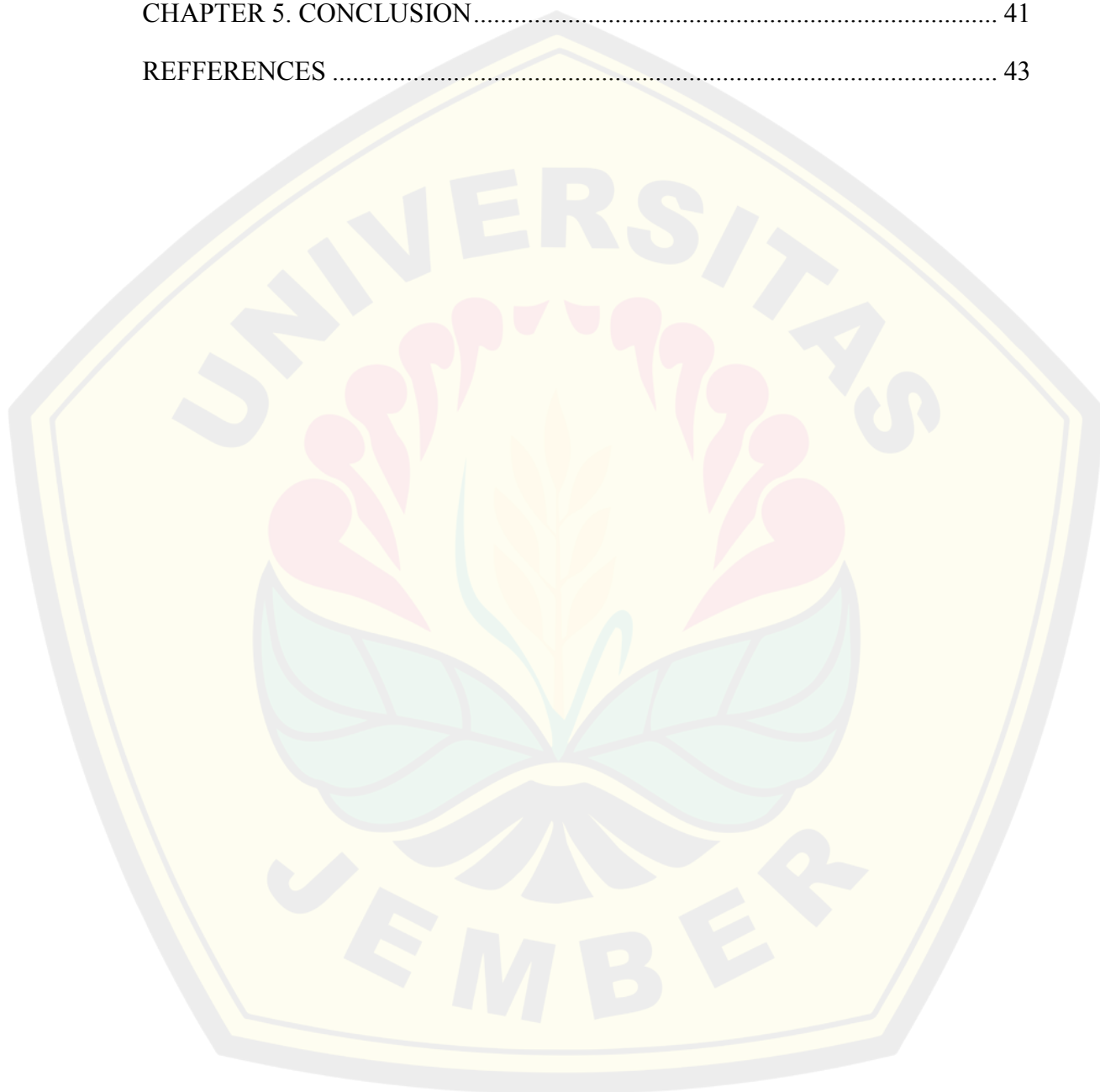


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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter contains the background of the study related to the topic of discussion in this ongoing research. The background of study is needed to develop the rationale analysis dealing with the topic. Moreover, to make clear overview, this chapter contains the description of the research topic, the research questions, and the purpose of the study.

1.1 Background of The Study

The Astonishing Color Of After is a novel by Emily X.R Pan which was published in 2018; this was her debut novel. Emily X.R Pan was born in the midwestern United States to immigrant parents from Taiwan. Emily grew up surrounded by Taiwanese culture most her life, and being the second generation of an immigrant makes her experience being an American at the same amount of time. In her debut novel, Pan focuses on facing a family member's death. The novel was not meant to use the death of a family as the theme of her novel. In one of her interviews, she said that she was supposed to tell a story that was inspired by her grandparent's life in Taiwan, but after experiencing a family member's sudden suicide, she decided to change her views. This novel tells the story of Leigh Chen Sanders, a mixed-race Taiwanese-American teenager who lives in the United States with her mother, Dory, a Taiwanese immigrant, and her father, Brian a white American. The novel starts with Leigh's statement that her mother had turned into a red bird after who died by suicide. The red bird gives Leigh a box full of letters in Mandarin from her maternal grandparents, whom she never knew. This while also learning about her mother's side of culture that has been hidden from her entire life. The novel sets mainly in the United States and Taiwan. The novel's story is shown in a chronological and reverse plot from Leigh's perspective two years before her mother's death, the present while she was in Taiwan trying to find the red bird, learning about Taiwanese culture while also finding out about her family's history.

The main story revolves around Leigh's grief that is focused not only her mother's death but also the clash of Asians and the West inside her, where her Asian part makes her believe that her mother is turning into a red bird is accurate. Superstitions in Asia are believable while also questioning whether the things she sees are real. The novel also tackles the trauma that her grandmother started, which then affected her mother, who ended up suffering from depression. The trauma that Leigh's grandmother suffers from is the result of her upbringing, which then affects her parenting style with her daughters. Leigh's mother, Dory, is not fit with her parents' beliefs and have made a conflict that resulted in her leaving Taiwan and coming to the United States. There her suffering from depression worsened, and she took her own life.

The issue that will be analyzed is representation of the grief of diasporic subjects, which in this case is the main character, Leigh. Specifically focusing on the perspective of the character Leigh and her attempt to make sense of her grief. There are two issue of grief presented in the novel through Leigh's perspective, the effects of unsolved grief as the cause of generational trauma and Leigh's role in solving the generational trauma caused by grief.

In order to delve deeper into the representation of grief in the novel, Representation theory was used to analyze it. this theory was used to examine how the grief of diasporic subjects depicted and portrayed in the novel, providing insights into the messages that the author's try to convey.

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis, it would be helpful to explore the specific instances in the novel that highlight Leigh's grief, the impact it has on her and how she tries to resolve it. broader and societal influences on Leigh's grief as a diasporic subject are also being considered. By examining these aspects, a deeper understanding of the portrayal representation of grief in the novel can be gained.

Representation is the product of the concept's meaning in our mind through language, and this system helps interpret the word meaningfully

(Stuart Hall, 1997, p.18). I take data from Emily X.R Pan's *The Astonishing Color Of After* and some other references related to the topic of discussion in my analysis.

1.2 Topic of Discussion

The novel of Emily X.R Pan's *The Astonishing Color of After* contains some problems and issues. In this research, the topic discussion is the representation of grief in the novel experienced by the main character and how unresolved grief affects family. I am narrowing the issue and make a limitation in which it focuses on analyzing the discourse of grief of people of diaspora in the novel by looking the cultural representation in the novel through supernatural beings and superstitions, and the condition surrounding generational trauma and how it affects other people.

1.3 Research Question

To answer of how grief undergone by mix Asian-American portrayed in the novel written by Emily X.R Pan entitled *The Astonishing Color of After*, this analysis will define some of the problems below:

1. How is grief on diasporic subjects represented in the novel?
2. What is the critical position of the author?

1.4 The Goals of The Study

This research is conducted to achieve several projects

1. To provide description about how grief on diasporic subjects is depicted in the novel
2. To reveal the writer's critical position in the novel

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of two sub-chapters comprising previous researches and theoretical framework. Previous researches are needed not only to differ this research with the previous one in which the topic is same but it is also needed as the basis in analyzing this research. Meanwhile, theoretical framework is used to gain the result toward the research questions in this research.

2.1 Previous Research

Previous research is used to help strengthen the research, it is a previous work that has been done by other researchers before me and has relation to the topic of this research. There are three researches based on grief in literary works that help this research.

The first previous research is a thesis by Wasilatut Thoyyibah (2018) entitled “Alaska Young Copes With Grief In John Green’s *Looking For Alaska*”. The purpose of her research is to analyze the main character in the novel, Alaska young. The novel focuses on the day before and after Alaska’s death and how it affected all of her friend. In the novel she was shown to have a problem dealing with trauma. The way her character copes with grief is shown to be a coping mechanism, which is a strategy that people often use in order to deal with trauma and to help manage painful or difficult emotions. In Thoyyibah’s research she uses coping mechanism as the main theory to analyze how the main character’s cope with the trauma, and how it affects all of her decisions in the novel. She also uses new criticism as the supporting theory to analyze the characterization of the main character. This research helps to understand how grief is being represented in the novel and how coping mechanism is used by the character in order to help manage her emotion.

The second previous research is a journal article by Sahar Jamshidian and Hossein pirnajmuddin (2019) entitled “The Chronotope of third Space

in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Management of Grief*. Their research examine the construction of identity in "the third space" in the age of immigration, it happened through the perspective of Shaila Bhava who has just lost her husband and two sons from terrorist attack on the Air India. In their research they use the main character's perspective and also other characters through dialogue. By using the data, it can enhance people's understanding of Shaila's journey for identity and how she become more mature from a naive person to be someone that are aware of her instability of her identity in the third space. The reason to use this research as one of my previous studies is that it helps to understand the perspective of a grieving person through the dialogue of a diasporic character.

The last previous research is also a thesis written by Dewi Nofitasari (2018) entitled "The Representation of Racism In Sherman Alexei's *The Absolutely True Diary Of A Part-Time Indian*". In Dewi's thesis, there are three topics that she wants to analyze. The first is how racism is represented in the novel, the second is the social condition that relates to the contextual background of the novel, and the last one is the critical position of the author. In her research, Dewi uses Stuart Hall's representation theory to represent the racism toward the main character, she also represents the social condition that Native Americans are going through in the novel. This thesis helps me to understand more about how the representation theory by Stuart Hall is being used in a thesis.

2.2 The Definition of Grief

Grief is an emotional experience after a loss, this could be a relationship, status, job, house, health, income, or even a major change in life such as moving, retiring, and getting a divorce. This means that being an immigrant can be considered to be a major change in life, as they have to get accustomed to living in a new country while also trying to make a living there. In the United States, there is about 60.2 million immigrants according to census bureau data by Pew Research Center in 2017, where Mexico is the

top origin country and China is the second.

Being an Immigrant especially when they arrive as a group of a minority can be challenging. The new cultural, religious, or political views can influence the views from their country of origin, in the end, they try to change all of it to be accepted in the new society. These changes that happened to the most second generation of an immigrant might cause a rift between the family who still clings onto their traditional beliefs in their homeland and the one who already immigrated to a new land has a different belief. As a result, the conflict that is not being resolved will cause anxiety which can lead to grief.

2.3 Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation

Stuart Hall (1997:16) States that representation is the product of meaning of the concept in our mind through language. By using the link between concept and language enables us to know the differences of the real world of objects, people or events, or to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, and events. There are two systems of representation states Stuart Hall (1997:18), the first system connects objects, people and events with a set of concepts or mental representation in our heads. By using the system, it helps us to interpret the world meaningfully. The second system is the language. Our shared map or culture must be translated into a common language so that we can connect our concepts and ideas using written words, spoken sounds or visual images. It can also mean that the first system enables us to construct a set of correspondences between things and our system of conceptual maps to give meaning to the world. While the second system depends on the language to construct a set of correspondences between a set of signs and our system of conceptual maps.

To explain how the representation of meaning through language works there are three theories that Stuart Hall suggests (1997:24), which he calls the reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist or constructivist approaches.

In the reflective approach of representation, it's supposed to lie in the object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions as a mirror, to reflect the true meaning. To explain how language imitated nature, the Greeks used the notion of mimesis in the 4th century B.C. that's why the theory says that language functions by reflecting the truth which already exists in the world, is called mimetic. The intentional approach of representation is that the speaker or author applies their unique meaning to the world through language. In this approach, words mean what the author intends to mean. However, it has flaws. Language depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes, as ourselves become the meaning, we could express it entirely in private languages. But, for our intended meanings to be understood, it has to enter into a rule, codes, and conventions of language. Because language is a social system.

The third approach which is the constructionist approach means that our mental representation of things in the world made the conceptual system and correlate it with a language system made up of sounds, images, gestures, or words to exchange meanings with others. Constructionist approach use language to represent the author's concept. Based on the three approach I will be using constructionist approach to analyze the representation of grief in the novel *The Astonishing Color of After* (2018).

2.4 Discursive Approach

Hall stated that there are two models of constructionist approach. There are semiotic model by Ferdinand de Saussure and discursive approach model by Michel Foucault. The last approach is going to be used for this research.

“By ‘discourse’, Foucault meant a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language.”

(Hall, 1997:44)

Based on what Foucault stated, discourse is a group of statement that provides language for talking about a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic. He stated that knowledge and meaning are not produced through language but through discourse. From this statement it can be shown that his concept of discourse is about language and practice. This helps to overcome the distinction between what one says (language) and what one does (practice).

Foucault then went on argues that discourse can also constructs the topic, by defining and producing the object of our knowledge, while it governs the way that a topic can be talked and reasoned about (Hall, 1997:44). He says that discourse never consist of one statement, text, action or source but it appears across range of text, and as forms of conduct, at a number of a different institutional sites within society. Thus, the similarity that was occur in discourse is included in discursive practice.

Foucault mentions that he was concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse (Hall, 1997:44). As has been explained before, it means that the construction of meaning is concerned through discourse. Thus, the use of discursive practice is to analyze the representation because it uses discourse as a system of representation. Hence, I use this approach in this research in order to confront the representation of grief through the main character and her family in Emily X.R Pan's *The Astonishing Color of After* and the critical thinking of the author.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the method of doing the research and describes how it is conducted. It includes the type of the research, how the data are collected, and how the data are processed and analyzed. These discussions are expected to be the suitable way of processing the data in order to get the objective result and achieving the goals of this research.

3.1 Type of Research

The type of this research is categorized as qualitative research. It means that this research focuses on collecting and analyzing the data that was taken from textual narrative or verbal data, that is not in the form of a number. The data can be collected from the text, document, image, interview, observation, and so on. The qualitative will be used as the object of this research is a novel that does not have any quantitative data in it.

3.2 Data Collection

I divide the data into two types: primary and secondary data. The primary data are taken from the novel written by Emily X.R. Pan entitled *The Astonishing Color of After*. The data that were taken are narrations, dialogues, and statements in the novel that are related to grief as the main focus of this research. The secondary data are taken from some books and journals that give me a lot of information and facts about grief on diasporic subjects. It was also supported by some journals and books that relate to the theory of representation.

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

I collect the data; the next step is data processing. It begins by categorizing the data. To get the related data to the topics of grief on diasporic subjects, close reading is the appropriate way to do. Then, I categorize the data into two. The first is all sentences, dialogues, and narrations in the novel

that relates to the grief on diasporic subjects in the novel. The second category of the data is all information, facts, and discourses about in grief experienced by diasporic subjects in real society by experts and many other researchers.

I categorize the data; the next step is data analysis. The process of analyzing the data is then divided into some parts related to the number of research questions that have made before. The first analysis focuses on how the novel represents diasporic people experiencing grief. It starts with analyzing the data that contains information about what grief is and how the character experiencing grief that caused by conflict of two different belief and solving generational trauma affected generations after. This part of the analysis answers the first research questions about how grief on diasporic subjects is represented in the novel. The second part of the research questions is about the critical position of the author. It focuses on the position of the author to find her critical idea about grief and the effects of unresolved grief. It will be answered by studying her biography and another article that informs about the author that relates to grief on diasporic subjects in the novel through the dialogues and narratives. While also relating to the contextual background of the author as a second generation of immigrant who is also experiencing grief like the novel character.

The final part is to conclude as it sums up the discussions about grief experienced by diasporic subjects in the novel. Conclusion is aimed to make a better explanation for the readers. The scientific explanation and reasons are needed when we analyze the data and make a conclusion from it. Therefore, it will be accepted and understood. better explanation

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

The section of this chapter discusses research questions. To answer the research question, this chapter is divided into two sub chapters. The first subchapter discusses the representation of diasporic grief. The second subchapter focuses on the differences in value and ideology among diasporic subjects and the family in their homeland that can cause grief. The last subchapter reveals the author's critical position.

4.1. Conflict of Generational Trauma Caused by Diasporic Grief

According to Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon diaspora comes from a Greek verb diaspeiro meaning I scatter or I spread about. Composed from a word dia which means between, through, and across and also a word speiro that means scattering. This word used to refer to people from a dominant city who emigrated to conquered land with the purpose of colonization and to assimilate the territory into the empire. In this modern age, diaspora becomes the term to describe immigrant, or displaced people away from their home. In the United States there are about sixty-two million immigrants according to census bureau data by Pew Research Center in 2017, where Mexico is the top country of origin and China is the second. In this chapter of this research will only discuss the type of grief that comes from diasporic people, people who are displaced from home.

According to online etymology dictionary, grief comes from middle English greef, gref that may have come from the old French grief that means grave, heavy, grievous, and sad or from the latin gravis which also have the same meaning. Being an immigrant especially when they arrive as a group of minorities can be challenging. To them the new cultural, religious, or political views can influence the views from their country of origin, in the end, they try to change all of it to be accepted in the new society.

These changes happened to most of second generation of immigrant or the third generation where all of their values from the old and new home have become

a blur, this might cause a rift between them and the first generation of immigrant where most of them are trying to hold and preserve their old views from their country of origin. The rift between these generations of immigrants can cause a conflict that can become big if not solved. As a result, this can lead to a type of grief that can only be experienced by them. It is through the representation and constructionist approach used in this research that the idea of grief experienced by diasporic people is represented in the novel. The discourse between members of the Asian-American community is used to construct the novel. This idea of grief then become a knowledge and believed by them. Emily as the author of *The Astonishing Color of After* represents that kind of concept in the dialogues and narration in the novel. As a result, the main topic of this research is this issue.

While generational trauma refers to trauma passed from generation to generation. It is a common phenomenon among Asian-American population. According to Molly Wang, a licensed professional counselor supervisor, it can show up within a family as well as within a larger community that shares an identity. Generational trauma can also be transmitted to younger generations by immigrants, forced migrants, and refugees. These immigrants experience traumatic stress, acculturation stress, resettlement stress, and isolation. For immigrant to be seen as successful many Asian diaspora have learned to be a model citizen, this includes shutting away parts of their identities that were not deemed acceptable—the otherness that made them targets of discrimination. This caused many Asian Americans to reject their own culture, language, food, names, community, etc. As a result, many Asian Americans have a seventeen-point three lifetime rate of psychiatric disorders. The struggle lies in the fact that Asian Americans are three times less likely to seek mental health treatments than white people. A study conducted by Bith-Melander, Chowdhury N, Jindal C, and Effird J for the international journal of environmental research and public health has demonstrated that Asian Americans respond positively to mental health professionals with similar cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as themselves.

4.1.1. Generational Trauma Caused by Unresolved Grief Affect Leigh Status as A Subject of Diaspora

In the novel, the people who suffer from generational trauma are Yuanyang, Waipo Leigh's grandmother and Dory's mother, Dory Leigh's mother, and Leigh. Although three characters are used in this part of sub chapter, Leigh is still affected by it. Yuanyang role in the novel is to represents the generational trauma as a part of diaspora, which then on causes her to have no relationship with her youngest Daughter. In comparison Dory is technically a first-generation immigrant, but her conflict cause her to fit more with the second-generation immigrant because she conflicts with her mother. Her role in this sub-chapter is to represent the second generation of immigrant affected by Yuanyang's generational trauma, which continues to affect her until her death. Leigh is technically a part of second generation of immigrant, but because of the ongoing conflict between her mother and grandmother get no knowledge of Taiwanese culture. Her role ins this part is to represent the third generation of immigrants who will mend the gap between the two generation before her and break the cycle of generational trauma so it does not run any further.

The first part of this chapter follows Leigh finding out that Yuanyang birth and adoption.

“A daughter,” her husband says. “Do we keep this one?”

They woman brushes away a bit of gunk sticking to the baby's nose. “No, this one we sell.”

The colors change, go dark. A glimmer and burst bring new light.

The same woman in the doorway of her hut, rocking the baby who is unknowing and swathed in rags. The woman's face smudged and empty, her husband beside her looking broken. He takes a filthy wad of money from a balding man in the grass just outside their home. The man takes the child. An easy transaction, hearts aside.

The balding man carries the baby across the field and into the trees. Out of the trees and up a mountain. And inside his own run-down mud cottage, he shows the baby girl to his wife. She rocks another tiny body in her arms, helping the mouth find her nipple and feed.

“What should we call our new daughter?” says the man.

“Yuanyang,” she says, rocking.

“Like the birds?” says the man sounding not all surprised.
(X.R Pan 2018: 133-134)

The quotations above show Yuanyang’s birth and being sold to a new family that lives in the mountain. From 1906 until 1940, selling and adopting children from another household is often practised in Taiwan. It is seen as a way for childless couples or individuals to receive a descendant and or an heir to their property (Fauve-Chamoux:1998). In Addition, by adopting a child, a home can provide for orphans, bastards, foundlings, children of impaired families, or otherwise unwanted children (Walker:2006)

According to studies by Saso in 1999 and Wolf and Huang in 1980, male adoption are far less complex when compared to female adoption because the goals are more straightforward. In most cases, the boy is most likely being adopted into the family to continue the family line. While this happens, all natal kinship ties are broken, and usually the boy’s biological parents are usually paid more money. Although, sometimes, a difference was made when no money was being paid and the boy’s biological parents could still have ties with him. While a girl could also be considered a value to strengthen familial bonds with other families, most families still prefer having a boy. The motivation behind adopting girls are more complex, as there are many different types of adoption and reason for adoption (Wolf and Huang: 1980).

The most common reasons as to why people adopt girls is to become future-wives for their sons. Economically this means that they would spend less money to wed them. Culturally this means that the family could shape the girl into becoming the perfect daughter-in-law, and the relationship between the adopted girls and their soon-to-be-in-law’s family could be more harmonious. The second reason is when a newlywed couple is taking a longer time to conceive a son believes that by adopting a girl it would stimulate the conception of having a son. The third reason is to have a kind of servant who could help with the chores at home, taking care of the family or to fulfil ancestor obligations. The last reason is because they just simply want to have a daughter. In conclusion the adoption of a girl is happened when there is a need for specific socio-economic reason, or to fulfil obligation to

the ancestors, other than that most family have no reasons to adopt girls. As it is now known why the family most likely choose to adopt Yuanyang. The reasoning, the family's treatment towards Yuanyang, and her role as a future daughter-in-law will now affect her life in the future.

Yuanyang sets a cup before the uncle and pours the red tea slowly, careful that her elbow angles away from him so as to not be rude. He taps two fingers on his knee in thanks, and she shrinks away. Her job is done best when she turns invisible, blending into the wall, becoming one with the sparse furniture. **(X.R Pan 2018: 135-136)**

From the quotation above shows a deep-rooted cultural expectation paced upon Yuanyang as a supposed Taiwanese daughter-in-law and adopted daughter. These expectations extend beyond being a perfect daughter-in-law but also encompass the idea that adopted daughters are more trustworthy, reliable, and emotionally connected to their adopted parents (Zhang:2006). the added pressure on Yuanyang to fulfill these roles and achieve family goals.

The significance of Yuanyang's quiet and invisible behavior becomes clearer considering the cultural values ingrained in her, throughout her life. In Taiwanese society, a silent and obedience and self-effacement are highly valued qualities in women, who are expected to conform to societal expectations. This upbringing can shape Yuanyang's understanding of her role as a daughter and mother, causing her to suppress her individuality and face psychological distress and trauma.

Furthermore, growing up alongside what supposed to a brother and a husband to her denies Yuanyang the opportunity to express her true self and establish a genuine sibling relationship. This further reinforces the expectation for her to blend into the background and fulfill the traditional roles assigned to her.

The pressure on adopted daughters like Yuanyang intensified by the perception that they are more trustworthy, reliable, and emotionally connected to her adopted parents. Because of this, it puts an additional burden on Yuanyang to not only be a perfect daughter-in-law but also help achieve family goals. The weight of these expectation contributes to the potential trauma she may experience.

Considering this, generational trauma may be perpetuated in Yuanyang's parenting style. Suppose she internalizes the belief that a good daughter should be invisible and blend into the background. In that case she may unknowingly pass this expectation onto her daughters. From this it can be assumed that the immense pressure that was placed upon Yuanyang as a supposedly Taiwanese daughter-in-law and the family's adopted daughter. The cultural values she has internalized and the additional burden placed on her contribute to potential psychological distress and trauma. Understanding these factors provides insight into the complexities of Yuanyang's character and the intergenerational effects within her family. Which then will prove in the next quotation with how she raised her daughter.

Yuanyang sighs. "You were never this much trouble. You did everything so well. You were always so focused,"

"You shouldn't always compare the two of us," Jingling says quietly.

Yuanyang shakes her head. "She will listen to you. Tell her to work harder. Tell her she must understand her priorities."

"I will," Jingling says to mollify her mother. But she knows her little sister has a different kind of spirit, bursting with a different kind of ambition. Her sister has so much more in mind, even now, as she comes up on the end of high school. Dreams that stretch beyond being a perfect child, a perfect wife. Her sister, with the right support and intention, could be a real artist. **(X.R Pan 2018: 218)**

From this quotation that Dory is far from her parents' expectations, where she is seen from Jingling's perspective as someone who has different kind of spirit and ambition. The only one who will continue to support Dory with all of her dreams are her older sister, Jingling wants Dory to succeed and believes that there is something different with her talent, something that the rest of her families does not understand. She also wants her parents to see that Dory's talent is something that are worth dropping everything else for. Yuanyang's expectation for Dory is contrast to the career path that she wants to follow, a musician. As Yuanyang having a conversation with her eldest daughter, Jingling who is still alive here. She continues to compare the two of them, and implicitly saying that Jingling is a perfect daughter to her.

Raising a perfect Chinese daughter is considered to be a dream of many

Asian parents especially East Asian, and usually this combines with the style of tiger parenting where they are more demanding of high expectations and stricter unlike their Western parents are. They usually sets a high standard for their children to follow and be more successful at school. The parents spend their times pushing their kids to study, practice, and achieve. Which resulted in highly competitive children. For many East Asian families, education is seen as the gateway to success in improving one's socioeconomic status (Chan. K: 2023). There is an expectation for the children to succeed. These children often seen as something that since they were not able to achieve are being passed on to their child. As a result, most of the kids shows a deep-rooted trauma from this, and show a huge resentment toward their parents which can be shown in the next quotation.

I remember trying to see her through the eyes of strangers: the willowy, dark-haired woman with the disjointed grammar and mixed-up idioms. I only ever remember hearing her speak English. She even picked an English name for herself: Dorothy, which she ended up shortening to Dory. **(X.R Pan 2018: 28)**

The result of the parenting approach adopted by Yuanyang and Waigong has resulted in their daughter, Dory, making the significant decision to relocate to a distant location far awsy from them. Not only has she physically distanced herself from her parents, but she also consciously distanced herself from various aspects of Chinese culture that were once part of her identity. Moreover, this includes renouncing her given name, refraining from speaking mandarin, opting for non-Chinese cuisine, and disengaging from any cultural practices or traditions associated with her heritage. The deliberate avoidance exhibited by Dory, unbeknownst to her, has not escaped the eyes of her daughter, Leigh. As Leigh has started to realize this since her early childhood years, she recognizes her mother's actions inadvertently prevent her from fully embracing and understanding an essential aspect of herself. That is largely why Leigh doubts her identity as a Taiwanese-American while simultaneously longing to embrace it. unlike many

immigrants in the United States, Dory's motivation for altering her name distinguishes her from most immigrants. It is a prevailing practice among Asian-American immigrants, particularly second-generation immigrants, to adopt English or English sounding names. This choice stems from their desire to assimilate into Western society and facilitate the pronunciation of their names by non-Asian individuals. Some people use both Asian and English names simultaneously. Immigrants also did this to avoid their peers making fun of their names (Louie, Sam:2021)

Throughout history, it has been a prevailing practice to employ alternative designation when referring to individuals who have migrated or are descendants of migrants. However, in the novel, Dory, deliberately chose to abandon her Chinese name. This decision was not solely rooted in a desire to conform to the Western culture but also served as a mean for her to create emotional separation from Taiwan and her familial connections.

In the novel, Dory's decision to stop using Chinese name can be interpreted as a mean to assimilate with the Westerners and create a sense of distance from her Taiwanese heritage and family. This choice highlights her desire to forge a new identity separate from her cultural background. By adopting a different name, Dory intend to embrace her new environment and detach herself from reminders of her past.

“Don't you think it's been long enough?” says my father very gently. “They deserve to see you. You deserve to see them. Leigh deserves to meet them.”
 “No. they don't deserve to meet her. You don't know them. I know them. They're my parents. They have only disappointment in who I am. My entire life. Disappointment.”

“It's been so many years,” my father says, “enough time for everyone to think about what's happened. To regret what's been said.”

“Yes,” says my mother, her voices shaking even harder. “I have lots of time to think. All I do is remember what they say. They say, ‘You are supposed to marry Chinese man. If you marry that white man, this is no longer your home. You are no longer our daughter.’ How can someone say that to their child?”

Dad wraps his arms around her; she holds her hands in tight fists between her chest and his. “They didn't mean it.””

“They did,” says mom, weeping now. “They mean it. I know they did.”

“Dory—”

“They blame me. They think if I never come to America, if I never meet you, Jingling would be alive. Why everything always my fault. Maybe I blame them. They ate lunch with her the day she died. They should see how sick she was. Why everything my fault? Why not their fault? They will never meet Leigh. They will never hurt her like they hurt me.”

Dad doesn't say anything after that. He holds her, and she buries her face in his neck, her shoulder shaking. (X.R Pan 2018: 331-332)

Ever since she was a child Dory has always been compared to her older sister Jingling, who fit the most with being a perfect Chinese daughter. Although Jingling does not support her parent's effort to keep forcing Dory to follow a certain path that was specified for her, like having a Chinese husband, having what considered to be a good stable job, and for her to stop following her dream of becoming a musician. When Jingling died, Dory who becomes the only daughter left in her family was forced by her parents to take Jingling's role to become a perfect Asian daughter for them. After Waipo and Waigong's attempt to change Dory's mind about marrying Brian, she finally leaves Taiwan and never came back. She never even tries to contact or giving her parents a chance to reconnect with her. In one instance after Leigh was born Brian tries to convinced Dory to allow her parents to meet Leigh, but Dory is adamant about her decision and said that she agrees to it one day. This further proves her resentment toward her parents has only grew not only in term of how many years she hold on to this but, her daughter will be affected by it. Chen, Dong, and Zhou (1997) who studied Chinese family in Beijing found that the authoritative style that most Asian parents used, had a higher level of parent-adolescent conflict. Which is what happened between Dory and her parents. It was also suggested that children raised under tiger parenting style often experience a high level of stress and pressure to meet their parent's expectations. These expectations can lead to feelings of constant failure and inadequacy. As a result, when they become a grown up, they may start to develop symptoms of depression, such as persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities, and changes in sleep and appetite patterns. In the novel when Leigh saw a flashback of her mother when she was being left alone at home, she sometimes have intrusive thoughts while she was doing her regular activities.

Furthermore, the strict and authoritarian nature of tiger parenting style can contribute to the development of generational trauma. This parenting style, which emphasizes on discipline, obedience, and conformity, often at the expense of emotional support and nurturing. This often can lead to the child having a long-lasting psychological effect, including anxiety, low self-esteem and difficulty forming healthy relationships.

The impact of the parenting style on depression and generational trauma may vary among individuals. While some children may develop resilience and adapt to the high expectations being placed upon them, other may struggle with the constant pressure and experience negative mental health outcomes.

From the quotation above it can be seen by the way she said that dory will never let her parents meet Leigh and they will never hurt her like they hurt me. As a part of the younger generation of immigrant where she has more awareness towards parenting style, Dory tries to fix the parenting style that is common in most Asian household. She does not push Leigh to be a perfect Chinese daughter either. Her statement comes from fear of rejection. She worries that if her parents get to know Leigh, they would reject her, just like they did with Dory in the past. Especially, with Leigh having the same type of passion for arts just like Dory had with music when she was younger. Dory believes that Leigh's passion is something that her parents will never understand or appreciate.

In the novel Dory has always supports Leigh in all of her arts projects, like when she was having an exhibition. Unlike what Dory experienced growing up where she was considered to be a trouble kid as she does not have the same vision for her future career like her parents do. This resulted with Leigh having her mother's full support towards her passion. However, this comes at the cost of Dory's own mental health, which continues to deteriorate after this.

Dory ended up losing her lives at the start of the novel, which then start Leigh's journey on finding Dory's bird incarnation, meeting Jingling as a ghost, and finding out what the bird meant by remembering. This exploration allows Leigh to better understand her own identity and the impact that Dory had on her life.

Essentially, Dory who suffer from the impact of generational trauma given

by her mother highlights the complexities of navigating cultural expectations and the toll it can take on one's mental health. In the end Leigh understand what the bird's meant by remembering and she start to accept her mother's death and her experiences while she was in Taiwan makes her eager to relearn about her culture.

It was the final gift the bird could give us: the remembering. The pieces of my family history glued back together, so that I finally know and understand. And a reminder of the love that we've always had, even in the times when it stormy, when it was hard to see. **(X.R Pan 2018: 351)**

From the start of the novel Leigh blames herself of her mother's death. When in fact it was no one's fault. While meeting the bird for the first time, it said remember. After having a journey throughout the novel, she concluded that not only the bird wants Leigh to meet her mother's side of the family but, it also made Leigh finding out what happened in her Waipo's past, and why her mother decided to never contacted her grandparents. She understand that although Waipo's make a mistake by saying that she did not want to accept Dory again if she ever leaves the house, it was done in a moment full of anger between them. That both of her grandparents regretted it the second Dory leave the house. Her Waipo's past, Yuanyang who grew up having to be separated from her birth parents, then being raised as a future daughter in law for the family who adopted her, while experiencing the expectation of what a perfect daughter in law is. Then she finally able to get out when her birth family come to find her.

From then Leigh able to sympathize with Yuanyang's experience, although it does not erase the fact that what she had done in raising Dory is wrong. On the other hand, Leigh finally understand as to why Leigh never been taught Taiwanese tradition growing up, Dory's trauma that caused her to become like that. Leigh's role at the end of the novel is to made herself a bridge of understanding the trauma that two generation suffer from. That even though they both make a mistake, it does not erase the fact that terrible things happened to their life. Leigh reaction toward both past events is very understanding and mostly acknowledging. Since her mother is gone and cannot forgive her grandparents in real life anymore, Leigh acts as a

bridge that between the two-conflict generation.

According to article made by Ryder and White (2022), creating space and supporting the coping needs of people who come from lineages of trauma is often the best move, rather than attempting to “fix” or remove the pain. Leigh a third-generation act as a bridge represent how the author, Emily X.R Pan who is a second-generation of immigrant view the issue between the two generation. From the start of the novel Pan’s never made any harsh judgement towards the two generation, rather she mostly acknowledge the terrible history they suffer from. Understanding the trauma and forgiving them is seen as how she see it as a way to heal and show more support toward the community by making an awareness about the issue. The next part of this research shows how the supernatural beings are used to represent the clash of culture inside of Leigh, while she struggles with the grief from her mother’s death.

4.2 The Use of Supernatural Beings to Represent the Clash of East and West based on Leigh’s Perspective

The Astonishing Color of After by Emily X.R Pan depicts the representation of grief experienced by Taiwanese Americans in 21st century by Asian Americans. In the novel, the idea of grief is a common knowledge for white people in most west countries, while in the Asian or other people of color diaspora who had been through it does not really believe in it the same way as how the white people going through it. In this research, the grief experienced by the Asian American, especially Taiwanese Americans is constructed through the discourse by Pan in the novel through Leigh as the main character.

This subchapter shows the discourse of grief experienced by diasporic people is constructed based on the assertion of Leigh that her dead mother has come back to life by changing into a red bird. The use of a red bird as a symbol represents the grief that Leigh has been through. It also act as a guide for her to find out more about her family’s past. The other supernatural beings that shows up in the novel and act as a guide was Feng, a ghost of Jingling, Dory’s dead sister.

In the novel she appears as a mean to guide Leigh through every Taiwanese

culture and help her translate everything that her grandparents are saying. This proves that even when their family member has died they will still act as a guide in their lives, helping them throughout any kind of misfortune happenings. While that happened Leigh is also experiencing doubts. Leigh who technically a part of second generation of immigrant, because of the traumatic experience that her grandmother and mother suffered from is shown to fit a third generation of immigrant. Her role is to represent how third generation of immigrant or part of the diaspora (diasporic people)

The start of novel is by Leigh describing that her mother has turned into a red bird. When the bird first appears, it was described as follows.

The suburban street was purple and dark, silent but for the lone cricket keeping time in the grass. A noise in the distance made me look up, and against the murky predawn sky, I could make out a streak of crimson. It flapped once, twice. A tail followed the body, sailing like a flag. The creature swept over the half moon, past the shadow of a cloud.

I wasn't frightened, even when the bird glided straight across the lawn to land on the porch, those claws tapping short trills into the wood. Standing at full height, the creature was nearly as tall as me.

"Leigh," said the bird.

I would have known that voice anywhere. That was the voice that used to ask if I wanted a glass of water after a good cry, or suggest a break from homework with freshly baked cookies, or volunteer to drive to the art store. It was a yellow voice, knit from the bright and melodic syllables, and it was coming from the beak of this red creature.

My eyes took in her size: nothing like the petite frame my mother had while human. She reminded me of a red-crowned crane, but with a long, feathery tail. Up close I could see that every feather was a different shade of red, sharp and gleaming.

(X.R Pan, 2018: 15-16)

As seen from the line above, this shows Leigh's willingness to believe that her mother has turned into a red bird. It was something that does not make any sense for people to just believe that any dead person has turned into some mythical bird. Instead Leigh a second generation of immigrant, a half-Asian born and raised in the united states this make so much sense, and even though she never learned or understood the Taiwanese culture it is a given that she must believe all the myth

and legend surrounding death. This could be shown by the use of Chinese culture being seeped into the novel, like the red-crowned crane, a mythical bird symbolized as longevity and immortality.

Many forms of arts and literatures from China often depicted the immortals riding the red-crowned crane. According to Xinping Zhuo (2018) the crane is a divine bird that can travel between paradise and man's world, it's also a symbol of longevity, and in some of its combination with a pine tree forms a saying "pines and cranes enhancing longevity". Crane are also the animals that are always carry immortals on their back. Although, in this novel show the crane being depicted has many different shades of red as a feather, another part Chinese culture being represented into the novel. The red bird can also be seen as a representation of spirit guidance from Leigh's ancestors or in this book Dory's soul to help her reconnect with the Chinese culture, while also helping her to process her grief following the custom there.

The color red in Chinese culture usually symbolization of life, happiness, warmth, auspiciousness, and so on. Huang Qiang (2011) said that a language, as the carrier of cultures of different nations. Vocabulary is not the only one of the three main factors of the language but also the constituent element of it. All the things are true to the color words, owing to the difference of culture, modes of expression, the understanding of the color. The same color may have different symbols and images in different languages. The color "red", in Chinese pin yin "hong", is an example of this, and it has unique symbols in terms of its figurative meanings, metaphorical usages, and idiomatic expressions in Chinese language. In his journals Qiang described the color of red as a symbol of many things, such as a symbol of happy events, a symbol of revolution and socialism, the association with a certain emotion, a symbol of youth, healthy, and beauty, and lastly a symbol of fortune, fame and power. In his journals there are no color of red being used as a symbol of someone who already dead.

Although it was seen as a symbol of life and more as a congratulatory, the color of red is usually strictly forbidden at funerals as it is a traditionally symbolic color of happiness; however, as the names of the dead were previously written in

red, it may be considered offensive to use the red ink for Chinese names in contexts other than official season. This is rather conflicting as red is the symbol of life because the novel's main character, Leigh is shown to see and believed that her mother has turned into a red bird. The use of death culture from Leigh point of views are ambiguous, as the supposed death in her point of views and the real one. When the color red being used as something to represent anything that would brings fortune but instead she saw it as something that represents her dead mother. This shows how unclear her view of culture from the two country, east and west, Taiwanese and United States. The writer, Pan is a Taiwanese-American born and raised in the United States. This means that Leigh could be a representation of all Chinese-American born outside of their parent homeland, in *The Astonishing Color of After* Leigh's role is to live through grief and reveal her existence as part of Diasporic people experiencing grief.

“what’s the significance of her being a bird?” he said after a long stretch of nothing, and I knew in that moment that he didn’t believe me, and there was nothing I could do or say that would change his mind.

I didn’t answer, and he sighed through his nose very quietly. I heard it clear as anything. I turned my face out of the window, my thumb stroking the vane of the feather.

He drummed the steering wheel a few times with the pads of his fingers, as he often did when he was thinking. “What does red mean to you?” he tried again, and it sounded almost textbook, like some technique he’d learned from Dr O’Brien.

“I didn’t make the bird up, Dad, It’s real. I saw her. That was Mom”

The rain came then; we had turned directly into the path of the storm. The water drummed loudly, slanting into us and cutting straight down the image of my face mirrored in the window, slicing me apart again, and again.

“I’m trying to understand, Leigh,” said Dad as he pulled the car into our driveway. He didn’t push the button to open the garage door. He didn’t shift the car into park. We sat there, idling, and the little tremors from the engine were starting to make me feel sick. **(X.R Pan 2018: 19)**

From the start of the novel Brian, Leigh’s father has been insistent on having Leigh talk to a therapist after Dory’s death. His concern was denied by Leigh as her persistence that her mother is still out there as a bird. Leigh’s opinion and resistance in becoming more closer to her dad reflects with the fact the Brian was rarely at

home, sometimes Leigh would be the one who have to witnessed her mother's bad days at first hand and be the one who have to deal with it since he was not at home. Brian's method of coping after a traumatic event is to talk to a therapist and made his daughter do the same.

His response to this is typical in the United States, whereas most Asian-American family would choose otherwise. It is a known fact that according to a research made by one of the American Psychological Association members, Koko Nishi. In a recent collected data from the National Latino and Asian American Study found that Asian Americans have seventeen-point thirty percent overall lifetime rate of any psychiatric disorder and a nine-point nineteen percent twelve-month rate, and yet they are three times less likely to seek mental health services than white people. In addition to that fact, the Asian American community faces stigma and a lack of culturally competent, holistic health services. Having a mental health professional that would understand their struggle culturally and historically would have been hard as not many of them pursue profession in mental health, it is also not looked upon as prestigious the same way as other career.

The way Brian react with what Leigh has just told him was seen by her the same way as her therapist would react. Especially when he said what does red mean to you? In which after that Leigh thinks of how it sounded like a textbook. Leigh who only saw the bird one time here is convinced with her reasoning, especially with her being a part of diasporic subjects from Taiwan where it is cultural to believe in some guidance from their ancestors or passed relatives. In a thesis by Scott Gordon Habkirk (2011) where he does a research to examines how religious and supernatural beliefs have changed with the rapid modernization and increased standard of modern, scientific education in Taiwan. Habkirk said that in Taiwan post-mortem experiences can occur with the relatives as they may come to visit the living from the afterlife to ask for help or assure their relatives that they are ok. In his research not only, he use Taiwanese people as an object but he also use white people as a comparison. The result are both people Taiwanese and white people has one dream meeting their deceased relatives and give them some kind of advice, although from the white people view them mostly as a ghost experience while the

Taiwanese people still values things like seeing their deceased relatives and burning money as an offer for them. Thus, the moment Leigh beliefs are different from her father proves this point. Although, at the end of this chapter Leigh sort of questioning her opinion, whether the bird is real or not.

I sat down on the sofa, suddenly so exhausted I fell asleep halfway through trying to get the twine off the box. When I woke again, this time with a full sun buttering the windows, the box was still there. It was real. It existed in the light of the morning. I took a deep breath and let my fingers curl around the lid. **(X.R Pan 2018: 25-26)**

In the novel when Leigh woke up in the morning the box that the bird gave her is still there, the first sentence in the novel chapter Leigh has a little doubt on herself and questioning whether the bird is real or not. This could mean that Leigh as a diasporic people lives in a land that thrives in anything logic scientific plant on her doubt, where in the few pages before this Leigh has a debate with Brian, her white parent who is questioning whether his daughter grief has affected her mental health. He made her sound like she needed more help from a psychologist that Leigh has been seeing after her mother's death. This in turn changes Leigh perspective and cloud her judgment. In the novel, the way she described her mother's body as gray, grayer than a sketch made it seem like she distinguished between the body and her mother. There's also another statement where she said that she did not cry also show her firm believe. Whilst in Chinese culture, it is customary for blood relatives and daughter in- law to wail and cry during mourning as a sign of respect and loyalty of the deceased. Wailing is particularly loud if the deceased has left a large fortune, but as it seems that Dory's funeral is being done in Christian.

Leigh doubting herself can be the result of Brian coaxing words, but it is also believed that in the western countries where people rarely ever tell ghostly or supernatural stories where for fear of being thought as crazy. People's response to such stories is that there had to be some scientific explanation for it. This contrast to the culture in Taiwan where they did not resort to psychological or physical reductionism when it came to encounters with spirit, regardless of their scientific background (Habkirk: 2011).

When the bird made its first appearance in the novel it was after the death of Dory and the night right before her funeral, this means that Leigh sorrow might affect it. It was not until later when the bird made a second appearance while bringing a box that is full of Dory's old things that are meant to be sent to her grandparents and have it burn as a funeral tradition in Taiwan. According to introduction Buddhist funeral cultures every person who has died can stay on earth for forty-nine days, after that the soul will move on and reincarnate to a new body. Leigh a mixed descent of Chinese and American that never been thought any of the culture proves that she still has some of the believes that her ancestors from Chinese has held, since the spirit of Dory does linger on earth until 49 days which she will then move and be rebirth. The novel also sets in the ghost month where it is believed to be the month where ghosts can be seen roaming on earth. Leigh process of grieving in this novel goes on to show that she is truly a mix of Asian and American, her thought during grieving shows that she is either has a logical explanation of things and some of it does not make sense in her eyes, but she continues to believe it because she is also part a third generation of immigrant.

I raised my head and the bird was standing in the yard with one leg tucked up just like the cranes I'd seen in paintings. The moonlight made her wing tips silvery and sharp, made the shadows in her body almost indigo.
 "The box is from your grandparents," said my mother, the bird.
 My first thought was my grandparents are dead. Dad's parents had been on the older side when they had him; both of them had been gone for a few years.
 Unless... the bird meant my mother's parents? The ones I's never met.
 "bring it with you," she said as I bent to pick up the box.
 "bring it with me where?" I said
 "when you come," she replied (X.R Pan 2018: 25)

From the quotation above, it can be shown that Leigh was given a box that are full of many Dory's memorabilia. Such as many letters, her favorite cicada jewelry pin, photos and others. The bird or Dory is asking Leigh to bring it when you come, which will be explained later that she wants Leigh to come to Taiwan while bringing the box there. What contains within the box is going to be very important in Leigh's journey in Taiwan. When she arrives there, it coincides with

the hungry ghost festival, according to Shirin (2021) she explained in her journal that hungry ghost festival in a time where the deity in Chinese culture grants the absolution to the spirits in the underworld and allow them to roam the earth. She also explained that the ghost festival is deeply rooted in the concept of filial piety, ancestor veneration and deity worshipping. Although it does not explain how the box made it there, Leigh somehow believes that it was the work of the bird. The box is one of the first many physical things that the bird left behind. Before this the bird only left a single red feather, and thus this strengthen Leigh's finding and believes that the bird is indeed a real thing. After this from the moment Leigh arrived in Taiwan she will continue seeing her mother, the bird across the town. Where she would then on experienced seeing more of supernatural beings such as the ghost of Dory's sister, Jingling.

Mandarin sounds so musical, the way the tones step up and down, each word rolling to the next in little waves. I catch phrases here and there that I recognize—but strung together, I can't quite decipher what the whole of the letter means. **(X.R Pan 2018: 35)**

From the quotation above, it is shown that leigh has forgotten most of Mandarin word that being thought to her during her childhood. Even though with her insufficiency of speaking nor reading mandarin she still has some longing to hear something being spoken to her in Mandarin. this proven that although she somehow has distanced herself from the country origin culture, Leigh still longing to be a part of Chinese culture. Raina (2016) states that the diaspora communities usually retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, and achievements.

In some of her dialogue with Dory in the novel when she was a child she kept asking for her mother to let her take mandarin lessons, and only to be rejected every time. Leigh also always asking about her mother's country of origin sometimes while growing up, like when she asks whether her grandmother practice foot binding, or as simple like how is her life in Taiwan.

Since Dory keep rejecting Leigh's advance questioning she then gave up.

Her trip to Taiwan will force her to re learn the language while also experiencing Chinese culture in the origin country. She also expresses some of her disappointment when she cannot communicate with her grandmother and grandfather whom she calls Waipo and Waigong. Even during Leigh's stay with her grandparents, she thought how she wishes her grandmother to be able to somehow magically being able to speak English. While her father, Brian, who is a white person is able to have a conversation with them, she even expresses that it is ironic that herself who is the one with Chinese and Taiwanese blood running through her vein, while her father the Irish American is the one who can read, speak, and write the language. In the novel, Leigh has Feng as a translator between her Waipo and Waigong and herself. At the end of the novel it was revealed that Feng is a ghost of Jingling, Dory's sister who died before her and Brian get married.

The feather is what I pick up first. It's slightly oily between my fingers, smelling strongly of a wild musk. It looks so much like the other feather I have from the bird. Was this left as a message? How is it that I didn't know what I would find, but somehow I knew exactly where to look?

The box is approximately the right size and shape for holding a letter opener—or maybe a feather—and made of a stiff cardboard material that's so old and worn it's gone soft. My fingertips come away gray; it's coated in a layer of silty dust. The whole thing is a faded marigold orange with a Chinese characters printed on it vertically in red

The only character that I recognize is the one with just two strokes. Ren. It means people. **(X.R Pan 2018: 55-56)**

Leigh has just received a box full of incense from the bird. She questions herself by saying how she know where to find the box but, does not know what is inside of the box. The moment when Leigh just knew where things are comes very often in the novel, and not just Leigh who experience it. Her grandmother, or Waipo knew exactly what Leigh was saying after Feng translates it. The use of the box here, a material thing that can be touched by anyone further believed as a sign from the bird that whatever she is experiencing is real. She is no longer questioning everything that make sense or scientifically proven to her knowledge. In Habkirk's (2011) thesis he got some answer from one of his participants regarding the science inability to prove the existence of the supernatural gave the support. The

participants states that science cannot prove it, but science cannot deny it. This statement support the beliefs in supernatural, and after he did some more research while comparing to the west that believes in anything scientific. Another thing he notes on this is that historically very nearly all scientific theories originate from myths, and the myth might contain some important component for the scientific theories. Before this Leigh also receives some boxes that are supposed to have burned along with the rest of her mother's belongings but the bird gave it to her.

My thumb and index finger are pinching together so hard it hurts. I look down: the stick of incense is gone. I click on the lamp to make sure: no trace of it anywhere. No ashes. It simply vanished. Open my palms wide, look at my trembling hands. I sit there like that, shaking until dawn. **(X.R Pan 2018: 66)**

The quotation above shows Leigh's first experience of using the incense, an aromatic biotic material that releases fragrant smoke when burnt usually being used for aesthetic reasons, religious worship, aromatherapy, meditation and ceremony (Hyams and Cushner: 2004). But, in this case it was used as some kind of communication where Leigh can see Dory and later her Waipo's memories of old time. The incense is given by her mother, The bird. this could be seen as a symbol of sign or guidance from her ancestors. Usually believed by Chinese people that their ancestors would come by some time and give them some guidance managing this world. Especially since the novel settings coincide with the hungry ghost month, where spirit of family and ancestors is said to roam the earth for a whole month. During this month there will be many offerings scattered around the places. Another thing that is uncommon in America, unless they are a family of migrant or people who believed in such culture. In other parts of the world kind of like the day of the dead in Mexico. Where there is one day in every year where the spirits of their family even ancestors would come to earth for a visit and give blessing to their descendant. Leigh's experience during the ghost month would keep proving that she believed a lot of the stories and myth surrounding the ghost culture, in the novel it will not only explore the culture surrounding ghost month and the Chinese funeral but also the ritual of marrying a ghost.

I try to imagine a life touched by a ghost. Changed by a ghost.
A fresh breeze gusts past, and as if summoned by my thoughts, I think I hear
the faraway beatings of wings. I look to the sky, search for a sign, a
silhouette, anything.
The wind recedes. Everything stills once more. (X.R Pan 2018: 270)

The quotation above is Leigh thought after being taught by Feng about the ghost month and every cultural thing that surrounding it. In the first line she said that sounded like she would be mesmerized if she ever see a ghost or getting help from a ghost. This could also because she was longing for the birds to reappear, in this chapter of the novel Leigh starts to feel agitated as the forty-nine days until her mother's spirit can make a transition into rebirth.

In this journey she met Fred who was married to the ghost of Jingling. He describes that although he accepts it because of pity, he also said that sometimes by having a ghost wife will bring good fortunes and he is thankful for everything that he has now counting it as a blessing from it. T Wing Lo (2022) said in his journal of criminology where he did a research of the connection between ghost brides and crime networks in rural china. Ghost marriages is a custom of marriages that has been passed down ever since ancient China. Adults who have died before marriage could not be buried with their ancestors and their families did not want to leave the bodies outside, as they believe that the spirits would become lonely. Instead they wished to find husbands or wives for their dead relatives in order to continue the family line. This practice is popular especially in rural china where there is an industry that has profited criminals to kidnap and murder women, raid tombs and morgues, and even steal and traffic corpses. This comes from the stigma of being unmarried before dying are seen as a bad thing. Jingling who has never been married before her death are a part of this marriages, her parents Waipo and Waigong are finding a husband for her because they pity their daughter for dying without ever get married.

“I saw the bird, too,” I tell Feng and I think she saw me. But she didn't come down. She didn't—”

My voice cracks and suddenly I need to gulp down air.
 “Maybe she didn’t need to,” Feng says very quietly. “Maybe it was enough.”
 “What do you mean? She told me to come to Taiwan—she has something to tell me.” “Maybe what she really needs,” Feng says, “is just to remember. And to be remembered.” (X.R Pan 2018: 274)

Here Leigh is getting some advice from Feng, because everything that Leigh has been doing since arriving in Taiwan was to only seek the bird. Her way of processing grief from the start up until this moment is seeking the bird. Even when she sees the bird, she never speaks more to it. Her idea of finding the bird is to prove that her mother is not dead and just turned into a bird. This thought process has been confusing as someone who comes from the United States where believing in anything supernatural is seen as a sign of losing their minds, while she also questions everything that the bird has given her because if she is a fully believer like most Taiwanese people she would never question things given by their dead relatives. Whether it was advice or something else. Her interpretation of ghost is also confounding. This is because in research such as Habkirk (2011) and many news outlets while promoting for people to visit Taiwan during the ghost month, there are many taboo things that no one should avoid and the main thing is to avoid trying to seek out any ghost. In his journal Habkirk (2011) explained that Taiwanese people can empathize with the story of the ghost and during the moment of revelation or where the supernatural shows up they show a strong physical and psychological sign of revulsion and fear.

The beliefs surrounding death in Taiwan have not changed even in modern times, they are still fearful of ghosts and the bad luck they bring while also still value burning money for the ghost. Feng is a ghost but, she is a ghost that is familiar with Leigh’s family, this can be seen as a sign or advice from deceased relatives, where they usually accept this as a positive thing.

Leigh’s role in the novel is to represent how third generation of immigrants a part of the diaspora see both culture from their country of origin in this case it was Taiwan and the country where she was born and raised, United States clashes as the whole novel is from her point of view. This was proven by how the novel represents supernatural beings and Leigh’s perspective while experiencing it throughout the

novel. there is a confusion in Leigh's mind about everything that happened to her, making it difficult for her to decide whether she should believe in it or question it logically. Throughout her journey in trying to find the bird she needs to see the red bird, just so she can confirm something. The need to prove something and make everyone believe in it and anyone who believe otherwise are wrong. In spite of her belief in supernaturals, from her perspective there is always an urgency or need to develop physical proof to prove it. This shows her logical thinking. This part of research tries to find the clash between supernatural and logical thinking that Leigh did. This is evidenced by Leigh's belief in it while also having some doubts and the need to prove it to others. She also was questioned by her father whether what she claimed was the result of her grieving or not.

In Asia, there is no doubt that superstitions and supernatural things play a role in their lives, whereas in the west, anything must have physical proof. While what happened with Leigh's father, Brian believed Dory is really dead and she is never coming back. His conversation with Leigh proves this when he feels the need to fix Leigh by making her attend to the therapist. The novel shows how the clash between Asia and the West was evident in Leigh's interaction with Brian. It also shows her inner monologue about her mother, the bird and interaction with Feng. Leigh as a third generation of immigrant is evident in this whole chapter, where her view between logical things and supernatural beings that keep showing up to her is unclear. The next sub chapter will deal with the critical position of Emily X.R Pan as the author of the novel.

4.3 The Critical Position of The Author

This last sub chapter discusses the critical position of the author. Critical position is an idea presented by the containing opinions, goals, or expectations regarding a matter seen through his or her literary work. To find out the way to the author critical position is to connect the biography of the author and the discourse of grief experienced by diasporic people in the novel *The Astonishing Color Of After*. By connecting these two things, the critical position of the author can be seen, whether the author view herself as a second or third generation of immigrant and

its role on generational trauma.

Emily X.R Pan was born and raised in Illinois and she is the only child of Taiwanese parents who immigrated to the United States, making her a second generation of immigrant. Her father, Alex Pan is a professor at The College of New Jersey and her mother, Beatrice Pan, a piano and gu zhen teacher, a Chinese traditional music instrument.

In an interview with community news (2018) she said her talent and love for writing has been happening since she was seven years old, where she describe her memories of writing for the first time and when she tried writing a book for the first time. By the age of fifteen she has not only writing a full-length novel but also trying to get an agent, which failed.

This then goes on until she graduated early from New York University Stern with international business and marketing degree, she then went on to work with a startup company while becoming the cofounder of bodega magazine. After which she gotten into New York University MFA program for creative writing, it was then while taking grad school she began to start make an outline for her debut novel, *The Astonishing Color of After* Community News (2018).

I started writing it in 2010, but it was a very different book back then. It was originally meant to span the first 40 years of a Taiwanese woman's life (based on my grandmother), starting in 1927 in the mountains of Northern Taiwan. I was quickly overwhelmed by the research, so it didn't take long for me to reframe it from the perspective of a modern-day teenage girl. I rewrote it many, many different ways, giving it whole new casts of characters, altering the premise and voice and format quite a few times. In 2015, I sat down to rewrite it from scratch (for the umpteenth time), and that was the version that got me my agent and then quickly sold. But I rewrote it again after that, so even the final version that became a real finished book is quite different. **(Emily X.R Pan:2018)**

According to Pan's interview with School Library Journal (2018) where she described her process of writing the novel, it was started in 2010 and have gone through many changes until in 2015 where it take last changes. According to the same interview Pan said that during that year a family member of her has died by suicide, and while experiencing grief at the same time she decided to give that experience to the main character by using colors to describe feelings and

experience.

The main character Leigh use colors to describe her feelings, she was inspired by Pan's husband who had a slight synesthesia tendency, a condition when people are able to see music or colors in real life settings. This means that what Leigh was going through with grief in the novel, was also experienced by Pan at some point. She has also stated her wishes to make an awareness of mental health issues among Asian-American in the United States. According to a research done in 2012 by Lee, Juon, Martinez, Hsu, Robinson, Bawa, and Ma there are many of Young Asian-American adults who recently immigrated to the United States, that they feel a tremendous pressure to be academically or professionally successful. In order for them to keep their focus, they ignored or denied the symptoms of needing help mentally, while other cite that mental health issues is a cultural concern where it was a taboo topic in their communities.

The stigma surrounding mental health issue among Asian-American is also being highlighted by Pan, where in one of her interviews with school library journals (2018) she said:

There isn't enough conversation about mental illness. The stigma around it prevents people from seeing help, and it also prevents people from being able to recognize just how dire certain situations—that we reach a place where we can talk about mental health the way we talk about physical health **(Emily X.R Pan:2018)**

Her reason for highlighting the issue also comes from her experience of having a family member died by suicide, in many of her interviews she has stated that it affects her and her family so much. Seeing how not only it made her change the storyline of the novel shows how much Pan cared about this issue among many Asian-American. Another thing is with how she identify herself more with Leigh and how it became more personal over the years; she also has stated that writing about Leigh's mother dealing with depression is hard, since she was also grieving. she also pointed out that she wants her book to represent the effect of depression in a house hold (Community News: 2018)

I wanted to capture that feeling of straddling two cultures. I wanted to make it even stronger and more apparent, so Leigh become biracial. - **(Emily X.R Pan, Community News: 2018)**

In the novel, Leigh, grieving after her mother's death is affecting her; another thing is how her clash of cultures affects how she deals with grief. It was seen through her background as a biracial person. While Pan is not biracial, but she felt like she was not American enough for her white friends or Asian enough for her Asian friends. Pan's views of the clash of culture was proven with how she presented through Leigh's race as biracial, and through how she views supernatural beings and superstitions in Taiwan while questioning or trying to find physical proves of it. Other than that Leigh never persecuted her grandmother's and mother's conflict as a bad history for her family. Instead she make Leigh understand that it happened in her family and acknowledge it. This and Pan's campaign to make more awareness of depression and other mental health crisis among Asian-American is seen as a mean to solve the problem, many newer generations are more aware of mental health while also trying to make the older generations understand it while also trying to seek help.

In one of Pan's interview she highlights how traditional food and other cultural influences is an important part in her life, and her journey of researching materials for her novel.

I mostly put in foods that I like myself like (or used to like, back when I wasn't vegetarian). I grew up eating very traditional Taiwanese foods cooked by my mother, so it wasn't hard to just think about how she or my grandmother or my aunts would cook and plate something. And although I'd been to Taiwan multiple times, I did also visit again on a research trip specifically to help me sharpen the details of the book. That included many extremely crucial trips to night markets, where I ordered a lot of food and tasted it all—for verisimilitude's sake, of course. On that same trip I visited many temples and spent a lot of time talking to people about Buddhism and Taoism. I was raised Buddhist, and I do consider myself religious, but I'm not one of those people who studies scriptures and goes to temple regularly. I wanted to be respectful to Buddhism and Taoism which are such important parts of the culture in Taiwan, and so while I was there I observed a lot of religious events and spoke to several monks and nuns. I also interviewed a lot of people for this book. From the start, the main character was biracial, so I spent a lot of time interviewing biracial friends and friends of friends—I wanted to be respectful to that identity and experience. I also interviewed members of my family

extensively, to try understand their instinct and perspectives. There are definitely significant cultural influences in the way they think about life and mental illness and grief, compared to how I think about those same things, and I wanted to capture the nuances as best as I could **(Emily X.R Pan:2018)**

Generational trauma refers to the trauma experienced by one generation that is passed down to the younger generation, affecting their mental health, physical well-being, and their perception of life in general. The trauma can be stemmed from traumatic experiences, such as being forcibly removed from their homeland, being exposed to war, violence, or discrimination, and dealing with the challenges of adapting to a new environment. As a result, many second and third-generation of Asian-American immigrants have been significantly influenced by generational trauma, as seen in events from Emily X.R Pan's novel. The novel protagonist Leigh serves as a reflection of the generational trauma being passed down in her family. The novel explores the themes of mental illness, grief, and Leigh's struggle with the clash of two cultures, all of which stem from Leigh's struggle with learning a part of her mother's heritage and experiences with her ancestors. Emily X.R Pan's personal experienced not only influenced the story but also her descriptions of traditional Taiwanese foods in the novel. In her interview, she stated that the food in the novel was influenced by her upbringing and her mother's cooking. This means that food offers an insight into the cultural traditions she carried from her parent's homeland and how she, like every other immigrant, still has some grasp or clings to their traditional way of life.

According to research by Chao, Yu, Chang, and Dong, Asian Americans, especially Chinese Americans, have the highest lifetime prevalence of Anxiety and depression compared to other Asian ethnic groups. This could be attributed to the residual trauma experienced by their immigrant ancestors. Being caught between two cultures, they often feel the need to conform to both and are often unsure of their identity, which could lead to psychological distress.

Moreover, the generational trauma experienced by the older generations, the first generation of immigrants in the United States often, leads to an inter-generational communication barrier between the older and younger immigrants.

This communication gap often results from the children of immigrants having a different worldview than their parents, which prevents them from effectively addressing mental health-related issues. According to the same research done by Chao, Yu, Chang, and Dong, Asian Americans have a lower mental health services usage rate than other ethnic groups. Many older Chinese Americans are born outside of the United States and usually have a life before coming to the United States have a low acculturation level, and they tend to delay seeking mental health services due to the language barrier, the stigma surrounding mental health, a high services costs and access to health care. As a result, this became a challenge faced by the younger generation in reconciling their heritage with their experiences growing up in a different culture. The cultural influences and expectations, particularly concerning mental health and emotional well-being, may differ between the older generations and their children, the younger generations. These influences can lead to a sense of displacement and a struggle to navigate their identities.

In an interview with the school library journal above, Emily X.R Pan delves into the significance of food in her novel to address generational trauma. She explains that food is a powerful symbol of cultural heritage and familial connections. Pan emphasizes how her character uses food to connect with their roots and bridge the gap between generations. Through sharing meals and preparing traditional dishes, second and third-generation immigrants attempt to reclaim their identities and heal the wounds inflicted by their family's traumatic pasts.

Pan's interview reveals that the representation of generational trauma in the novel is not just a narrative device but a real-life experience for her. Pan has stated in some of her interviews that she feels strongly related to Leigh, who was born as a mix of two cultures. She also shares that while writing Leigh as the main character, she does not realize that she put many of her experiences within the novel. By drawing on her background as a second-generation Taiwanese American, Pan shows the struggles, many younger generations face who bear the weight of their family's history.

Furthermore, Pan's exploration of how the characters in her novel try to

solve generational trauma through food and other cultural practices or even storytelling highlights the importance of cultural identity in the healing process. It becomes a means of reclaiming lost connections and fostering a sense of belonging. It is a tangible way for second and third-generation immigrants to mend the bridge with first-generations while honouring their heritage and finding relief amidst their collective trauma.

Based on Pan's interview, the real-life struggle of second and third generation of Asian Americans immigrant, and the novel's context. It can be drawn that generational trauma has a significant impact on second and third-generation immigrants. The novel *The Astonishing Color of after* shown how generational trauma passed down through the main character, Leigh's family, exploring themes of mental illness, grief, and struggle with identity. Pan's traumatic experiences with having a family member died by suicides which resulted in her writing it into her novel concluded that unresolved grief among second and third-generation immigrants is often a result of generational trauma. This trauma significantly impacts these individuals, affecting their mental well-being and their struggle with their cultural identity. Pan's novel reflects this generational trauma by exploring themes of mental illness, grief, and the challenges of reconciling heritage with upbringing in a different culture. Based on her interview pan has stated many times that there is a need to creates spaces that help these immigrants to come terms with their traumatic experiences and interventions such as therapy and community support.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Emily X.R Pan is an American author who represents diasporic grief in the United States through her novel entitled *The Astonishing Color of After*. The terms diaspora which means displaced people who moved from their home to a new place with a new culture, not only this can cause a trauma or grief but can also make the younger generation affected by it. As unresolved grief can cause trauma that spans for generations to come, if it being left untreated. It is very common among many generations of immigrants in the United States because of the conflict of views with the family from their homeland.

In the first part deal with the repercussions of unfinished grief that caused generational trauma and how Leigh as the youngest generation help to break generational trauma and solved the problem within her family. Leigh a part of diaspora act as a bridge represent how the author, Emily X.R Pan who is also a third generation of immigrant view the issue between the two generation. From the start of the novel Pan's never made any harsh judgement towards the two generation, rather she mostly acknowledge the terrible history they suffer from. Understanding the trauma and forgiving them is needed as how she see it as a way to heal and show more support toward the community by making an awareness about the issue.

While the next part shows how novel the use of supernatural beings in Taiwan and superstitions surrounding ghost month to present the clash of culture to represent the grief that diasporic people suffer from. The main character, Leigh is the one who experience meeting and having a guidance from supernatural beings during ghost month. In Asia, superstitions and supernatural things play an important role in their lives, whereas in the west, anything must have physical proof even for mythology, supernatural, and superstitious stuff. Another thing is with Leigh's father, Brian who believed Dory is really dead and she is never coming back. His conversation with Leigh proves this when he feels the need to fix Leigh by making her attend to the therapist. The novel shows how the clash between Asia and the West was evident in Leigh's interaction with Brian. It also shows her inner monologue about her mother, the bird and interaction with Feng. Leigh as a part of

diaspora is evident in this whole chapter, where her view between logical things and supernatural beings that keep showing up to her is unclear.

The last part of this chapter deals with the author's point of view. It was concluded that the author, Emily X.R Pan believes that unresolved grief and experiences as immigrants can cause generational trauma. This trauma significantly affects younger immigrants and, if not solved, can affect more generations to come. Emily X.R Pan, the author of the novel *The Astonishing Color of After*, wants to create an awareness of how this issue has impacted generations of immigrants in the United States; she also focuses on the mental health of these immigrants as it primarily got impacted by the trauma. The novel's main character relates to her life and how having a family member with a mental illness can affect their life. In the end, it concludes that to break the generational trauma, the community needs to create a safe space for these immigrants to talk and come to terms with their trauma and start to seek help from professionals.

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