

Cultural Identity Construction in the Novel *East Wind: West Wind* by Pearl S. Buck

DOI:10.22515/lib.v7i1.4110



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submitted: 29/1/2022 revised: 15/4/2022 accepted: 16/4/2022 published: 17/4/2022 pages: 13-23

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the cultural identity in the novel *East Wind: West Wind* written by Pearl S. Buck by using postcolonial theory proposed by Bhabha (2007). It aimed to identify the cultural identity, that consists of stereotypes, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity, and how it was experienced by the main character in the novel. This study used qualitative method with descriptive approach. The writer collected the data by reading the novel and highlighting the data from the narrations and utterances that were appropriate to the problem of study. The result of this study showed that there are cultural identity construction in the life of Kwei-lan's, the main character in the novel, which trapped her into identity confusion. Two cultures, namely traditional Chinese and Western culture, cause Kwei-lan's confusion of her identity. Kwei-lan's attempts to survive from this situation by imitating the modern lifestyle, such as habits, appearances, and parental actions. This cultural shift makes her feel uncanny or being in an unhomey moment where she sticks in the middle between past and present, or between her origin Chinese culture and her new modern Western life.

Keywords: postcolonial, culture, Chinese, American, ambivalence

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism has occurred for centuries on this earth. This happens because there is a desire to dominate one nation against another. Ahmad (2020) explained colonialism as an effort to expand, develop, control an area with the power of one country outside its location. For a long time, Western nations have colonized other countries, especially from eastern parts of the world. One of the factors causing the phenomenon was the natural wealth owned by a colonized nation, such as spices and oil, which attracted foreign people to come. The abundant exploration of natural wealth could support the future life of the colonizing nations, especially in economic. Due to lacking education, knowledge, and human resources, the Eastern were then easily trapped into Western colonialization.

Colonized societies feel that they are always being alienated, read, and controlled by colonial imperialism. They think whoever used to be colonized always gets the stigma of being defeated or inferior as a people who must be under the control of the colonizer in all aspects of life. The colonized people also have the perception that the colonizers are strong, great, prosperous, rich, smart people and are considered promising the ability to change the life of the colonized society under the condition of accepting to be controlled by and submitted to the colonizer (Neisya 2018).

The consequences of colonialism always leave bad memories and also have a big impact on society, where the colonizers do not only control the natural wealth owned by the colonized country, but also to their human resources, from the mindset, lifestyle, work, language, up to the culture. The impacts of colonialism also lead to many changes in society, particularly of the

socio-cultural aspect.

Cultural issues have become an endless topic of conversation. A lot of people remain arguing about their preferences of cultural adaptation. Two different cultures almost bring two different values within them. According to Said (2010), Western is superior, lucky, controlling, whereas Eastern is inferior, poor, and controlled. The Eastern always mean dangers, threats, and troublemakers and they are seen as dolls by Western people. Western generally have the right to define the Eastern all they want, about who or what Eastern people are. Orientalism tended to lower Eastern ways of thinking which are considered different and not equal to that of Western people.

Over time, the development of the era also affects the cultural changes that are characteristics of a nation or a society. In general, every society in an area has characteristics that are inherent in that society. However, culture surely changes along with the era development. People in Eastern countries try to adapt to a new culture which massively propagated by Western people. In reality, not everyone can adapt to and accept these cultural changes. They have been accustomed to the culture that has taken root to their ancestor indigenous culture and lifestyle strongly. Unfortunately, the more they put efforts to adapt to the strange culture, the more they lose their own identity. They are trapped into the ambivalence of identity which has drown them into confusion.

Ambivalence arises from both like and dislike something or someone. Ambivalence is the attitude of the colonized people who accept and reject the colonialists' attitudes or behaviors. The colonized hate the colonizers but they also like them. Bhabha (2007) said ambivalence as a condition between presenting the original or showing differences (Loomba in Dewojati 2017).

This common phenomenon in Eastern countries that used to be colonized before has successfully attracted some authors to make this issue as the main theme their literary works. One of them is the novel entitled *East Wind: West Wind*. This novel was published in 1930 and written by Pearl Sydenstricker Buck. This novel tells Kwei-lan story of life. She is a woman who lives in a strong tradition of Chinese society and gets married to a man who has been changed to be a modern person. This novel talk about the conflict between a traditional and modern culture.

Postcolonial provides a new perspective in viewing literary works, especially those related to two countries or two cultures, meaning that one is inferior and the other is superior. This is also what happens in the novel, where there is a contradiction between two cultures, namely traditional Chinese culture and Western culture, which cannot be avoided and causes conflicts in the characters in the novel.

The ambivalence of identity of Kwei-lan, the main character in the novel, becomes an interesting topic to study. This issue then turns into the central conflict that has to be overcome. The choices are only two, whether she defends her truly cultural identity but having conflict with her husband, or just mimics the modern culture to which she does not belong to and losing her own true identity. This study aimed at describing the postcolonial identity construction in the novel *East Wind: West Wind* by analyzing the stereotypes, mimicry process, as well as identity ambivalence, and hybridity of the main character.

Hopefully, this study gives benefits to students or other people by helping them to understand more about the cultural conflicts in the novel. The result of this study is also expected to be useful to the readers to give additional information that is not explicitly told in the story. For other researchers, this study may be a valuable reference for their future projects with the same novel.

Postcolonial Theory

The term 'postcolonial' first emerged around the 1970s. It comes from the combination of the words 'post' that means 'after' and 'colonial' that is originated from 'colonialism'. Therefore, 'postcolonial' can be understood as the period after colonialism. However, this term is also frequently used to refer to the mental image of the position between the colonizer and the colonized. Colonialism that occurred in different countries on earth has created a social order, namely superior and inferior. The former is labeled to the colonizer whereas the latter is the attribute of the colonized. The colonized countries are treated arbitrarily by the colonizers. They must submit themselves to and become slaves of the colonizer who controls their country, so that their rights are taken away by the colonizer. The theory of postcolonialism can be used as an analytical tool to claim the existence of colonialism practices in this modern era and the emergence of new forms of colonialism as manifested in racism behaviors and unequal power relations.

According to Faruk (2007), postcolonial theory is a set of statements about the condition of a colonized and once colonized society. Postcolonial theory is used to reveal traces of colonialism that are still ongoing today, such as confrontations between cultures, nations, or races where there are unequal conditions or positions and where one control and the other are controlled. One of the postcolonial theories that are widely used is the one proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (2007).

Bhabha (in Lestari 2016) states that between the colonizers and the colonized there is a liminal space which allows both to interact one another. However, between the two there is also a room for some resistance where the dividing line is never permanent so that the boundaries as well as the ends cannot be known. This space can act as a space for symbolic interactions. Postcolonial discourse consistently resides in this space. It is in this space that cultural changes take place.

The concepts in Bhabha's postcolonial theory include stereotypes, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity. In his book, *The Location of Culture* (2007), Bhabha states that postcolonial perspectives emerged from the colonial testimony of third world countries and the discourse of minorities within the geopolitical division of east and west. The injustice towards minorities people is known as Eastern and Western. Western is the colonizing people, while Eastern is the colonized people.

The postcolonial theory discusses what will happen when two different cultures meet and cause each other conflict as well as when one culture is powerful and considered superior to the other. Postcolonial emphasizes the struggles that arise when one culture is dominated by another.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are more dominantly labeled to people who have little or low power and status in society who are often the target of anger, hatred, and frustration from the more powerful people. According to Said (in Taum 2017), stereotypes have enabled the categories of master-slaves, colonizer-colonized, white-black, and civilized-uncivilized. In practice, people have various stereotypical views about these two opposites as they are othering each other.

Mimicry

Mimicry is the act of imitating colonizer's lifestyle in a colonized country which often unsuccessful (Bhabha, 2008). This imitation or mimicry effort is the result of a cross-cultural interaction or colonization process in which the colonizers have succeeded convincing the colonized. The colonizers act as the superiors who will increase the life quality of the colonized so that the latter would match

themselves to the former. It makes the colonizers succeed in eliminating the traditions and traditional identities of the colonized people. The efforts made by the colonized in mimicry are, among others, imitating the language styles, lifestyles, ways of dressing, and others in order to be respected and get the same level with the colonizers (Bhabha, 1994)

This Bhabha's concept of mimicry contains ambivalence since on one hand, the colonized want to develop the same identity with the colonizers, but, at the same time, they also want to maintain their differences. They both look very similar but still different. That is what Bhabha called 'almost but not quite the same' or a camouflage.

Ambivalence The colonial presence is always ambivalent, which is divided between presenting itself as the original or showing differences. Ambivalence was derived from psychoanalysis, which is used to describe the continuous fluctuation between choices for wanting something and also the opposite (Loomba in Dewojati, 2017).

Ambivalence arises from both like and dislike of something or someone. Ambivalence is an attitude of the colonized people who simultaneously accept and reject the colonialists' attitudes or behaviors. In other words, the colonized hate and like the colonizers at the same time. Ambivalence is concerned with the relation between colonizers and colonized which gives birth to discourse about differences as a field of identity struggle.

Hybridity Hybridity comes from an effort to find an identity. The efforts made can be seen from the acts of imitating or mimicry which then becomes the base of a hybrid identity. Hybridity is a junction between two or more cultures that produces a new culture. When there is an interaction between different cultures, a new form of culture or identity and way of life will be produced over the time.

Novel Wellek & Warren (1990) classified the types of literary works into two, namely written and oral literary works. Written literary works are popular in writing forms. We often found various kinds of written works such as prose, poetry, short stories, drama, and romance or novels.

The word novel comes from the Latin word, *novellus* which derives from the word *novies* mening 'new'. It was said to be new because when compared to other types of literature such as poetry, drama, and others, this type of novel appears later (Tarigan 2011). Novel is a variety of prose besides short stories and romance. it is a long prose that presents characters and displays a series of events and settings in a structured manner (Sudjiman 1990). Meanwhile, Esten (1978) defines novel as the expression of the fragma of a human life in a longer term in which certain conflicts occur and then lead to the changes in the way of life between the clans.

**East Wind:
West Wind** The novel *East Wind: West Wind* was first published in 1930. It was written by Pearl Sydenstricker Buck or also known by her Chinese name Sai Zhenzhu. This novel tells Kwei-lan story of life. She is a woman who lives in a strong tradition of Chinese society. She lives in the ancient city of the middle Kingdom or China. In her culture, no one thinks about modernity or changes his/her mind or life to be modern. Kwe-lan grows up with the belief that Western society does dark magic and is uncivilized. Kwe-lan is married to a man to whom she has been arranged to marry by their parents even before she was born. However, she finds that her husband does not really love her, in contrast with what she has done to him. Kwe-lan's husband is a doctor who graduated from the United

States. Her husband was originally from China but he has long taken education abroad in the Western country. It has changed his lifestyle to be modern like Western people do have.

Actually, deep in his heart, Kwei-lan's husband loves his wife but he does not like her mindset and her habits that he thinks to be ancient. He wants his wife to change all her irrational habits such as bounding feet as strong as possible to get small legs which is a traditional habit commonly practiced by Chinese women. They think that a small leg is beautiful. After married, Kwei-lan's husband chooses to leave his parents' house and moves to his very modern house. Kwei-lan is very shocked and feels strange because her husband's house is very different from traditional Chinese houses in general. Kwei-lan life story becomes more complicated when her brother comes home with his an American wife named Mary since their mother wants her son to marry a Chinese woman. Instead of fulfilling his mother's wish, Kwei-lan's brother choose to leave his family and moves to Western country. Along with the time, Kwei-lan's relationship with her husband is increasingly colored by love. Their son grows amid the blend of Western and Eastern culture with the supervision of Kwei-lan to balance those two opposite ways of life.

Previous Related Studies

There are found some previous studies with the same novel as the object,. The first one is written by Khoiriyah (2015), entitled *The Influences of Modernity to Kwei-lan and the Husband in Pearl S. Buck's East Wind: West Wind*. In her study, she also used post-colonial theory of Bhabha. And the study analyzed the differences between Western culture and Eastern culture through the tradition and modernity of two major characters in the novel. She found that the influences of modernity to both characters are marked by the emergence of adoption and adaptation of Western culture and the mixture of Chinese and Western culture. The similarities of the study with this current research lie in the material object and the theory used for analysis. The difference, the study analyzed the traditional and modernity of two major characters, whereas, in this research, the focus of the analysis are the cultural identity ambivalence, mimicry, stereotype, and hybridity from one main character only.

The second previous study was written by Lestari (2016) with the title *Analisis Pascakolonialisme Gadis Pantai Karya Pramoedya Ananta Noer dalam Teori Homi K. Bhabha (Postcolonialism in Gadis Pantai by Pramoedya Ananta Noer in Homi K. Bhaba's Theory)*. In this journal article, the postcolonial identity—consisting of stereotype, mimicry, hybrid, and ambivalence—appeared in the story. It was also found that the colonizer create stereotype if their colonized people are just their slaves. The colonized people do mimicry by imitating the fashion, foods, and games identical to the colonizer. The hybridity that occurs between the colonizer and colonized is found in the styles of drinking coffee, wearing shoes, having culinary, and using tools of eating. The ambivalence in this novel was found in characters Bendoro and Mardinah. The theory and the points of analysis of the study are similar to this current research. However, the material objects are different since the previous study put an Indonesia novel entitled *Gadis Pantai* that was written by Pramoedya Ananta Noer as its object of analysis.

The last previous study was written by Neisyia (2018) entitled *Kerapuhan Identitas Ras Kulit Hitam Afrika dalam Puisi The Little Black Boy Karya William Blake (The Fragility of Racial Identity of African Black People in the Poem Little Black Boy by William Blake)*. She found that white people superiorly colonize and oppress African black people through racial discrimination. It makes the

people depressed because of their inferior position to the whites and results in a big trauma in their hearts. This trauma is represented through resistance which is used to calm their hearts and they assume that everything is the same in God's eyes since, in the end, all humans will return to Him. Different from that study, this current research was focused on the ambivalence of cultural identity rather than the fragility of racial identity. The material object is also different since the previous study analyzes a poem and not a novel.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researchers applied a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono (2012), qualitative research is based on the philosophy of postpositivism and used to examine the condition of natural objects in which the researcher is the key instrument. Sampling of data sources is done purposively and the data collection technique was triangulation (combined). This descriptive approach was chosen because to describe stereotypes, ambivalence identity, mimicry, and hybridity in the novel *East Wind: West Wind Novel*. The data were collected from the narrations as well as utterances in the novel. These were used to make explanation and interpretation of the object of study.

The object of study was Kwei-lan, the main character of the novel *East Wind: West Wind* written by Pearl S. Buck that was published in 1930 and consists of 276 pages. The researchers collected the data by library techniques, that is a technique of collecting the data from written sources, both in printed forms and files from the internet to get the information needed.

The data were collected through some steps. First, the researchers read the two versions of the novel—the original in English and its translation in Bahasa Indonesia—several times. Second, the writer read the postcolonial theories from Homi K. Bhabha several times both by online and printed media and make Third, the researchers sought and read some previous studies related to this study from offline and online media such as journals, theses, research results, and articles to enrich their study perspective. Fourth, the researcher seek the similarities and differences between this study with the previous studies. And the last, the writer highlighted the stereotypes, mimicry, identity ambivalence, and hybridity data appearing in the novel.

After being collected, the data were then analyzed following some stages. First, the data were selected according to the purpose of the research. The selected data are then identified and classified into stereotypes, mimicry, identity ambivalence, and hybridity based on the underlying theory. Next, the data from the novel—such as narrations and utterances—were added to the categories. Lastly, each of the data was analyzed and described based on Bhaba's postcolonial theory.

CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN *EAST WIND: WEST WIND*

Based on Bhaba (2007) theory of postcolonialism, there are found some aspects that construct the cultural identities of Kwei-lan as the main character in the novel *East Wind: West Wind*. The detailed descriptions are as follow.

Stereotypes

There are two perspectives of stereotypes or two sides that found in *East Wind: West Wind* novel. The first is the stereotype from Kwei-lan towards her husband about how Kwei-lan views her husband, who is originally a Chinese man but has been changed to be a modern man like Western people. Kwei-lan sees and feels that everything about her husband as something that fills her with confusion and oddities that she has never faced before. The second is the stereotype of Kwei-lan's husband towards his wife about how he views his wife

as a traditional Chinese woman. Chinese people always avoid and reject all things related to and from the West because the West was considered bad, evil, and full of black magic.

***The Stereotypes
of Kwei-lan to
Her Husband***

Kwei-lan sees her husband figured as a person who is very different from Chinese men in general. He was born as a Chinese man but he has studied abroad in the Western country and then returned after becoming a doctor. He has changed to be a modern person like Western people. Everything about the lifestyle of Kwei-lan's husband is modern, including education, knowledge, clothes, food, attitude, language, profession, house, habits, music, taking care of children, husband and wife relationship, the position of men and women, as well as appearance.

Her husband is no longer part of traditional Chinese culture. He has a new house that full of strange things and very different from Chinese house in general as can be seen in the following quotation:

"This new house is like nothing I have ever seen. It has no courtyard. There is only a tiny square hall from which the other rooms open, and from which a stair rises swiftly up." (Buck 1930, 26)

He always wears Western clothes and eats Western foods which are only half cooked and no longer likes Chinese food as he usually consumed before he went to the West. It is evident contained in the following quotation:

"But when he comes in, wearing the strange foreign dress, I cannot speak these things."

"I saw him standing there in his stiff, black, foreign clothes." (Buck 1930, 20)

"Before he crossed the four seas, he loved duck's flesh roasted brown and dipped in the jellied juice of wild haws. But since his many years of feeding upon the barbarous and half-cooked fare of the Western peoples, he has lost his taste and cares no more for delicate foods." (Buck 1930, 31)

He always uses Western language to communicate, such as when he is talking to Mrs. Liu, his Western friends, and Kwei-lan's brother. It is strange to Kwei-lan because she do not understand what they are talking about as she only speaks Chinese. This problem can be verified in the following text:

"They spoke of things of which I have never heard. Foreign words flew back and forth between them. I understood nothing except the pleasure on my husband's face." (Buck 1930,25-26)

Kwei-lan's husband's way of thinking has changed into that of Western and he was very angry when his family intend to take care of his son as a lineage since he is different and wanted to take care of his son in his own home following the Western way of child taking care. This situation of parental action is described in the following part of the novel:

"My husband is most unhappy about it. He frowns and mutters that the child be ruined by foolish slave-girls and over-much feeding and harmful luxury. He paces the floor, and once he even grieved that the child was to be born." (Buck, 1930, 68-69)

Then Kwei-lan's husband chooses working as a man who has responsibilities to his family life like the people in the West and makes his own money by working, not just stay at home. This phenomenon is proven in the quotation below:

"But I wish to work, my father! I am trained in a scientific profession — the noblest in the Western world." (Buck 1930, 25)

Kwei-lan is amazed at what her husband does when he meet other people. He practices the Western custom of giving greetings that she has never seen before in China. They are greeting by holding each other's hands and shaking it up and down. Meanwhile, in China, giving respectful greetings to others can only be done by bowing their bodies. It can be seen in the following excerpt:

"My husband had taken the guest's hand and was shaking it up and down in the most peculiar manner." (Buck 1930, 47)

The Stereotypes of Kwei-lan Husband to His Wife

Kwei-lan's husband sees his wife as a very old-fashioned woman. It is because Kwei-lan was born and raised in a Chinese culture that never knows about modern things from the outside. She has been taught by her ancestors that a woman should always keep quiet in front of her husband and elderly people. She should not express what she feels and thinks, likes and dislikes. This matches from the following expression:

"A woman before men should maintain a flower-like silence and should withdraw herself at the earliest moment that is possible without confusion." (Buck 1930, 2)

Traditional Chinese women also have a strange standard beauty that is binding feet as strong as possible to create small leg. They thought small feet was beautiful. It makes his husband dislikes and even hates Kwei-lan because she still follows her old tradition that is not suitable in that era. He wants Kwei-lan to leave her old habits and traditions and starts to follow modern lifestyles. In his opinion, her habit of binding feet is not healthy for her legs and not good in his eyes. It is contained in the following quote:

"I have wished ever since our marriage to ask you if you will not unbind your feet. It is unhealthful for your whole body. See, your bones look like this." (Buck 1930, 33)

Mimicry

Kwei-lan who believes and practices the traditional Chinese culture which has taken a root in her life then tries to imitate the Western women to make her husband loves her. Kwei-lan with her real identity as a traditional Chinese woman has been unable to make her husband sees and loves her, so that she tries to change herself into a modern woman following her husband's modern way of life.

Her first step is to unbind her legs to get a healthy and normal size of leg like Mrs. Liu has because she is jealous with her who can make her husband smile happily when they both are talking to each other. Kwei-lan also imitates Mrs. Liu's habits of wearing leather shoes. She goes to a store to buy the same shoes. This situation is described in the following quotation:

"I said: If you will tell me how, I will unbind my feet"
"But they are not yet as large as Mrs. Liu's, I said." (Buck 1930, 33)

Kwei-lan also learns a lot from Mrs. Liu and Western people about parental actions. She wants to take care of her children by her own and nursed them by her own breastfeed like what Western mothers usually do. This is evident in the following excerpt:

"But the most interesting part of the visit came when my husband asked the foreign woman to let me see her children and their clothes. We were expecting

a child of our own, he explained, so that he wished me to see Western ways. "See, my white is all inside — linings which can be taken out and washed. Learn the good that you can of the foreign people and reject the unsuitable." (Buck 1930, 64-67)

**Identity
Ambivalence**

Kwei-lan has been transformed herself into a modern woman. However, Kwei-lan feels alienated to herself at the current time. She is uncomfortable with these changes but she also does not return to her original position as a part of strong Chinese culture, even though she feels that is where she feels comfortable and where she should be, not in the modern world. The description was can be observed in the following excerpt:

"Although I knew my place was no longer there, my spirit in spite of this rested in its true home." (Buck 1930, 35)

From the description above, it is clear that the 'home' referred to a place where Kwei-lan originally lives with her true identity as a traditional Chinese woman whose life is governed by the rules of her ancient traditions. In that house, what Kwei-lan knows and believes came from. As a mother, home to Kwei-lan is a place where she can always come to rest in peace and comfort as well as a place where she can complain everything she feels discomfort.

Kwei-lan feels like being in the middle between past and present. Kwei-lan loves her husband very much and has intentionally followed her husband's lifestyle. On the other hand, Kwei-lan also feels that she cannot leave her original and true identity as a traditional Chinese woman. Kwei-lan wants to return to the past and her true identity but she is no longer a part of them. She is stuck in the middle. This situation is shown in the following excerpt:

"I am like a frail bridge, spanning the infinity between past and present. I clasp my mother's hand; I cannot let it go, for without me she is alone. But my husband's hand holds mine; his hand holds mine fast. I can never let love go!" (Buck 1930, 101)

Hibridity

In the novel *East Wind: West Wind*, there is not found any condition that indicates Kwei-lan experiencing hybridity. Kwei-lan, who was a traditional Chinese woman, only tries to be like a Western woman by imitating Western women lifestyles as close as possible in terms of her appearance, home, taking care of children, relationships, and way of thinking. However, it does not carry out the process of hybridity or formation a new culture from the two influential cultures, namely the traditional Chinese culture and Western culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and explanations above, it can be concluded that there is an identity construction as what stated in the postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha in the novel *East Wind: West Wind* by Pearl S. Buck. This identity construction consists of stereotypes, mimicry, and ambivalence. There are two stereotypes that the researchers found in the novel, namely the stereotypes of Kwei-lan to her husband and stereotypes of her husband to Kwei-lan. The stereotypes include education, knowledge, clothes, attitude, language, profession, house, habits, taking care of children, and greeting each other which differ between Kwei-lan's and that of her husband. The former adheres to traditional Chinese whereas the latter's favor was modern Western culture.

Meanwhile, the mimicry in the novel includes appearance, habits, and parental action. Kwei-lan imitates the behaviors and lifestyles of Western people to make her husband love her in turn of her love to him.

Kwei-lan experiences ambivalence when she has changed herself and her way of life to be like Western women. She feels uncomfortable with these changes. She feels stuck in the middle between the past and the present. She wants to go back to the past but, at the same time, she cannot leave her modern life with her husband. According to Bhabha (2007) the situation is called uncanny or unhomey moment. It is a situation when someone feels strange to themselves and feels that his/her home is not a home anymore. Home is no longer the most comfortable place. It has turned into an alienated place to live. It makes someone stuck in the middle of life and cannot go back and even forward.

The story describes Kwei-lan's current life when she is confused about her identity. Finally, Kwei-lan can only live between two identities and tries to survive and balance her old identity and her new identity.

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ARTICLE CITATION IN *THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE 16*

In-text Citation

Neisya, Aprilia, and Lestari (2022, 18)

..... (Neisya, Aprilia, and Lestari 2022, 18)

Reference List Entry

Neisya, Fitria Aprilia, and Puspa Lutpiyana Duwi Lestari. 2022. "Cultural Identity Construction in the Novel *East Wind: West Wind* by Pearl S. Buck". *Leksema: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 7 (1): 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ljbs.v7i1.4110>.

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