Home in Han Suyin's Till Morning Comes *from the Perspective of New Cultural Geography*

XIAOLING HU
ARBAAYAH ALI TERMIZI*

Abstract. Viewed through the lens of new cultural geography, a geographical landscape is a symbolic system showing the beliefs and values of society, as in the case of the home landscape. The article employs Mike Crang's concepts of landscape and home to examine different homes in Han Suyin's *Till Morning Comes* (1982). From leaving homes, searching for homes to returning homes, Stephanie, an American woman in diaspora, is exposed to different cultures, experiencing a sense of home in China, a sense of homelessness in both China and America, and a sense of being between worlds. In the process of searching for a home, Stephanie constructs her identity as a Chinese and eventually as a world citizen. The home in the novel is more than just a dwelling place; it is a place signifying cultural identity and a meaningful space that influences the identity transformation of a diasporic woman. The article therefore uses a textual analysis approach to explore how homes are represented and how a diasporic woman's identity is affected by the home landscape she experiences in *Till Morning Comes*. This novel's exploration of home illuminates the unique experience of a diasporic woman, highlighting the importance of re-evaluating Han's work within the framework of contemporary cultural geography.

Keywords: Han Suyin, home, new cultural geography, landscape, identity

Introduction

Han Suyin, a pen name signifying both a Chinese identity (Han) and a persistent voice (Suyin meaning "little voice"), was the literary persona of Rosalie Elisabeth Kuanghu Chou (1917–2012). Han described Suyin as "a little voice that never stops talking" (Dullea 1985: 6). As Cui & Tickel (2021: 147) aptly put it, Han became "[t]he little voice of decolonizing Asia" as her works explored China's past, present, and future, particularly the complex relationship between the East and the West (Wang 1996; Kuek & Fan 2015). Indeed, *Till*

* Xiaoling Hu, University Putra Malaysia, gs58991@student.upm.edu.my
Arbaayah Ali Termizi, University Putra Malaysia, arbaayah@upm.edu.my

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Morning Comes (1982) advocates that the cultural exchange and co-existence between the East and the West can be achieved through mutual compromise (Wang 1996: 317).

It is therefore of no surprise that previous studies of *Till Morning Comes* either confine it to the reflection of the East–West relationship (Wang 1996), or focus on its translation (Zhang 2013; Li 2014). Zhang (2013) conducts a comparative analysis of three Chinese translations of the novel, providing her own translations in accordance to Yan Fu's standards of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance". Li's (2014) study, on the other hand, focuses more on a post-colonial critique of the translation of the novel, looking into five categories: names of people and places, forms of address, daily expressions, political expressions, and interjections. Through these categories, Li (2014) shows how Han does not overexplain Chinese names and terminologies and argues that by doing so, the author is not pandering to the English audience. Li (2014) sees this as an act of resistance against the English language which subverts existing power relations between the East and the West.

However, the novel is more than just an exploration of the East-West relationship. It also centres on the love and married life between 1941 and 1971 of Stephanie Ryder, a journalist from a prosperous white American family, and Jen Yong, a Chinese doctor. As a Chinese daughter-in–law and an American daughter, Stephanie is confronted with a variety of difficulties in both China and America. Despite these difficulties, Stephanie ultimately finds her position in the world. Through the narrative of Stephanie's transnational experience, it could be argued that Han also explores issues such as the identity of a diasporic woman.

The present study, therefore, attempts to explore the connection between the diasporic woman's identity transformation and the home landscape under the lens of new cultural geography. The study is situated in the context of cultural geography for two primary reasons. First, Han's story is transnational, set in both China and America, covering numerous places such as Yenan, Shanghai, Texas, and New York. These places, each imbued with its own unique culture, enrich the female protagonist's diasporic experience. Second, home as an everyday landscape is depicted throughout the narrative as captivating the female protagonist's attention.

Despite being from 1982, the novel is worthy of being re-evaluated here because of the exploration of the female diasporic connection between home and Stephanie. As Clifford argues, diasporic experiences, particularly viewed through the lens of women's experience, may lead to the reinforcement of patriarchal structures or give rise to new roles and political spaces (1994: 313–314). For example, Stephanie's diasporic experience closely intertwines with

her formation of a Chinese cultural identity. In terms of the idea of home, this space has often served as a foundation for feminists contemplating the roles of women. Simone de Beauvoir (1989) and Betty Friedan (1963), for example, challenge the perceived natural connection between home and women, arguing that women experience frustration in homes where they have limited power. However, Roberta Rubenstein claims that home is associated with the "yearning for recovery or return to the idea of a nurturing, unconditionally accepting place/space" and blames "contemporary feminism" for creating an unnatural detachment of women from homes (2001: 3–4). In response to Rubenstein's perspective, Strehle argues that focusing on women's natural attachment to home overlooks the power dynamics within homes (2008: 20). According to new cultural geographer Crang, home shaped according to the beliefs of its inhabitants cannot be neutral; instead it embodies the sort of social relationships we believe in and the practices that sustain it. Home can be seen as a gendered landscape, serving to maintain the idea of a man as the "breadwinner" and home as the domain of women (1998: 28–29). To a certain degree, the new cultural geography's idea of home aligns with feminists' perception of home, as both emphasise the gendered power dynamics within homes. However, new cultural geography does not solely focus on gendered power relations; rather, it directs attention towards broader social ideologies. Therefore, the discussion of various homes experienced by a woman in the diaspora under the lens of new cultural geography can yield new insights into the connection between home and women's identity.

The concepts of landscape and home in new cultural geography

Carl O. Sauer, the founder of traditional cultural geography, is regarded as the first to study the landscape in cultural geography. For Sauer, reading landscapes is reading the cultures that make them (1963: 341–343). Thus, Sauer's purpose in studying landscapes is to discover evidence of culture (Mitchell 2000: 28). However, new cultural geographers recognise that material landscapes are not neutral and instead reflect social power relations and dominant ways of seeing the world (Berger 1972). Denis Cosgrove emphasises the class-based significance of the cultural production of landscape, arguing "in class societies, where surplus production is appropriated by the dominant group, symbolic production is likewise seized as hegemonic class culture to be imposed across all classes" (1983: 5). The landscape as built form and representation is both the result and the medium of the social power relations of class and gender (Mitchell 2005: 49–52). Under capitalism, landscape functions as both the site of production (work) and reproduction (rest or leisure), making it inevitable

that the site of one's leisure or rest is the site of another person's labour. Consequently, landscape serves as a source of alienation (Mitchell 2005: 51).

As well as class, the symbolic representations of landscapes embody gendered power relations. The cultural meanings in landscapes reflect notions of feminine inferiority versus masculine superiority, and idealised ideas of women's passivity and their confinement to the private sphere (Bondi 1992; Deutsche 1991; Rose 1993). Crang further claims that the landscape is a symbolic system reflecting the beliefs and values through which a society is organised, as the landscape is shaped by "practices of people to accord with their cultures" (1998: 27). In this sense, the shaping of the landscape is seen as expressing social ideologies that are then perpetuated through the landscape. The landscapes of American and Chinese homes depicted in the novel reveal their inhabitants' beliefs about social life.

Home refers not only to the physical unit, the house, but also to the social unit, the family. Simply put, home is both a dwelling place and a social and cultural system. Home and its spatial layout including surroundings like walls, bounding hedges, and gardens embody both the beliefs and identity of the inhabitants and social power relations of gender and class (Crang 1998: 27–40). Hence, home and identity are conflated in Crang's understanding. Han's portrayal of Stephanie's dwelling places, particularly the Ryders' homes and ranch, as well as the Jen Family House, highlights the contrasting social and cultural structures of American and Chinese societies. The way different home landscapes convey meaning to the diasporic woman and how these home landscapes influence her identity require attention. Thus, the exploration of home landscapes in *Till the Morning Comes* from the perspective of new cultural geography can yield a fresh insight into the value of home to a diasporic woman.

Homes and Chinese identity construction

Home is the most intimate landscape, and can be seen as relating to beliefs about social life (Crang 1998: 27). Homes depicted in *Till the Morning Comes* can be read as texts illustrating the beliefs of the inhabitants and aid Stephanie in constructing a Chinese identity.

Stephanie's Chinese identity construction is inextricably linked with her departure from her American home. Stephanie, a white American journalist, is assigned to report on the war against the Japanese invasion of China during the 1940s. Stephanie's departure from her homeland seems to be associated with her work, but it is essentially driven by her search for her value and identity. Before she accepts the assignment, she is uncertain about the life she desires.

She believes that she will know what she wants to do after completing a year's contract with the American magazine *HERE* (Han 1982: 7). Therefore, Stephanie's journey of leaving home is fundamentally a quest to discover herself. Despite Stephanie departing from her American home, she does not feel homeless because she finds a sense of home through her love and marriage to Jen Yong while in China.

The first place where Stephanie initially experiences a sense of home in China is in the caves in Yenan. Yenan was almost obliterated by Japanese bombing in 1940. The remnants of the Communist armies after the Long March took refuge in the city, taking shelter in caves that were "scooped out of the cliffs, tiered one above the other, neat as the cells of a beehive" (Han 1982: 113). While these caves are very simple and crude, even the most well-equipped ones offered to American friends are quite basic, consisting only of "neat plaster on the wall, brick floors, iron stoves for heating, a good wooden door, and a window with panes of glass instead of paper" (Han 1982: 113). The partially roofed latrines used by all the cave dwellers are "rows of holes, either dug in a wooden board or simply on bricks over a dry trench" (Han 1982: 120). These caves suggest life in Yenan is characterised by simplicity and challenges, indicating the Communists' determination to overcome difficulties in constructing a new China. Stephanie interprets it as "a replica of early Christianity, frugal and sober, hard-working, undaunted, with a faith that could displace mountains" (Han 1982: 117).

Despite the challenging conditions in Yenan, regular dance parties are held every Saturday. Dance parties serve as entertainment for Americans and also provide an opportunity for communication between Chinese and their foreign friends. Enjoying the communication, Stephanie finds solace in the atmosphere of the dance party, feeling a sense of being at home in Yenan. This experience leads her to approach the ordinary Chinese people and better understand Yong's commitment to building a new China. Moreover, interracial marriages in Yenan are seen as normal, as the people from China and America attempt to cross frontiers and foster understanding. Consequently, Stephanie realises the humanist aspect of Yenan, which ultimately leads her to marry Yong. After her marriage to Yong, the cave becomes a home for Stephanie. Yong's acts of emptying Stephanie's toilet jar and the stove of its ashes, as well as cleaning the cave on Sundays, create a sense of care and domesticity. Yong's expression of his love through service enables Stephanie to feel the sense of home in the cave. According to Crang, the division of activities within and outside the home are accorded different status and values. "Productive" male labour occurs outside the home, while the "reproduction of labour", domestic activities, are typically associated with women's responsibilities inside the home (1998: 28). However,

Yong's involvement in domestic tasks challenges the social norms highlighted by Crang, indicating his new idea of home as a space where love and equality are expressed. Therefore, the cave transforms from a mere physical dwelling place into a symbol of love, care and equality between Stephanie and Yong.

Additionally, the cave evolves into a symbol of cultural exchange, for it becomes a space for Stephanie to learn Chinese poetry and to receive her friends with mixed marriages. Yong becomes not only Stephanie's life partner but also her guide in exploring Chinese poetry, teaching her the poems of love of the Book of Odes. Yong and Stephanie also frequently receive their friends and exchange Chinese poems with them. As Crang argues, there is no simple natural disposition of activities in the landscape, they are always intertwined with particular cultures (1998: 31). The exchange activities within the cave demonstrate to Stephanie the possibility of the emotional and cultural exchange between the Chinese and the Americans, leading her to believing that "all the world should be like this" (Han 1982: 138). In this way, the cave transforms into a "common hearth", to which different races bring their knowledge and love (Han 1982: 138). Therefore, for Stephanie, the cave not only reflects her transnational love but also the possibility of a harmonious mixture of diverse cultures and her willingness to become Chinese and fight with the Chinese.

Having achieved a social sense of home in Yenan, Stephanie's return to the America generates a different meaning for her. Stephanie returns to her American home for the first time shortly after her marriage in Yenan because of poor health. Upon arriving in Dallas, Stephanie is immediately captivated by the great physical changes in her hometown and the Ryder house. Stephanie observes "the new buildings of the growing city, growing powerful and beautiful" (Han 1982: 144), and comes to realise that Dallas is transforming into a metropolis of industry and increasingly developing and changing the world through its energy and power. Stephanie also notices that the Ryder house has undergone some changes: "It's got forty rooms, two swimming pools, sixty acres of garden and three patios" (Han 1982: 144). The size and magnificence of the house not only reflect the increasing development of the city but also signify the wealth and power possessed by her father, Heston Ryder. The ranch owned by the family further manifests Heston's wealth and power:

> The four-hundred-acre spread lay in rolling country; it took in half a small valley, shaded by live oak and pine. It was Heston Ryder's latest acquisition, and the ranch house was elegant white with portico and pillars. (Han 1982: 147)

The ranch is not separated by the outside land; and nothing interrupts the view from the ranch to the outside land. The expansive ranch signifies both "visual and social mastery" (Crang 1998: 34). Landscapes, as subjective representations that can serve ideological purposes, potentially lead to the alienation of certain groups from the land, for those who build the landscape may not necessarily be those who own the landscape (Mitchell 2005: 51). In this regard, the ranch's tremendous visual mastery indicates the power of the wealthy elite to own the land and exclude the poor from it. Therefore, this ranch serves as an entertaining place only for the Ryder family and their affluent friends. It would not have encouraged the cross-cultural exchanges that had happened in Stephanie's cave dwellings.

Stephanie's American house and the ranch symbolise the wealth and power owned by her father. The family's accumulation of wealth and power manifests Heston's pride as a man and an American. Crang believes that the home serves to uphold the notion of a man as the "breadwinner" (1998: 28). In this sense, home is a place for Heston to demonstrate his extraordinary capabilities as a man, elevating his family in high society. Moreover, Heston's American-ness is manifested through the house. Heston's considerable fortune is accumulated by building airplanes, an important asset for European countries during wartime, Heston therefore often claims that America is generous to supply the European countries and deploy "her wings of gold over the world" (Han 1982: 148). Heston's self-importance and American pride are fully expressed throughout his house, particularly through the decoration of European antiques. Heston's newly bought house is depicted as the following:

> The car went down Armstrong Parkway, purred forwards past the splendid houses which were just beginning, came to the gates of Ryder House, and went up the long avenue through wooded grounds to the mansion, built as a mixture of Schönbrunn castle and the Trianon at Versailles….
>
> Paintings of old and contemporary masters on the walls. Carpets underfoot. Lustrous magnificence. A house built in such meticulous detail, with such perfect material, that not a stone would move, no piece of wood would splinter or creak for many, many year.
>
> Isobel's bedroom. The alcove, the canopied bed raised high on a platform, swathed in brocade, fluted pilasters copied from a royal couch. (Han 1982: 202–203)

The new Ryder house is a fascinating museum displaying treasures from European countries. Stephanie considers the opulent furnishings of the Ryder house excessive, a gaudy display of wealth built over generations. Heston's pursuit of treasure indicates that he is "the emperor of a new, vigorous dynasty",

who aggressively expands his empire and accumulates resources (Han 1982: 203). However, Heston's accumulation of European antiques isn't to encourage intercultural exchange, but to show dominance. This is not Stephanie's idea of home. It can be argued that Stephanie's American home mirrors not only the rapid development and prosperity of America during WWII but also Heston's sense of national pride and his spirit of wanting to "change things" (Han 1982: 144), which ensures his financial success.

Not representing Stephanie's new idea of home, Stephanie is no longer reluctant to stay in either Ryders' old house or the new one. Stephanie returns to her American home three times in total after her marriage to Yong. During her first return, the luxury of her house brings a strange restlessness, "as if she had lost a part of herself" (Han 1982: 148). She is eager to go back to her Yenan cave because she has already identified herself as the wife of a Chinese. Stephanie's second return to America is with Yong, three years after her first return. The extreme luxury of the Ryders' new house does not evoke a sense of American pride in Stephanie; instead, it again makes her restless. This restlessness results from her years of living in China, particularly her experience of Yong's home, the Jen Family House. The Ryder houses, serving as a contrast to her homes in China, prompt her to establish a Chinese identity.

Stephanie's homes in China offer her completely different social experiences because these homes are shaped according to the beliefs of their Chinese inhabitants. Although the cave in Yenan is rather simple, it provides Stephanie love and the hope of a harmonious mixture of diverse cultures. However, it is the Jen Family House that enables Stephanie to closely experience Chinese culture and a different way of seeing the world. The Jen Family House in Shanghai is called Willow Pool Garden. The excerpts below give depictions of the House:

> The House was at the end of Eight Jewel Lane, paved with stones dating back to the previous century. It was surrounded by a stone wall ornamented in the fashion of middle China, where chimneys were adorned with carved bricks and roof tiles dovetailed to fashion flowers and birds.
>
> The main gate was heavy wood, lacquered in black, with brass clappers. Three steps of stone led up to it. Standing below the steps was the gatekeeper, a young apprentice by his side holding a copper and glass coach lantern.…
>
> They went into the reception pavilion to drink the ceremonial tea of welcome. Electronic lights hung in silk lanterns from the center of the high ceiling and also from the corners. Stephanie was enchanted: it was a beautiful room, uncluttered, with south China style carved furniture and on tall stands peony and fuchsia in porcelain flower pots. The windows, uncurtained, displayed lattice work of lacquered wood. Their centerpiece glass panes were etched to

> represent landscapes. Light could pour in, but it was impossible to see through from the outside. (Han 1982: 178–179)

The detailed description of the Jen Family House exemplifies Han's ability to produce "vivid visualisations" (Wong et al. 2021: 424). Through such visualisations, the natural beauty, elegance and tranquillity sought after by the higher class of Chinese society within their houses are effectively displayed. Consequently, Stephanie considers the House as a paradise with no serpent.

In addition, the Jen Family House also embodies the values of the Jen family, which are notably distinct from those represented by the Ryder house. According to Crang, "[j]udgements about morality and sexuality are written into the fabric of the house through the creation of private spaces" (1998: 29). The ancestors' pavilion in the House manifests the morality:

> She was then taken to the ancestors' pavilion – secluded and protected, its only access through the length of the garden, murmurous with willows and sycamore, Chinese oak and cassia, with trellises of wisteria and seven-mile jasmine. It stood raised on a stone platform. It had pillars of brown lacquer; its floor was black tiled. The altar was very simple. No god, no deity. Ancestors. Not their bodies, but their soul-tablets, denoting the imperishable spirit. Simple slivers of wood arranged by rank, each one inscribed with the name of the particular ancestor, each bearing a dot at the top, red for male, black for female. (Han 1982: 182)

The words "secluded" and "protected" imply the privacy and solemnity of the pavilion. The display and decoration of the pavilion reveal the family's respect for their deceased ancestors. The Jen family believe that their respect for ancestors can bless them and bring good luck to them. Whenever there is an important event, the deceased ancestors are invited to share the feast and happiness with their descendants. Hence, Stephanie's wedding must be held in the ancestors' pavilion. Only in front of the ancestors can her marriage be accepted by the extended Jen family. The ancestors' pavilion as a significant place for the Jen family indicates the entrenched family values of the Jen family – respect for ancestors and the priority of family interests. It becomes evident that the Jen family prioritises family interests, while the Ryder family exhibits a pioneering spirit, which guarantees the prosperity of the family.

Although the two home spaces symbolise different family values, they display similar gendered power relations. Home is a landscape marked by gender roles, reinforcing the idea of a woman's "realm" in the home (Crang 1998: 28). The two distinct home spaces reveal women's confinement and passivity within homes, despite Yong's mother and Stephanie's mother playing different roles in their homes. Yong's mother takes responsibility for all household matters, such as organising family parties and nurturing children.

As de Beauvoir argues, domesticity "provides no escape from immanence and little affirmation of individuality" (1989: 451). The extensive involvement in domestic labour restricts Yong's mother's personal expression. In the Ryder house, Stephanie's mother seldom involves herself in household matters. However, this does not indicate that Stephanie's mother achieves freedom and individuality within her home. On the contrary, her passivity is reinforced by Heston's absolute control over the household decisions, including the purchase and decoration of the new house, as well as the acquisition of the ranch. It is interesting to note that despite the passive roles assigned to Stephanie's mother and mother-in-law within the two homes, Han treats Stephanie differently by endowing her more freedom from domestic confinement. Therefore, as a woman in diaspora, Stephanie negotiates her identity in a unique way, influenced by the experience of the distinct family values of the two homes.

Despite vast differences between the Jen family's values and those of her own, Stephanie strives to adapt, eager to become a part of Yong's family. For instance, Stephanie shows respect to the deceased ancestors in the family during her marriage ceremony by lighting incense sticks and bowing to their soul-tablets. She also fulfils the traditional expectations within the family by bringing early morning tea to her parents-in-law the day after her marriage. In addition to adhering to Chinese family values, Stephanie's formation of Chinese cultural identity is greatly influenced by the elegance and nobility embodied in the Jen Family House. Unlike the Ryder house, such elegance and nobility in the Jen Family House are "[n]ot overtly based on money, not like the elegant predatoriness [of the Ryders' home]" (Han 1982: 458), but rooted in centuries of cultural accumulation. Therefore, when she has the opportunity to own her house in Peking, she carefully selects various items such as snuff bottles, ivory statuettes, porcelain, old rugs, authentic Ming Chairs, and tables and chests to decorate it. Her choices are not merely aesthetic; rather they reflect her affirmation of Chinese cultural identity through identification with Chinese culture. Stephanie's deliberate incorporation of furniture representing Chinese culture in her house serves as a tangible expression of her Chinese cultural identity, aligning with Crang's notion that the spatial arrangement of the landscape speaks to us about its inhabitant's distinctive worldview which sustain it (1998: 31). As Stephanie admits, she is excited "to learn Chinese, to dress, to eat, to almost *be* Chinese" (Han 1982: 346). If we view Stephanie's marriage to Yong as the means by which she gains legal recognition as a Chinese wife, her adherence to Chinese family values and affection for Chinese culture signify her self-acknowledgement of being Chinese. To some extent, the Jen Family House, more precisely the Chinese culture symbolised by the House, attracts Stephanie to become culturally and psychologically Chinese. Without realising it herself, Stephanie becomes Eurasian in a cultural sense.

Between Chinese and American homes and mixed identity awareness

Stephanie, by identifying herself as Chinese, becomes an individual situated between Chinese and American worlds. During her first few years of marriage to Yong, Stephanie tends to identify as Chinese and believes she has found a home in China. However, the political conflict between China and America creates a new tension: although China offers a dwelling place for her, she no longer obtains a sense of belonging in the country due to anti-American sentiment.

Stephanie experiences a sense of alienation from the Chinese people, despite having fought alongside them for their peace and freedom in the past. During a trip by train, she is checked four times by the transport security police. Her excellent Chinese, viewed as a sign of her Chinese identity, makes her suspect. Although she proves that she is travelling with her family and that her marriage has been permitted by several of China's leaders, she is still not fully accepted. Later, when she leaves the train, a young man spits on the ground in front of her. Most terribly, when she sees Yong off at the airport, she is suspected of being an American spy. Despite being pregnant, she is taken to an office in the airport and waits fifteen hours to be checked. Due to the prolonged wait, she gets a cramp and has to be taken to hospital. However, even in hospital, she continues to wait, as nurses and patients all believe that the hospital is for "Chinese", not for "foreigners", particularly not for Americans, who "are killing [their] people with germs " (Han 1982: 289). Dr Peng, a colleague of Yong, shows indifference to Stephanie, even though he cures her. And finally, even Yong's sister perceives taking care of Stephanie in the hospital as an insult: "Why do you think we are barbarians, like *your* soldiers?" (Han 1982: 290). The use of "we" and "your" indicates Stephanie is also treated as the other by her Chinese family. The discrimination and alienation from the Chinese are instrumental in reminding Stephanie of her identity as a non-Chinese.

During China's social and political upheavals, Stephanie realises that she is nothing more than a foreigner in China, which has led to her diminishing emotional bond with China and her Chinese home. For Stephanie, "all around her now was alien, and [a] threat. Even the Family. Even Yong" (Han 1982: 371). The Jen Family House, once a paradise, turns out to be an alienated place. Stephanie's sense of homelessness in the Jen Family House results from the changed social norms of the family. Both the Japanese invasion and the national political upheavals are closely linked to the fate of China, but the Jen family exhibits distinct attitudes towards the events. When facing the Japanese invasion, the Jen family rises to resist the invasion and defend their country. However, facing the ongoing national political upheavals, Yong and his parents

never resist, but rather endure the unequal treatments. Stephanie does not approve of this and criticises them by saying, "You will weather it, Yong, you and your Family. Oh, you've weathered the centuries, or is it the millennia? Endure and survive. Smile and survive. You'll go on. And on. Every time you will adapt; you will compromise..." (Han 1982: 373).

Stephanie also finds it unbearable to live the life "planned" by the family: "They thought *for* you. Planned *your* life, *your* likes and dislikes" (Han 1982: 373). In Stephanie's view, the family's efforts to protect her against discrimination and harm result in her being "blind and deaf" to certain realities (Han 1982: 381). As Crang claims, "[A] geography of order is about a series of moral and cultural judgements of what should happen where" (1998: 49). The Jen Family House is such a geography of order, specifically a space heavily dependent on Chinese moral judgements, such as endurance and family interests. However, Stephanie finds it challenging to adhere to these values because they clash with her inherently American spirit for change and innovation that "had led her to China, to the Yenan caves ... and to Jen Yong" (Han 1982: 144). Stephanie's reluctance to conform to Chinese moral judgements disrupts the order of the Jen family space, resulting in her loss of a sense of home. As a result, Stephanie feels she "no longer knew *what* Yong really thought, how he really felt" and she wants to go back to her American home (Han 1982: 362). Stephanie's failure to fully adhere to the altered social norms of the Jen family leads to a reduced sense of belonging to the Chinese home.

Stephanie's reduced sense of belonging to the Chinese home is also interconnected with her reluctance to engage in the political changes in the country. According to sociologists and political scientists, the sense of belonging is closely associated with participation in the political process (Dasgupta 2007: 82). Stephanie's great passion for the Chinese cause once provided her a sense of belonging in China. However, with the country changing, Stephanie admits, she "had lost touch with the cause which had brought them [Stephanie and Yong] together", and she was no longer "able to become involved" (Han 1982: 362). Her reluctance to re-engage in the Chinese cause largely stems from the constant alienation from her surroundings and her disapproval of the Jen family's lack of reactions to the ongoing political upheavals. Ultimately, both external and internal factors lead to her loss of a strong connection to the country.

However, Stephanie feels a sense of displacement not only in her Chinese home but also in her American one. Weighed down by the ongoing social and political unrest, Stephanie ultimately chooses to return to her home country. Back in America, Stephanie finds herself under investigation for her involvement with China, "Stephanie Ryder, Mrs. Jen, was on their list of people

to watch" (Han 1982: 201). The FBI come to Stephanie's home three times a week to question her, and newsmen and cameramen hang about the house to gather news about her. Although Heston contacts his congressman and senators to maintain the security of his home and to keep his daughter far from any danger, the FBI continue their investigation. Stephanie is viewed as "Red Stephanie", writing books and articles to praise Red China and the Communist regime, and is suspected of being a traitor. America no longer appears to be her homeland, and her American home becomes a site of threat. Ironically, despite possessing homes in both China and America, Stephanie does not feel a sense of belonging in either country. Both her Chinese and American homes become places of alienation for her.

Stephanie's experience of homelessness within both Chinese and American homes prompts her to face her diasporic identity. Stephanie first leaves her American home in search of herself, but she finds herself in a more complicated situation upon returning. However, Stephanie's quest for herself does not end with her final return to America. The return leads her to realise the impossibility of abandoning either her American or Chinese identities. Despite physically returning to America, Stephanie cannot emotionally detach herself from Yong and her son. Her natural attachment to her Chinese home, where her loved ones reside, intensifies her yearning for home. Stephanie regrets leaving her Chinese family and keeps thinking of returning to her Chinese home whenever the possibility arises. She firmly believes that there is another Stephanie in China. In other words, China becomes her spiritual home.

Eventually, it is in New York, a melting pot of a city, that Stephanie realises that she has to reinvent herself. "[P]laces have meanings beyond their statistical expression" because people come to understand places with different emotions (Crang 1998: 43). Stephanie, a woman between worlds, finds that New York offers her a unique experience. The diversity of New York gives Stephanie the strength and vitality to embrace her status of being between worlds. Eventually, Stephanie decides to assert her American identity by fighting to "make America healthy again", despite harassment by the FBI (Han 1982: 422). She goes back to Dallas to take over her father's business, aiming to change its condition which has been hampered by security and loyalty checks. Additionally, Stephanie acknowledges her Chinese cultural identity by wearing the necklace of jade with gold links handed down in Yong's family. In her luxurious Dallas house inherited from her father, Stephanie deliberately incorporates Chinese elements by using sheets and house linen made in Hong Kong. This intentional choice reflects her effort to reinforce her sense of Chinese cultural identity. Considering Crang's argument that the spatial arrangement of the landscape can offer clues about its inhabitants' worldview (1998: 31), Stephanie's

deliberate blending of cultures within her home further serves as the evidence of her perspective on mixed identity. Stephanie ultimately realises that China can remain as her home, particularly her spiritual home, though she has to live in her native country. Stephanie successfully finds a balance between her Chinese home and American home and negotiates her mixed identity by transforming into a world citizen who contributes to making "[a] whole new world" (Han 1982: 500).

Conclusion

While Han's *Till Morning Comes* is often seen as exploring the familiar East–West dynamic, a closer look reveals the novel's deeper examination of diasporic identity, particularly through the lens of an American woman. Stephanie's diasporic identity is closely associated with the process of her constant leaving, searching for, and returning to homes in both China and America. In such a process, Stephanie initially assimilates into Chinese culture, finding a sense of belonging with her Chinese home; later she experiences a period of homelessness before ultimately succeeding in embracing her status of being between homes. In other words, Stephanie transforms her cultural identity from an American to a Chinese and finally to a world citizen. In the transformative process, home plays a crucial role in shaping and negotiating the identity of a woman in diaspora. Home for the diasporic woman is not a place of oppression and resistance, but a place that can help her understand different cultures and construct a cultural identity. Therefore, the analysis of the connection between the diasporic woman and home in the novel underscores its significance in exploring the diasporic woman's identity. Furthermore, Han's exploration of the identity of a woman in diaspora demonstrates that women can develop an international perspective on the world and effectively negotiate their identities in diaspora. The reading of Han's *Till Morning Comes* through the lens of new cultural geography further proves Han's novels are of lasting interest and value.

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