Pearl S. Buck's Concept of the Home-Angel in Three Novels: The Time Is Noon, All Under Heaven, and The Goddess Abides

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Although Pearl S. Buck wrote during the twentieth-century, her female protagonists in her American novels seem more closely related to the nineteenth-century true woman or home-angel than to twentieth-century women. Three such characters, Nadya MacNeil (All Under Heaven), Edith Chardman (The Goddess Abides), and Joan Richards (The Time Is Noon), create a place where they belong, a place of safety and security, a home. The homes they create resemble the ideal American nineteenth-century homes, which were seen as refuges and retreats from the turbulence and evil of the business world.

As these three protagonists create refuges of serenity and security, they display some of the traits generally associated with the nineteenth-century socially prescriptive ideal of the home-angel and/or the true woman: piety, pureness, submissiveness, and domesticity. However, Buck simultaneously accepts and questions the
validity of this social ideal for women through the behavior and thoughts of Nadya, Edith, and Joan.

Nadya MacNeil, the quintessential home-angel, accepts her position and seeks to enlarge her areas of responsibility. She creates a home of peace and love for herself and her family, but refuses to submerge her own identity in total subservience to her husband.

Widowed after approximately thirty years of marriage, Edith Chardman struggles to discover who she is after years of unknowingly immersing herself in her husband's idea of what she ought to be. She makes a conscious decision to consider only her own likes and dislikes, but the habit of centering her life around a man is too strong. She ends by dedicating her life to helping Jared Barnow, a promising young scientist, achieve his dreams—just as she had dedicated her life to her husband.

Joan Richards wants a home which manifests the characteristics of her childhood home: peacefulness, serenity, security, and love. After the death of her parents, she marries in an attempt to replicate that childhood home, but is unable to create her idea of home until she leaves her husband and establishes a home of her own.

Despite Buck's philosophy that men and women are equal, an examination of secondary women in each novel
reveals that her female characters, rather than occupying a position of individual strength, are subordinate to the male protagonists who occupy a position of authority.

Accepted by: Vickie Ricks (by Eugene Young), Chairman

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Of Home and Home-Angels

In the essay "What Can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can't Write," Joanna Russ states: "Our literature is not about women" (5). Further on, she writes that the women portrayed in our literature are not women but images of women.... They [the women] exist only in relation to the protagonist (who is male).... they do not really exist at all--at their best they are depictions of the social roles women are supposed to play ... but they are the public roles and not the private women. (Russ 5)

One writer who wrote about women, not their public nor private roles, but the realness of their inner emotions, their personal problems, and their quiet struggles to solve those problems was Pearl S. Buck. She wrote of the everyday, real life concerns of women and of the sometimes satisfactory, sometimes not, real-life solutions to those problems. One such concern, significant in the development of many of her plots and characters, is the need people have for a place--physical and emotional--to belong, the need for a home. This common thread running through much of her work is probably a result, in part, of her own life lived in both China and
America for a nearly equal number of years and her feeling that she never truly belonged in either place. (China was her home from 1892 until 1934, when, at age forty-two, she decided to make the United States her permanent home. She lived in Pennsylvania until her death on March 6, 1973 at the age of eighty-one.) (Doyle Chronology)

Buck was born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, June 26, 1892, but her missionary parents returned to China when she was five or six months old. She spoke Chinese before she spoke English; her family lived among the Chinese people instead of shut away in a missionary compound as was generally the case. Although she knew she was different because of her blond hair and blue eyes, it was not until the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, when she was about eight years old, that she sensed her isolation and fundamental difference from her Chinese friends. They belonged, she did not; their black eyes and black hair were the usual color, hers were not; because of her skin color, she became an enemy. When the rebellion ended, the family returned to their Chinese home, but Buck never again felt the same security and safety as before (Theodore Harris 80).

In a conversation with Theodore Harris, Buck talks about feeling out of place:
Somehow I have always been an object, rather than a person. As a child, I was white with yellow hair and blue eyes in a country where everyone knew the proper color of eyes and hair was black and the skin was brown. I can remember my Chinese friends bringing their friends to look at me because I was different.

(81)

When she was nine the family spent a year in America, and although she knew she was an American and belonged there as the child and grandchild of Americans, she, nevertheless, experienced feelings of displacement and of not belonging. In America the color of her eyes, hair, and skin were acceptable, but her experiences in a non-western culture set her apart. She felt as if she had no real place, even with her relatives. "There is a searching in Pearl Buck," writes Theodore Harris, "a searching so deeply embedded that it is difficult for one to fathom, but I am convinced that it stems from a basic need to belong somewhere" (81). Buck herself, in My Several Worlds, acknowledges her feelings of displacement: "I grew up in China, in one world and not of it, and belonging to another world and yet not of it" (51).

The turn-of-the-century atmosphere in which Buck was raised also contributed to the feeling of not belonging.
Although she was born in 1892 and grew up during the early years of the twentieth century, her upbringing was basically nineteenth century. In the mornings, guided by her mother, Buck studied English grammar, American and world history, arithmetic, and American, English, European, Greek, and Roman literature. In the afternoons, her Chinese tutor, Mr. Kung, taught her to read and write Chinese. From him she also learned the history of China, proper Chinese behavior, and the philosophy of Confucius. In *My Several Worlds*, she mentions the books she read for enjoyment--Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, William Makepeace Thackery, George Eliot, Shakespeare, and Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*--and of the American magazines that the family subscribed to: *The Delineator*, *The Century*, *St. Nicholas*, and *The Youth's Companion*. She writes that these last two were "to keep us in touch with the young of our own country. I doubt the validity of the touch, however, for I somehow got the notion of incredible perfection in America" (62-63).

Buck's social education consisted of, as Dody Weston Thompson writes in *American Winners of the Nobel Literary Prize*, "the cultural accretion of four thousand years" of Chinese life and the "birthright from her parents...of a past and passing world, a powerful, mid-nineteenth-
century and American pattern of thought--active, egalitarian, pioneering, upright, and compelled to service" (88).

Writing of that cultural birthright, Thompson goes on to explain that Buck's parents had been children during the American Civil War, and their view of life had long crystallized by the time they came to China in 1880. Their shining memories of America were passed intact, enshrined and polished like a fly in amber, to their children in a strange land. In this way, since she lacked the usual means of modifying the parental view by contemporary impressions outside the home, Pearl Buck's mold was irrevocably set a generation behind what would have been her normal one. If later she exchanged the ricksha for jet planes, if the deep peace of her childhood gave way to revolution, and she both read and traveled widely, her deepest roots nevertheless were locked away in time as she herself had been in space. East versus West, Victorian versus twentieth-century values: her life and work turn on their interplay. (Thompson 89)
This interplay of changing values and the tension such differences cause are apparent in the search and struggle for a place to belong for the characters in Buck's novels. Three of her novels in which having a place and belonging are significant in the development of the plot and the growth of the female protagonists are *The Time Is Noon*, *The Goddess Abides*, and *All Under Heaven*.1

Although these three novels are not set in the nineteenth-century, the philosophy of Buck's parents, Buck's upbringing and education, and the reading material which helped shape her thinking combined to give her a nineteenth-century approach to the world--an approach that is evident in her writing.

Two writers, Maxine Van de Wetering in "The Popular Concept of 'Home' in Nineteenth-Century America" and Barbara Welter, in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," describe the ideal nineteenth-century home and the socially assigned role of woman in that home. These two writers supply important concepts and terminology which seem to also describe the homes Buck's characters attempt to create and the roles her female characters are assigned.

According to Van de Wetering, the nineteenth-century American "home was becoming a place of privacy, serenity, exaggerated reverence, and conspicuous nurture" (14).
Home was a place of retreat from the frenzy of the business world. Home was the place where a person could "reveal and work out the vicissitudes of her or his personality" (16). Home became the bastion of morality, and order, and it provided reassurance and nurturing for the individual.

Central to this definition of home was the idea of a "settled, ministering 'home-angel' inside, the benign and pious and fixed-in-place mother" (Van de Wetering 13). This paragon of piety, patience, and perfection was expected to provide "an atmosphere of peace and harmony" (16), "unqualified love" (23), a "heavenly abundance of domestic bliss" (27), and "personal nurturing of others" (24). In addition, the home-angel was to dispense "'disinterested love,' a love which was consistent and reliable despite the circumstances or the possible shortcomings of the beloved" (23).

The term "home-angel," used as early as 1837 in sermons, women's magazines, and religious tracts, described the attitudes, attributes, and responsibilities of the ideal wife in the nineteenth-century American home. Closely related to, if not synonymous with, the home-angel was the true woman as described by Welter. Prevalent in sermons, women's magazines, and books between 1820 and 1860, the term "true woman" described the ideal way every
woman, married or not, should think, feel, and act. (It is important to remember that in the Van de Wetering and the Welter articles, the terms home-angel and true woman do not refer to literary manifestations of women, but instead are descriptive of the real-world social expectations for women.)

Barbara Welter, in defining those tasks a true woman was supposed to accomplish, writes: "Woman was expected to dispense comfort and cheer" (203), "to be `the presiding genius of love' in the home" (206), and to focus her whole attention on her husband (208). Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic explain more explicitly what it meant for a women "to focus her whole attention on her husband": "It is the surrender of herself--of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both--that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act..." (25). A successful woman in the home, then, was a woman who effectively erased herself in service to her husband and, by extension, to their children.

However. Van de Wetering also suggests that a woman herself might be in need of love and nurturing: "Home ... served the woman inside as an impetus of her own self-realization.... Her own nurture was ... self-furnished, or it came from other women" (24). And Welter indicates
that a woman was expected to gain a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction through her housework and through her nurturing of others (204).

One of the important characteristics of the home-angel was her 'insideness.' Because home was to be a retreat, a place of serenity and tranquility, the person in charge of home needed to be there. Because a woman was to focus on her husband and his needs, she needed to be there: "The true woman's place was unquestionably by her own fireside ... as wife and mother" (Welter 202).

In "The Gentle Doubters: Images of Women in Englishwomen's Novel's, 1840-1920," Susan Gorsky adds to our understanding of what was expected of women during this time period:

Real women--and thus heroines in fiction--were to be obedient, chaste, and pious, to look forward to marriage as their proper goal, and to expect in marriage to see their parents' authority exchanged for that of their husbands. (29)

Women of the nineteenth century did not live ideal lives. They were excluded from participation in the world outside their homes. No economic rights were accorded them; whatever property and wealth a woman brought into marriage became her husband's. A wife was totally
dependent upon her husband. Women were considered fragile, delicate and inherently weak and therefore unable to cope with the turbulence and violence of the business world. Instead, they were to stay home and create a place of refuge, a place of peace to which their husbands could escape the secular world of work. In *Woman and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, Jenni Calder writes:

> the Victorian view of the home was precisely of a haven isolated from the trials and temptations of the 'real' world outside. Women presided over this haven, partly because that was preeminently where they ought to be, but also ... because they could not be trusted in the outside world. (13)

Although women were seen as pillars of Christian strength and virtue, they were also viewed as too weak to cope with the outside world. Calder notes that moral strength was clearly not sufficient protection in itself from society's pitfalls and dangers. Women were simultaneously the supporting pillars and the helpless parasites of society. (13)

In each of the three novels examined in this study, Buck attempts to create a female protagonist who stays in
the home, not as a parasite but as a strong, intelligent, and independent individual.

Each of the main women characters endeavors to find or create a home in situations where she has been otherwise excluded or denied a place of belonging. In each novel the woman's search for home, for a place where she belongs, ends with the woman finding or creating, somewhat successfully, both a physical and emotional home where she is comfortable and where, we are led to believe, she can continue to develop as an individual in control of her own destiny as well as in harmony with the society in which she lives. However, Buck has difficulty creating independent female characters who live inside homes which are also inhabited by men.

Buck's female protagonists are not based on the eighteenth and nineteenth century literary portrayal of women. She does not write out of the Jane Eyre-George Eliot-Charlotte Bronte tradition. Her female protagonists do not escape into passivity, madness, suicide, or illness and death as the female characters seem to do in such works as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Kate Chopin's The Awakening, Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse and Iris Murdoch's An Accidental Man. Nor are there any indications from the narrator, other characters or the female protagonists that their
questioning of and revolt against the nineteenth-century expectations for women turns them into witches, bitches, or monsters. Instead, their small acts of rebellion against men's idealized view of women seem natural and understandable given the circumstances in which they are placed. In fact, Buck's female characters seem more like the Chinese women she knew during her forty years in China. In Of Men and Women, she writes of the Chinese women, whose place was in the home and whose home had, through the centuries, become the place where "the real life of the nation went on" (12). Of these women she wrote:

Woman handed down to woman a vast lore of history, culture, ritual, and practical knowledge which educated them and made them a part of the great national whole. But more valuable than any actual knowledge was the quiet and conscious conviction Chinese women have always had of their own worth. Look at a Chinese woman anywhere in the world, and you will see a human being of personality and poise who apologizes for nothing that she is or does.... She knows her irreducible value as a woman. She does not worry about herself as
compared to man. She accepts her difference and knows herself equal to him. (13)

Although Buck's female protagonists in these three novels are not Chinese, they have this sense of their own value. When they rebel against the prescribed behavior of society's home-angel, they are not being witchy, bitchy, or monstrous, but are maintaining their sense of individual worth. Within the contexts of their particular circumstances, they are able to successfully question the home-angel concept because they do not question their own worth or equality.

Although the homes these characters want to create can be described in the same terms as the homes described by Van de Wetering, and although they appear to fill many of the responsibilities of true women, they are not mirror images of the home-angel nor of Welter's true woman. Through quiet acts of revolt against those concepts, Buck's characters convey the message that the idealized image of woman is only an image, not a reality. In these three novels, Buck questions the validity of the home-angel concept. She places a woman in the home and then tries to show that that woman is not only a provider, nurturer, and giver of unquestioning love, but is also a woman of intelligence who has interests other than her husband. She wants her female protagonists to be
individuals willing to fulfil the responsibilities of wives and mothers, but unwilling to exist only as images. We sense a tension and a conflict for Buck's readers, as well as for her female protagonists, when these two concepts--the independence and equality of women versus the hoped-for willingness of women to remain at home without power or status--are written into the same character. This conflict is also evident in Buck's non-fiction writing dealing with the place of women in American society.

Buck discusses her philosophy of women and home throughout her book, To My Daughters, With Love. For her, men and women are equal and have equal responsibility for the progress and security of society. She believes education and employment must be equally available to both sexes, and that the different attributes and contributions of both men and women must be equally valued. She also believes that women are responsible for home and believes that "if she is married and certainly if she has small children," a woman should stay at home (Daughters 180). For Buck, home is created by the weaving together of many strands: nurture, acceptance, love, serenity, and the assurance of having a place to belong. In her writing, it is a woman who is the creator of home, a woman who seeks to bring calmness and acceptance and love into her own
life and the lives of any others she may be responsible for, a woman who does the weaving which creates home. Buck's description of home and the way in which she defines a woman's role in that home seem to reflect many of the nineteenth-century social concepts of home and women. At the same time, her women characters question, through their actions more than through any social or inner dialogue, the lack of power and status they experience when they use their energies to create homes.

As examined in the three novels of this study, Buck's initial understanding of home and of the role of the home-angel, based on the nineteenth-century concept, changes from home as a static concept defined by the home-angel tradition in All Under Heaven to a more fluid concept of home defined by an individual to meet that individual's emotional and physical needs in The Goddess Abides, to, in The Time Is Noon, an individual's concept of home defined as a place where those sharing a common living space are able to mature, to learn, and to grow at their own pace in an atmosphere of respect, acceptance, encouragement, and love. The idea of home, then, changes according to each female protagonist's growing awareness of her own needs and her attempts to meet those needs.

The female protagonist of All Under Heaven is Nadya MacNeil, a wife and mother who is creating home for her
family in a country foreign to her. For Nadya, home is the place she creates, the place where she can provide, for her children and herself, the stability she has never known. Of the female protagonists in these three novels, Nadya (the main female character in a story told from her husband's point-of-view) is closest to the ideal home-angel of mid-nineteenth-century society. Her focus, directed away from herself, is on her husband and their children. This novel shows clearly that the home-angel concept works best in the presence of a husband.

In The Goddess Abides, Edith Chardman, mother of two grown children, is newly widowed. Now that it is no longer necessary to create a home for a family, now that she is alone and does not have to mirror the expectations of her husband, she redefines home as she begins an introspective journey towards an understanding of who she is. The focus of her life changes from outward (husband and children) to inward. As she focuses on her needs, she endeavors to make a home which is exclusively for her, a place apart from the world where she can pursue her interests at her pace without having to consider the wants, comforts, or needs of anyone else unless she chooses to. That her attempt is not altogether successful
serves to emphasize the contradiction and conflict sensed but not openly admitted in Nadya MacNeil of *All Under Heaven*.

Joan Richards, protagonist in *The Time Is Noon*, is a young woman endeavoring to replicate her childhood home. Her definition of home is based on the tradition of her mother's home, rather than on any criteria she has developed out of her own experiences. She expects home to be the place where she will receive both physical and emotional comfort and security. She does not, at first, realize the responsibility she has to create such a home. As she gains insight into her role as a creator of home, she struggles to free herself of the expectations of society in order to create a home in which she can function as an individual. Her success is a direct result of her willingness to acknowledge the contradiction between her role as a wife and her wholeness as a person.

Each of these three women--Nadya, Edith, and Joan--rebels against the traditional expectations of women, against society's traditional view of woman as the "home-angel," against the idea that woman's role is to fulfill other people's dreams and expectations while repressing and ignoring and denying her own. Instead, these three women grow emotionally and are able to create a home, a place of belonging for themselves and, where applicable,
their families. These female characters are aware of responsibilities to other people in their lives and each takes care of those responsibilities, but not at the expense of her own needs.

Although this progression at first glance seems to be the stuff of fiction, the characters' search for belonging parallels the experiences of Buck herself. Both biographical information and publication information available for these novels concur. Although published in 1973, All Under Heaven, according to Buck's epilogue, was begun much earlier, but she "did not know then, years ago, how to complete that novel" (AUH 199). All Under Heaven includes Buck's search for a house, a physical and emotional place where she could belong, when she left China and moved permanently to the United States in 1934, as related in Section IV of My Several Worlds, her account of searching for and finding her American home, Green Hills Farm in Pennsylvania.

The Goddess Abides, also frankly autobiographical, tells the story of the death of Buck's second husband and her acceptance of and adjustment to the sudden lack of belonging which she experienced (Sicherman 118). It is Buck's mature realization that a woman cannot create a home for herself until she understands what her needs are. It is also an expression of her understanding that a home
must be consciously created as a place where emotional as well as physical needs can be met.

Published in 1966, The Time Is Noon was actually written and prepared for publication several years earlier. However, because the novel deals with her relationship with her first husband, John Lossing Buck, her publisher and second husband, Richard J. Walsh, felt it was too personal to be published at that time. Buck agreed and so publication was delayed. In fictional terms the book tells of her personal searching for a place to belong (Buck, Skies, 191).

The chronology of the writing of these three books supports the internal evidence of Buck working with an idea, defining and redefining it as the experiences of life enlarge and interpret the world for her. We are able to examine, through these three characters, Buck's questioning of the assigned role for women and her search for a place to belong, a search for who she is and her place in the world. Hers is a search that echoes the search of many American woman.
Notes

1 One note as to internal documentation needs to be made. Because several of the sources used are Buck's own writing, I have used the initials of those books which are the subject of this study, rather than the titles themselves. Thus, The Time is Noon is documented as TIN; All Under Heaven is AUH; and The Goddess Abides is TGA.
Who Is Hiding in His Story?

Of the three women analyzed in this study--Nadya MacNeil (All Under Heaven), Edith Chardman (The Goddess Abides), and Joan Richards (The Time Is Noon)--Nadya MacNeil comes closest to being the "settled, ministering 'home-angel' inside, the benign and pious and fixed-in-place mother" described by Van de Wetering (13). Nadya's interests are her husband and children. She uses her talents and energy to create a place of comfort and happiness for herself and the members of her family.

Nadya's "insideness" in the home is reinforced by her position in All Under Heaven. Her interests and activities are focused on her family and on creating a home of love and permanence for them. In addition, Nadya is not the protagonist of All Under Heaven, as Joan and Edith are of their respective novels. Both The Time Is Noon and The Goddess Abides, as we shall see, define the home-angel primarily in terms of the woman, while All Under Heaven defines the home-angel more in terms of the husband, in this case, Malcolm MacNeil--Nadya's husband. Thus Nadya, almost hidden in Malcolm's story, is revealed to us in Part I mainly through Malcolm's thoughts, conversations, and inter-actions with her. Because Nadya's story, her experiences, even her childhood are
revealed to us filtered through Malcolm's perception, interpretation, and memory, we do not see the real Nadya. Instead, we see Malcolm's idea of Nadya—an image, rather than the real woman. In Part II, Buck abandons the limited narrator point of view, allowing us glimpses inside the minds of other characters, including Nadya. But the reality of the woman Nadya can only be guessed at because those thoughts of Nadya that we are allowed to glimpse reinforce our perception of Nadya as the home-angel, the creator and maintainer of a place of refuge and safety—the MacNeil home.

Even though Nadya is a supporting character in Malcolm's story, it is her vision, her desires, and her work that create the MacNeil home. Creating a place of security, stability, permanence, and love is her task and her pleasure, or at least that is what MacNeil believes and sees.

As Malcolm thinks about Nadya and the circumstances of her childhood and youth, he helps us understand her dedication to creating a home of safety and love for her family. The narrator introduces us to Nadya as she and her family arrive in New York after being uprooted from their home in Peking by the Communist Revolution. This move is Nadya's third escape from political unrest. When she was five, she and her parents (members of the Russian
aristocracy) left their lands and home near Moscow to escape the Bolshevik Revolution. Nadya grew up in Harbin, Manchuria, but when the Japanese invaded Manchuria she and her parents fled to Peking. Here she met and married Malcolm, a member of the United States diplomatic corps. When the American embassy closed in Peking, Malcolm had talked about staying in Peking, but Nadya, afraid of Communists, whether Russian or Chinese, begged Malcolm to move the family to his country--America.

Nadya's unsettled childhood and the insecurity of her life as a refugee in China determine the type of home she wants to create. Although she does not have the memories, as Joan Richards does, of a safe and secure childhood home on which to pattern her home, she does remember the homeless and destitute Russian refugees for whom "tenderness was the touchstone.... Never to wound one another, never to seem unloving or unkind" (AUH 140-41). From this background comes Nadya's belief "in love, the large and enveloping love that accepts all human beings as they are. Love was as essential to her as air..." (AUH 141). This attitude of acceptance of and love for people is a mark of the home-angel "who," according to Van de Wetering, "dispensed what was called 'disinterestedness' or 'disinterested love,' a love which was given without qualification..." to members of her family (22-23). In
her role as home-angel, Nadya wants to create a stable, permanent, peaceful home full of love, a place where her husband and children will feel loved and accepted.

Not only does Nadya exhibit characteristics of a home-angel, but the home she endeavors to create has many of the characteristics common to the nineteenth-century concept of home as described by Van de Wetering:

The new American home of the Victorian period, then, encompassed and confirmed that which was considered honorable, permanent, natural, and nurturing in the world.... The home, then came to represent tranquility and stability" (28).

Through the activities she engages in and the choices she makes, Nadya does create a permanent, tranquil, and stable home for herself and her family. Her desire for such a home is evident, not only in the type of atmosphere she tries to create within her home, but also in the materials from which she wants it constructed. When Malcolm asks what kind of house she wants to live in, Nadya tells him, "Not a wooden house, please ... I feel the wooden house is too quick to pass. A fire, a storm--it is gone!" (AUH 71-72). When he tells her that America is a country of trees and most houses are wood, she reminds him that all her life she has lived in houses made of brick or stone or, as a refugee in Manchuria, beaten
earth (AUH 72). Wanting to live in a stone or brick house underscores Nadya's need for the symbolic permanence implied in stone or brick.

In response, Malcolm searches for, finds, and buys a hundred and ninety-two year old fieldstone house which needs some renovating. The age of the house and the stone it is made of speak of permanence, as does its construction. "Under the house were deep foundations of stone, the solid stone of the fields.... The vast chimney went solidly through the house and here in the cellar spread nine feet of rock" (AUH 83-84). The sheer mass and solidness of the stone serve to emphasize the permanence and stability of the home that Nadya intends to create for her family. An inscription found on an inside panel of the front door--"I, Joseph Hechtmann, make and work this door. April 6, 1778. Today I marry my true love, Agnessa" (AUH 82)--attests to the age and permanence of the stone house. This suggests that in this house which was built with love and has stood strong and sound through nearly two centuries, Nadya will be able to create a strong and permanent home for herself and her family. She will create a new home on a solid foundation of stone and a tradition of love.

Once the renovation of the old stone house is completed, Nadya begins to turn the house into a home.
She begins by using a traditional Russian greeting from her childhood to make a celebration of the family's first official entrance into their new home. As the family stands just inside the entrance, Nadya gives each person a piece of salted bread to eat. Next, she has each one take a sip of red wine from the same silver cup, then walks over to the large fireplace and pours the last bit of wine on the stone hearth. "It is a libation," she said (AUH 91).

The bread and salt are symbolic, as is the wine. Bread is regarded as necessary for sustaining life; salt, of course, is a preservative and is considered necessary for a long life. Nadya's use of salted bread suggests that in this house life will be preserved and what is needed to sustain life will be available. The libation of wine has religious overtones, echoing as it does the pouring of a liquid offering to deity, as if Nadya requests heavenly recognition and blessings for her home and family. One of the duties of a home-angel is to provide an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, a place where family members might renew themselves spiritually and mentally. The religious overtones of the wine libation seem to suggest that Nadya will fulfill this function of a home-angel for her family.
This traditional Russian greeting connects Nadya's heritage with the family's present and future, strengthens feelings of family between the four of them, and gives a sense of permanence to the act of moving into their new house. In addition, this ceremony, initiated and led by Nadya, strengthens her position in the family as the individual responsible for the home.

Through this celebration of welcoming her family into their new house, Nadya fulfills the traditional function of the home-angel, providing for the emotional and material needs of her family and thus fulfilling the role of "the saintly mother ... who seemed to provide the image of sacred provender" (Van de Wetering 28). One of these images which Nadya displays is that of the "bounteous mother" (Van de Wetering 27) whose home was a "place of great earthy plenty" (Van de Wetering 26). Frequently in nineteenth-century literature depicting the American home "inside--as on the overflowing table--and outside--as in the productive garden, the busy barnyard, and the bountiful field--the theme of abundance was a standard adjunct to ideal domestic settings" (Van de Wetering 26). Nadya creates an example of this ideal home as she fills the role of the bounteous provider, expressing her love and caring through the food she provides. She serves her family homemade bread, commenting that "always in this
house we will have good bread. I will make it" (AUH 90). Nadya uses cream from her own cows to churn the butter her family uses. Eggs are freshly gathered each morning. As she serves the first mid-day meal of "broiled beef, sliced thin, the salad, the baked potatoes" (AUH 104), she nourishes her family with good food and with beauty, placing fresh flowers on the table. And when her son Peter brings friends home after school to practice football, she invites them to eat "some chocolate cake, if you please, and I have made some ice cream myself. It is better made at home as I do it--" (AUH 128).

But it is not just good meals that are evidence of Nadya as a provider. In addition, her home includes Van de Wetering's "busy barnyard" (26). When Malcolm tells her that he would like to go on a lecture tour, leaving her and the children at home, she is agreeable--with conditions: "Malcolm, while you are gone, I should like to make here a real farm" (AUH 162). He has reservations--she is not a farmer; she will need help; she must be careful with money. For each argument she has an answer. She says a farm is needed "to keep me busy.... While you are gone I shall make such a farm and take care of the children, and then I shall not be lonely" (AUH 162). She reminds him that for generations her family had always lived on the land as landowners until they had to flee
Russia, and that her "father said he was never again so happy after he left his land" (AUH 163), implying that farming is in her blood, and she will be successful because of her ancestors who lived on the land. As for help, she will find a young farmer to help. A small stone house stands on their property where he could stay. And she is surprised that Malcolm would mention money: "Certainly I shall not spend more money than I can save" (AUH 163).

This picture of Nadya as a farmer, as a woman who nourishes her family through the work of her own hands, places her closer to the women of the eighteenth-century whose labor was necessary for the literal survival of their families than to the nineteenth-century true woman whose energy was spent supervising servants and doing needlework. Because the true woman did not contribute to the economic stability of her family, she was totally dependent upon her husband. In creating a woman who makes meaningful contributions to the family's economic stability by baking bread, churning butter, and raising cows and chickens, Buck has created a woman whose behavior questions the validity of the concept of a true woman as dependent, fragile, retiring, and in need of protection (Hymowitz 67).
Nadya makes a great success of her farm. She manages during the months Malcolm is away "to create in the farm a bursting center of life" (AUH 189) with a half dozen cows to milk, chickens, and a garden. As Nadya works to create her idea of home, the concept of the nineteenth-century home as a place "of orderly bounty, the riches provided by the good earth and a good, human cultivator" (Van de Wetering 27) becomes a reality. As her home becomes this place of orderliness and plenty, we recognize, not Malcolm, but Nadya as the provider for the family.

Nadya's home is more than a place of permanence where the family members are secure in their knowledge that Nadya will provide nourishment for them. It is also a place of comfort, repose, and serenity. From the few times the furnishings of the house are referred to, we can sense the visual order and beauty that Nadya has created. When the family moves into the house, Nadya takes Malcolm to his room which she has furnished as a surprise for him:

Thus when she led him to his room, which he had supposed would be empty, he saw a large bed, the sort of bed he would exactly like, four strong posts of maple, hand-carved, and a man's chest of drawers to match, old and carefully made, and by the fireplace an easy chair with brown leather cushions. (AUH 91-93)
She has furnished his room to suit his love of fine workmanship and of uncluttered space. It is also another example of the ways in which Nadya acts as a provider for her family, thus reinforcing the essentialness of her contributions to both the economic and emotional stability, of the family.

The home of a true woman or a home-angel was supposed to be a place of repose and of tranquility. The few descriptions we have of the interior of the MacNeil home show that Nadya arranged and decorated rooms to make them comfortable and attractive places where family members would come to experience serenity and beauty. Once again it is Malcolm who reveals this additional facet of Nadya's contribution to the family. Malcolm thinks that Nadya "had a coordinating eye, a sense of ensemble, she could imagine how a room must look and then shape it to design and she loved the task" (AUH 105). A short description of the living room shows that Nadya's home is a place to relax, to be comfortable:

They were in the big living room ... a place now made bright by many windows, and where delightful American chairs and sofas invited repose, yet where the tapestries and painted scrolls that she had brought from Peking looked not at all amiss. (AUH 135-36)
This restful and comfortable home is what Malcolm remembers while he is on tour, and it is to this home and his family that Malcolm's memory turns. The night of his first lecture in a strange town, he thinks about "the warm center now hundreds of miles away, where Nadya and the children lived and waited for his return" (AUH 170). At the end of his tour, his feeling for home is again evident:

He was exhausted, spent, emptied of all the inner richness with which he began his journey. There was nothing left in him except the desire for home, and for the few human beings who were his own" (AUH 182).

At the train station, waiting for the town taxi to pick him up and take him home,

He sat down on the slatted bench in the waiting room and gave way to weariness. It was more than physical. He needed an inner reconstruction. His spirit was eaten away, disillusioned.... Somewhere his own understanding of [his own people] had failed. His approach had presumed too much. They knew less than he had thought they did. To get home, to live with Nadya again and be with his children and restore himself.... (AUH 182-83)
For Malcolm, home serves as a refuge from the world, from his feelings of despair and disillusionment. We never learn what home is for Nadya, only that she wants a stone or brick house. Is the home she creates for her family the home she wants for herself? Buck gives us no help with this question. Nadya, reflected through Malcolm, remains hidden, lost. But the home she creates for Malcolm and the children does not.

The home Nadya creates is the sort of home John Demos saw as a mid-nineteenth-century home which was "a bastion of peace, of repose, of orderliness" to which Malcolm can retire "for refreshment, renewal, and inner fortification" (51). For Malcolm the home Nadya creates echoes the nineteenth-century perception of home as "a haven isolated from the trials and temptations of the 'real world' outside (Calder 13). Buck connects Nadya's home with these nineteenth century descriptions of home through Malcolm's thoughts. As he travels the last mile or so before home, he sees

his house set on the hillside. It looked tranquil, a patient edifice of stone, sheltering generation after generation of men and women and their children.... Here was something his own, here he could live and work with freedom, whatever was outside. (AUH 183)
Nadya has successfully created a home where Malcolm can come to be renewed, "to rejuvenate [his] basic trust in the world (Van de Wetering 25).

Malcolm is not the only one who finds Nadya's home a place of renewal and repose. The calm and orderly atmosphere of home makes it possible for Peter to spend time alone, pursuing his own interests. Because Peter wants to be accepted by the American boys in his school, he hides his love of learning. It is only at home that he feels safe enough to enjoy "his books, and he often worked far beyond what was required, keeping this secret from his fellows and even from his teachers" (AUH 125).

It is not just the other members of the family who find home a comfortable place to be, a place where they are nurtured and loved, a place where they can be happy. Buck would like Nadya herself to be content and happy, but we are not sure that she is. We do not doubt that she feels the love of her family and enjoys the process and tasks of creating home. However, we sense that there needs to be more to Nadya's life when Malcolm asks her if she is happy, and she replies "Oh, entire [sic] ... I am washing the dishes and Leora makes the beds and cleans upstairs" (AUH 191). Her answer seems less an indication of her happiness than of her desire to not examine her feelings about keeping house. Because we sense neither
anger nor frustration in Nadya, we can conjecture that she enjoys farming and gardening, teaching her children, and pleasing Malcolm. She does these things cheerfully, but we can't help wondering why her reasons for being happy do not also include such possibilities as the feeling of success she enjoys as she perfects her performance of a piano concerto by Tchaikovsky and the feeling of accomplishment she may feel as her children successfully master the lessons in music which she teaches them. Again we are reminded that we do not see Nadya because Malcolm does not report her to us.

If Nadya does feel frustration or anger at her life, we do not know it because both Malcolm's thoughts and the absence of anger or words and scenes of frustration in the novel convey the idea that Nadya is willing to make a home of comfort and serenity and calmness for her family: "Malcolm blessed the day that had brought him Nadya, she who lightened all the darkness, a wellspring of love and gaiety" (AUH 28). When we remind ourselves of Nadya's life as a refugee, a woman without security or home, we can understand Nadya's willingness to find happiness in creating a home for Malcolm and the children. In this way Nadya seems somewhat related to Barbara Harris' description of a true woman: "The essence of her role lay
in sacrificing herself in the service of her husband, children, and other relatives" (34).

This sense of service can be seen as Nadya, in her role of home-angel cum true woman, makes home a place where Malcolm can write the books about China that he feels are important. Because Nadya deals with family and domestic concerns, Malcolm is free to go into the small stone building across the yard from the house and spend the day writing the book that would explain China and the Asian mind to his countrymen. Malcolm is aware that it is Nadya who makes it possible for him to work: "Nadya was bearing almost alone the tasks of the house and the children, sparing him, as he well knew, the many interruptions of the day ..." (AUH 157).

Nadya also displays another characteristic of a true woman when she expects her children to be responsible for certain household tasks and when she shares her knowledge of music with them. According to Welter, mothers were expected to teach their children uplifting values and to introduce them to culture (207, 209). During summer vacation, Nadya teaches Peter and Lise to work:

Peter cut the grass and fed the chickens Nadya had somehow accumulated.... She was teaching Lise to clean house and make beds and help with
the mending. She was giving them both piano
lessons, too.... (AUH 158)

Nadya focuses her talents and her time and her abilities on the home and the family. Welter, writing of the characteristics of a true woman, comments that "a woman's whole interest should be focused on her husband" (208). In addition, the true women was also to be an ideal mother (Barbara Harris 33). Nadya focuses her interest on her husband--and her children. The home she creates is peaceful and thus Malcolm can write. She teaches the children more than how to work. She adds music to their lives through piano lessons.

In these many ways--providing food, peace, education, love--Nadya meets many of the criteria of a home-angel and a true woman. But she does not meet all the criteria. She is not passive and submissive, always agreeing with Malcolm as a true woman should: "Submission was perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women" (Welter 199). The Young Lady's Book, quoted by Welter, emphasized the need for submissiveness on the part of a woman:

It is, however, certain, that in whatever situation of life a woman is placed from her cradle to her grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper, and humility of mind, are required from her. (199)
It is obvious that Nadya did not read this particular admonition to women. Though she created a peaceful and loving home, though she did her best to "lighten [Malcolm's] cares" and "like a guardian angel, [watch] over his interests" (qtd. in Welter 208), she did not give up her sense of self. Her status as a person in her own right is established in the opening paragraphs of the book. As the ship the MacNeil's are traveling on enters New York harbor, Nadya is described as is Malcolm's reaction to her:

The east wind was blowing sharply across the Atlantic and Nadya's profile was all but lost in her flying hair, pale, yellow, straight and fine. She had cut it shoulder length only yesterday and he did not know when he could forgive her for it. He had supposed, when she said that she was going to the ship's beauty shop, that she would have only her usual shampoo.... But to come back with it cut off!"

(AUH 3-4)

Because this is Malcolm's story, we do not know how Nadya reacts to Malcolm's displeasure. However, since the incident is not mentioned again, we can surmise that Nadya acts independently frequently enough for Malcolm to accept her decisions even if he is not always pleased with them.
Other examples in the book point to her sense of who she is apart from Malcolm's wife. When she tells Malcolm that she wants a farm and he mounts objections, she answers each of his objections and ends up with an active, working farm. At another point in the novel, Nadya approaches Malcolm with a request that he has already turned down, and she, obviously in this case, needs his cooperation to achieve her goal. She tells him that she wants "something entirely American. In short a child, born here in this house, American complete, not knowing Peking at all" (AUH 136). Very aware that he is near fifty and Peter and Lise are thirteen and eleven respectively, he protests that a baby growing up "in a house with a lot of adults or semi-adults will be lonely." Nadya readily admits that two children would be "much better" and tells him that he always makes her happy (AUH 136-37). Although a woman is supposed to do her duty and submit to her husband, she is not supposed to be the aggressor. But, Nadya knows what she wants, asks for it, and convinces Malcolm to let her have it. Later, when Malcolm asks her to wait until after he has finished writing his book to get pregnant, she answers him with determination, "I say no, Malcolm! I cannot wait upon a book to begin my new living" (139). Several months later Thomas MacNeil is born.

The most telling evidence of Nadya's independence and
lack of submissiveness, however, is her response when Malcolm asks her not to tell people she is Russian. His request comes because, during the time period in which the book is written (probably 1947-48), people in the United States equated being a Russian with being a Communist. Nadya tells Malcolm, "How can I live, Malcolm, trying to hide what I am? I am not one to hide. I love Russia, though I am not Communist. It is I who do not understand why they cannot know this simple truth" (AUH 112).

Nadya MacNeil maintains the sense of who she is while she accepts the role of home-angel for her family. She comforts, counsels, and cares for her husband and two children. She is the bountiful provider, serving them food provided through her own labor. For Malcolm

the house was shelter and comfort and safety. It was a deep reserve of human love, Nadya the center and the source, and in her radiance they basked and love grew in manifold life" (AUH 188).

Nadya is able to care for her family in an atmosphere of peace and security because she has created a place where she feels at home, a place where she belongs, a place where she feels secure. Even her "hidden" place in the novel is indicative of the safety and security she feels in her role as the quintessential "settled, ministering
'home-angel' inside, the benign and pious and fixed-in-place mother" (Van de Wetering 13).
Is She an Individual or Home-Angel?

In All Under Heaven, Buck writes about home in terms of family. The MacNeils need a place of security and stability. Nadya MacNeil's task, to create a home for herself, her children, and her husband, is completed as she turns an old farmhouse into a secure and loving home. She is content in her role as a home-angel and a creator of home.

In The Goddess Abides, however, Buck advances the notion of a woman's responsibility to form a home, and writes in terms of the individual woman. Edith Chardman, for all intents and purposes, has no family. Her husband, Arnold Chardman, is dead and her son and daughter are grown and gone from home. Edith has lost her place as wife and mother; her role as a home-angel seems no longer valid. Edith's task, then, is to find where she belongs, what her role is to be. Unlike Nadya, who does not explicitly question who she is or what her role is, Edith does question who she is and what her role is. The Goddess Abides chronicles her struggle to determine what her role is, who she is, and where she belongs, not as a wife and mother, but as an individual without responsibility for the well-being of others. Edith's struggle is similar to that shared by many twentieth-century women--young and old. They too want to define who
they are as individuals as they try to balance the multiple roles—mother, daughter, wife, career woman—that society expects them to fulfill.

Edith, a widow at 42, lives a solitary, but luxurious, life complete with chauffeur and servants. She owns two houses: a stone ski lodge in Vermont and a stately brick house in Philadelphia. Although her two children are grown and raising their own children in distant cities, her life is not devoid of companionship. She sometimes lunches with Amelia Darwent, a childhood friend who lives on the estate next to Edith's Philadelphia place. And two men love Edith. One is Edwin Steadley, a seventy-six year old philosopher who asks to share her bed, explaining that "We inhabit these bodies, my darling. They are our only means of conveying love" (TGA 36). The second, Jared Barnow, is a twenty-four year old physicist who combines inventive genius, talent, training, and education in engineering, biology, and art to create medical instruments and prosthetics for handicapped people. Jared, insisting that "I shall never love anyone as I love you" (TGA 172), wants to marry Edith. Against this background of luxury and love Edith begins a journey of self-discovery.

Now that she is a widow and her children no longer need her, Edith begins discovering who she will be and
what role she will play by recognizing who and what she was in the past. Thinking of herself as a wife and mother, she realizes that although she had been young, "she had been a good mother. She had seen her children through early babyhood, childhood, and adolescence .... She had enjoyed both functions [wife and mother]" (TGA 12). Before she was widowed she had been a wife, mother, daughter, sister "dividing herself perforce, though willingly, for she had enjoyed each relationship and treasured her memories" (TGA 22).

Although Edith is not depicted in her role as a home-angel, her thoughts about herself as mother and wife show that she does fit Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's understanding of woman in the role of home-angel: "It is the surrender of herself--of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both--that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act..." (25). We see how much of herself Edith surrenders in molding herself to fit her husband's idea of what she ought to be:

In the shelter of his [Arnold's] superior age, his success as a famous lawyer, she had felt no stimulus except to be what he wished her to be, his wife, the mother of intelligent and reasonably obedient children, a charming hostess, a figure conventionally correct in the
conventional and correct society of an old conservative city. (TGA 52)

In being the "conventionally correct" wife, Edith gave up much that was her essential self. Only after Arnold's death, when she is coping with the lack of emotional place, the lack of belonging to someone, does Edith become aware of her sacrifices. She remembers how she prepared for a solitary life when she knew her husband was going to die. At the Vermont ski lodge, she had the hired man, Sam, build book shelves to hold the "books which she had always wanted to read and never had time for while Arnold lived" (TGA 11). Later, after Arnold's death, she begins to rebuild her own life, a life that had not been her own as a wife:

She revived in her life, now solitary, not only the music of the great, but her own musical talent, dormant after years of wifehood and motherhood and the daily business of being Arnold's wife .... She had hungered, too, for languages, many languages ... and so she had begun once more to study French. (TGA 11)

Edith gave up more than music and books as Arnold's wife. Although green was her favorite color, she could not wear it because Arnold did not like it. Although she loved nightgowns of lace and silk, she wore pajamas
because Arnold thought they suited her better. She would have liked to live by the sea, but Arnold said the sound of the waves would keep him awake. Arnold decided how the furniture should be arranged and what they would eat. "It occurred to her [Edith] that she was in fact repressed, although unaware of repression" (TGA 53). She wonders what sort of person she is and what her own tastes and interests are.

Susan Koppelman Cornillon, in the preface to *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*, defines female characters in fiction as heroes if they "are portrayed as whole people or as people in the process of creating or discovering their wholeness, of women seeking and finding other metaphors for existence than men..." (Preface XI). Edith is a woman in the process of discovering who she is as an individual separate from her husband. She realizes that she can become "a different person now, someone she had not known, less shy, less retiring, more concerned with her looks, with her mind--in short, with growth" (TGA 52).

The first active step towards becoming her own self is a tour of the Philadelphia house. As Edith walks slowly through the rooms that she has lived in as a child and a wife, she realizes that she does not care for the house nor its furnishings; none of it is "her idea of a
house for herself.... Grandparents and parents had built it, had filled it with the furniture of their own age, valuable, heavy, immovable" (TGA 53-54). She decides to build a new house "because," as she explains to her friend Amelia, "I want to rid myself of old encumbrances" (TGA 54).

Although Edith already has two houses, neither of those houses is "hers." They were built for other people, just as the person she has been for many years has been a person for other people. She decides that in order to discover herself she will do only what pleases her and in this way rid herself of the "furniture," the "old encumbrances" of her husband's likes, dislikes, expectations and rules.

The Philadelphia house represents Edith's ties, not just to her husband, but to her childhood and to her grandparents. In deciding to build a new house and possibly sell her childhood home, Edith is giving voice and action to her feelings about finding out who she is and doing what she wants.

In addition, she recognizes that although she designed the vacation house in Vermont, it is no more hers than is the house in Philadelphia. She had designed it for her husband, not herself. At one point in the novel she is "moved by a sudden and inexplicable impulse" (TGA
98), and offers the house as a gift to her daughter, explaining that it is "too lonely" for her (TGA 99). Buck does not overtly connect this with Edith's jettisoning of her old life, but the implication can be made that giving away the Vermont house is evidence that Edith is changing and growing beyond the person she was when her roles in life were those of wife and mother. It appears that until her widowhood, Edith had existed "only in relation to" her husband, that she had been a "public role and not [a] private [woman]" (Russ 5). While her husband was alive she did not question her role, nor did she question if she was only a role, an image for her husband. However, as she begins to look for who she is, as symbolized by her decision to build a house for herself, she gives up playing the role her husband expected her to play. Getting rid of the house she designed for him frees her from limits which he had set for her. Edith perhaps intuits that when she becomes a new person, she will want a new place to live--a place that is free of her husband's influence and the memories of the limits he imposed upon her.

Buck uses the planning of the new house to emphasize insights gained at times of emotional growth that occur in Edith's life. The house becomes an outward expression of the inner changes Edith experiences as she begins to find
out who she is, not in terms of someone else's demands or desires, but in terms of her own interests, likes, and dislikes.

One such change occurs when Edith agrees to become Edwin's lover:

> It remained incredible that she had accepted Edwin, had actually allowed him in her bed, thereby in that simple act asserting independence of the past years during which she had known no man intimately except her husband. (TGA 57).

Although Edith sees this act as symbolic of her independence, as readers we sense that she is still defining who she is by a man in her life. Instead of becoming her own self, she seems to exchange her husband's image of her for Edwin's image of her. Earlier in the novel, after the first time Edwin came to her bed, Edith is aware of being passive: "Let life lead her where it would! She felt herself floating, passive, waiting for whom, for what, she did not know, she would not ask" (TGA 39). Edwin becomes an important part of her life, sharing with her his philosophical attempts to understand what he believes are the eternal nature of love and the transient nature of death. She takes on a role wholly different
from that of wife or mother, becoming his devoted lover and confidant.

A few months after she and Edwin have become lovers, Edith receives a call from one of Edwin's sons. He calls to tell her that his father is dying. Edith cannot decide if it would be better to be with Edwin this one last time or better for him and his children to be together without her. In an attempt to escape the need for making a decision and thus having to accept the reality of Edwin's death and the loss of another of her roles, Edith drives for many hours, eventually ending up along the North Jersey shore. It is here and at this emotional time that Edith finds a piece of beach front property on which she wants to build her new house.

Finding the property for her own house at the time of Edwin's death and so far from her childhood home is symbolic of the great changes she is making as she continues to discover who she is and where she belongs. She has found a location for her new house. This suggests that she will find a place for the new her, the person who is no longer a wife and no longer Edwin's lover and confidant.

Another change in Edith's perception occurs when on an autumn visit, her daughter Millicent brings the news that she, her husband, and their children will be moving
to California before Christmas. Edith realizes that she will be alone for Christmas and begins to think of all the changes (one of them the change in Christmas traditions) which Arnold's death has brought to her. She recognizes that the Philadelphia house is exactly the same but that everything in it has changed:

It had really been his house, then! At least without him all its ways and habits were meaningless. If she continued to live here, she would live in a growing melancholy that in the end would stifle her. (TGA 99-100)

Edith recognizes that although she has decided to become herself, not Arnold's wife or widow, the pattern of her life with him will continue as long as she lives in the house they shared together. Her memories of Arnold, the routines and habits still in place from her life with him impede her journey towards self-discovery.

The intensity of the connection between Edith's old houses, her old roles, and her wanting to be herself is clearly emphasized when she sets off one afternoon in the snow to look at the beach front property for her new house and to sign the papers. As she looks back at her childhood home in Philadelphia, the house where she and her husband Arnold lived after the death of her parents,

She saw for an instant the formidable house of
gray stone, standing like a German baronial castle in the midst of tall dark evergreens. Somehow she must escape that castle, but which way escape lay she did not know. (TGA 101)

It is not merely the house she must escape, but the old ways of thinking, the old roles of mother and wife—which are no longer appropriate. Living in a new house will mean new ways of being and new patterns of thinking which will help Edith become a new person.

Building a new house is not so much an escape from parents and husband, as it is a moving toward self-knowledge. For Edith, "home" includes/encompasses the idea of knowing oneself, being that person, and taking care of that person. For Edith, planning the new house is a means of discovering herself, of validating her worth as a person. She wants to build a place where she can give to herself "the kind of nurture that resulted in self-knowledge, self-realization" (Van de Wetering 25):

The house would be entirely her own. Instead of a guest-room wing, she would have a sunken garden.... She wanted her interests separated by walls and spaces, the library separated from the music room, and especially she wanted a contemplation room whose semicircular windows encompassed the sea.... Where she dined must be
open to gardens and where she slept must be open to the stars. (TGA 61)

In Edith's design of a house with no provisions for other people, we see her determination to become her own person, to take care of her needs, to live her life as she wants to without taking responsibility for the needs or desires of other people.

In the midst of Edith's changing, growing, and becoming, she meets Jared Barnow when he arrives on the doorstep of her ski lodge desperate for a place to stay. He has come to Vermont to ski and is unable to find a room for the night. Contrary to her usual practice, she invites him to eat dinner and then allows him to sleep in Arnold's bedroom. Jared's arrival makes her painfully aware of her loneliness. He is good company, talking of music and books and making her laugh. By the end of the ski week-end, Jared and Edith are friends. He occasionally calls her and sometimes visits her Philadelphia house. As their relationship develops, he takes her skiing, driving, dining, and dancing; he invites her to New York to tour his laboratory and meet the people for whom he designs lifelike prosthetics. Edith is emotionally and physically attracted to Jared, and finds that during the long intervals between his visits he is a constant presence in her thoughts. Once again we see that
Edith, despite wanting to discover herself, continues in a pattern of passivity, responding to the suggestions and wants of a man. She is aware of this conflict between her wish to be her own person and the habit of being what the man in her life wants her to be. Edith struggles to maintain an independence from Jared, refusing to tell him about her new house for fear she will be influenced by his suggestions or criticisms. As a mutual attraction grows between them she tells herself, "I shan't give up my precious freedom to anyone" (TGA 91).

Edith's decision, in the early part of the novel, to find out who she is and what she wants to be is a decision that affirms her value as an individual important in her own right, not just as someone's wife or mother. This latest determination to not give up her freedom to anyone reaffirms that she is seeking to find "other metaphors for existence than men" (Cornillon Preface XI).

Although Edith has determined to concern herself with her likes, her interest, her growth, she, nevertheless and probably unconsciously, provides an atmosphere in which Jared is able to be more himself. He makes this clear when he tells her:

I am conscious in your presence of a beautiful freedom to be myself, to think my own thoughts, plan my work, consider the future--in short, to
live, and more freely even than when I am alone, because you broaden my freedom just by being the person you are, instead of making demands, limiting freedom as other women do. (TGA 118-19)

Jared's description of the effect Edith has on him fits closely the description of a home-angel. Van de Wetering defines the home-angel as the women who provides a place where an individual is free to concentrate "upon the self: self-discovery first, followed by self-acknowledgement, followed by self-realization" (21). And it is "women ... with their special maternal gifts of understanding" who generally provide "the kind of gentle, reassuring presence that engendered easy confession" (Van de Wetering 23). Despite wanting to take care of no one but herself, Edith has assumed some of the responsibilities of a home-angel in her association with Jared.

The climax of their relationship comes months later when Jared rescues Edith from a near-drowning. In the emotional closeness that occurs after this incident, Jared tells Edith that his feelings for her have changed and now he thinks about her to such an extent that he is unable to do his work:

I'm committed to you. I'm not a free man anymore. I've never committed myself in my life before. I've never been possessed. But now I
am. I'm not even sure I like it. What does a man do when he's possessed by a woman? I only know I'd marry you tonight--if I could! (TGA 152)

At this point Jared appears to be the one who is drowning, the one in danger of losing the sense of himself. Edith senses that Jared feels "caught in a web of desire for her, resenting her because he was beginning to know how deeply he loved her" (TGA 152-53). It is her turn to do the rescuing. Edith weighs the happiness and contentment she feels whenever she is with him against the possibility that he would be unable to develop, to invent, and to create to his full potential if they were to marry. She recognizes that as a close and trusted friend she can continue to encourage him, listen to him, and respect his need to come and go as he wants. For Jared, her home, characterized by the elements of the ideal nineteenth-century home, is "a bastion of peace, of repose, of orderliness" (Demos 51). Edith fears that a home they shared together would not be as serene and relaxing, and she worries that as his wife she would place demands on his time and attention which would hamper his ability to work. She believes that they are "two human beings who recognized their complete congeniality, their complete trust" as "components of love" (TGA 172). However, she
decides that she has a responsibility to help Jared develop into the best person he can be and she does not think she can accomplish this as his wife. Much as a part of her wants to marry Jared, she decides not to.

Edith's decision is not, however, a victory for herself as an individual because her reasons for not marrying Jared have nothing to do with taking care of herself. In creating Edith, Buck began by writing of a woman definitely in the process of creating herself, and, so it seems, a woman who chooses to remain free of emotional commitments to a man. That choice for Edith is not an easy one. She enjoys Jared's companionship and is aware of responding physically and emotionally to his attention. Unfortunately for the woman as hero, Buck ends the novel by having Edith make a very strong emotional commitment to Jared of which he is unaware. She takes on a role that goes beyond that of home-angel or a true woman. Instead, she sees her role in his life as that of goddess—a wise, selfless, loving guide who dedicates her life to making sure that he will achieve greatness:

She knew her place now in his life and her duty to love him as only she could. She understood that the more she fulfilled her own life, the more wisdom she could learn, the more she could achieve in herself, the more complete she
became--yes, even the more perfect, the better her love could serve him. And she must be forever the abiding goddess. (TGA 185)

Edith dedicates her life to Jared. She has decided that she must become the best person she possibly can, not for her own growth, but in order to help Jared reach his full potential. The practice and attitude of doing things for her husband, for centering her existence in a man are too heavy and immovable for Edith to change. She now centers her life in Jared. Buck's strong female protagonist, the woman in search of herself, has ended by voluntarily becoming an invisible woman.

Or has she? A hint of unease, of impermanence seems to surround Edith's decision. Throughout the novel she has planned for a new house by the sea. She has chosen and bought a piece of land; she has drawn the plans for that house, but she has not finished the plans. At this point, when she has determined what her role and her position are, Edith is able to finish the plans for her house. And these plans do not include room for anyone else--not guests, not children or grandchildren, not even Jared. In All Under Heaven, Nadya MacNeil, though she maintains a certain sense of herself, is content in her role of home-angel. In this novel, Edith has made a conscious decision to function as a home-angel in Jared's
life, but keeping her house for herself indicates that she is not completely comfortable with her choice. This sense of unsureness seems to indicate that Edith is in the process of becoming Cornillon's woman as hero. Buck has not created a finished female character, but one that is "in the process of creating or discovering [her] wholeness ... seeking ... other metaphors for existence than men or martyrdom, or selflessness" (Preface XI).
A Home-Angel but not a Wife

Nadya MacNeil in All Under Heaven functions as a home-angel without questioning the validity and value of that role in her life. In The Goddess Abides, Edith Chardman questions her role as a home-angel, determines to become her own independent self, but ends by voluntarily taking on the role of home-angel again, this time in Jared Barnow's life. Joan Richards, female protagonist of The Time Is Noon, begins by not questioning the home-angel role, nor her father's position of privilege and supremacy in the family. Joan does, however, question what she should do now that she has finished college, what her role should be in the world, and, feeling out of place with her childhood friends who did not go to college, she considers the problem of where she belongs.

The process of answering these questions is a years-long journey of searching, marked, at the beginning, by Joan's loss of her family and home. This loss compels her to search for a place to belong, for home--the place where she first felt safe and secure, where she first felt accepted. In an attempt to find such a place, she rushes into marriage, trying to replicate the safety, security, and love of her childhood home. Afterwards she discovers that shelter and physical security are not the only
criteria for her concept of home. Instead, for Joan home is characterized by a welcoming, comforting atmosphere created by her mother—the home-angel, the giver and provider of bounty, of security, and of peace (Van de Wetering 28).

Joan's childhood is the standard against which Joan's other homes are measured. In the description of Joan's childhood home, we see evidence of the nineteenth-century concept of home as discussed by Maxine Van de Wetering in her article, "The Popular Concept of 'Home' in Nineteenth-Century America": Home was a place of "privacy, serenity" (14); it was a place "to gain the kind of nurture that resulted in self-knowledge, self-realization" and which "fostered such honest self-disclosure as to provide the renewal that came with personal attention..." (25). Home in the 1800's "came to represent tranquility and stability..." (28) as much for the individual woman as for her family.

Buck's use of this nineteenth-century concept of home is evident when Joan, newly graduated from college and back home for the summer, contemplates what being home means to her:

She put herself wholly into this moment, into this instant of sunshine, at this hour on a quiet morning, in this house of peace.... Here
it was safe. Here she was little again, a happy little child for an hour, waking as she had waked so many mornings of her life to the security of the walls about her.... (TIN 11)

In this short paragraph, we see clearly the elements named or suggested by Joan's choice of words which define home for her: a place of safety, of peace, of security. The word "sunshine" also contributes to our understanding of Joan's concept of home. The word connotes warmth, light, and life. "Safe" connotes life and the continuance of life, just as lack of safety would connote danger and the possibility of "no life." "Peace" and "security" connected with Joan's feeling of being "a happy little child" convey the idea that home is also a place where growth—emotional as well as physical—can take place. A child who feels safe and secure is able to reach out beyond herself and to grow intellectually and emotionally, as well as physically.

In using words like "peace," "security," "happy" and "sunshine," Buck echoes the mid-Victorian idea of home as being tranquil, serene, and constant. Family practices, relationships, and activities described by Buck further illustrate ways in which Joan's childhood home mirrors the ideal nineteenth-century concept of home as a retreat, a place of safety, "a haven" (Calder 13).
In addition to being a haven, the nineteenth century home was a place of abundance. Van de Wetering writes that home "was the place of great earthy plenty" (26) and "the laden table, in fact, was a leitmotif in the literature on the home" (27). The idea of "the laden table" is an integral part of the home experience for Joan, who meets with her family three times daily for meals:

So the meal came to an end and they were knit together again by it. their lives parted now and each went his way, but three times a day they were knit together again bodily.... They rose refreshed and ready to live apart for awhile.... But they would come together again and again, so they were never lost in loneliness. (TIN 4)

This family ritual of shared meals connects Joan's home with the nineteenth-century concept of home, as does the practice of family attendance at church. "Family prayers, family bible reading, and regular family attendance at church on Sunday morning" (Barbara Harris 34) were considered necessary attributes of home. As a sanctuary for moral and spiritual values" (Barbara Harris 33), the nineteenth-century American home "came to be heavily invested with symbols of sacredness and
reverence..." (Van de Wetering 28). Not only do Joan and her family attend church on a weekly basis, but her home is inhabited by a religious symbol--her father, Reverend Richards, is the pastor of the Middlehope Presbyterian church. Thus meals are preceded by her father's prayers to The Almighty; the children, when younger, learned scriptures to recite to their father; behavior is circumscribed by his position as spiritual leader in the community; and attendance at church as a family is a significant component of the Richards home:

Joan sat beside her mother and Rose beside Joan
To them this was an air as familiar as home.
This place too was a sort of home. Years full
of Sabbaths Joan had sat in this same front pew
beside her mother.... (TIN 20)

Family church attendance and meals eaten together are ways of reassuring oneself and other family members that one is never alone and friendless. This adds to the atmosphere of security and peace in the home.

Not just sharing daily meals and attending church as a family, but also living in the presence of a symbol "of sacredness and reverence" (Van de Wetering 28) gave Joan a place of stability and security in which to grow up. In addition, she learned that home is a place where the needs of a father and husband and, by extension, the needs of
other family members are met. Because the sermons preached by Reverend Richards on Sundays are written by him on Saturdays, Joan, her friends, and her siblings had to be unnaturally quiet while he wrote. Although twentieth-century critics may view this silencing of Joan, her siblings, and her friends on Saturday as a repression of personhood, Joan does not view this demand for quiet as repression or as a sign of second class citizenship. For Joan, obeying the injunction against noise is a sign of courtesy towards another individual. Joan's memory of these quiet Saturdays and the reasons for them strengthen her understanding of home as a place where the needs of all family members are met.

Who meets the needs of family members? Who is responsible for the security and love Joan experiences at home? Who creates this serene and peaceful home? Van de Wetering notes that another characteristic of the nineteenth-century home was the presence of a home-angel who provided for the family's needs: bountiful food, order, peacefulness, safety, security, and "unqualified love ... joyful giving..." (23).

Joan's mother, Mary Richards, is the home-angel in the Richards' home. Her children and husband take for granted that Mary, wife and mother, will take care of their needs. Neither Joan nor Rose need to worry about
household chores or having new dresses to wear. Their mother provides both a clean home and dresses which she makes herself. It is their mother who teaches them to love music, to read, to know right from wrong. It is she who acts as disciplinarian when necessary. Mary Richards provides for her children as a home-angel should:

Each had what he needed of her. As she had given them her milk when they were born, now she gave them the food of her brain and her thoughts and everything she knew. (TIN 18)

It is not just the children and her husband who expect Mary to care for their needs, but Mary herself sees this "care taking" as her role and duty. She is aware of the role she plays in the lives of her children and husband:

...she was at her best and richest. She knew her house was warm and comfortable around her children. She was feeding them the best she had, feeding their bodies with milk and bread and meat and fruit, feeding richness into their blood and their flesh.... (TIN 18)

In the nineteenth-century home the needs of all family members were met by the home-angel, but the father's needs were paramount. In the essay, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," reprinted in Women's
Experience in America, Barbara Welter writes that the prevailing attitude during the nineteenth century was that "a woman's whole interest should be focused on her husband" (208). She quotes a sermon on the role of women preached by Samuel Miller in 1808:

How interesting and important are the duties devolved on females as WIVES ... the counselor and friend of the husband: who makes it her daily study to lighten his cares, soothe his sorrows, and to augment his joys: who, like a guardian angel, watches over his interests, warns him against dangers, comforts him under trials; and by her pious, assiduous, and attractive deportment, constantly endeavors to render him more virtuous, more useful, more honourable, and more happy. (208)

Joan's childhood home, when perceived from her viewpoint, appears to fit the definition of the nineteenth-century home. The creator of the home atmosphere, the giver and provider of bounty, of security, and of peace is the home-angel, in this case Joan's mother, whose presence is necessary to the well-being of her family.

Mary also provides for her family in ways they are not aware. Over the years she has been exceedingly frugal
with the household money Reverend Richards gives to her each month. Saving nickels, dimes, and an occasional quarter, she has managed to save a hundred dollars. When she knows that she is dying, she tells her husband that she has saved this money for her children and that he will find it in a trunk of baby clothes in the attic. In a society where a woman is "not allowed to testify in court, hold title to property, establish businesses, or sign papers as witnesses" (Chafe 5), and is perhaps unable to open a savings account in her own name, a trunk of baby clothes in the attic seems like a rational place to keep money. Because attics are generally places where items which are no longer needed or used, but still of value, are stored, no one would go looking for money in such a place; it would be safe from thieves. Since the money is for the children, hiding it in a trunk of their baby clothes also seems appropriate. This incident seems to be a natural place for Buck to comment upon the lack of economic rights of women. But as happens in the other two novels, she continues the surface details of the story, never using this or other incidents to overtly question the home-angel concept.

The personal cost of Mary's frugality becomes more apparent after her death when Joan and Rose are going through their mother's closet. The girls find shoes which
Joan recognizes as shoes she had thrown away because they were no longer wearable. Mary had retrieved the cast-off shoes from the trash, had them mended, and continued to wear them. Joan realizes that none of them had noticed their mother. They all took from her, each took what he needed for his own life, without seeing that she also needed something from them for herself (TIN 128).

This incident not only strengthens our view of Mary as a provider, but we also see her in the role of a true woman: "The essence of her role lay in sacrificing herself in the service of her husband, children, and other relatives," (Barbara Harris 34).

In all Mary's behavior it appears that she is the epitome of the home-angel. She has created a home of security and serenity and tranquillity. She has provided for the physical and emotional well-being of her children and husband through meals, house-cleaning, mending, counseling, listening, and teaching. She fulfills the tasks of a home-angel by providing for the family's needs: bountiful food, order, peacefulness, safety, security, and "unqualified love ... joyful giving..." (Van de Wetering 23).
However, a few days before Mary's death and later, after her death, we become aware of ways in which Mary rebelled against the home-angel concept. Welter, quoting from *The Young Lady's Book*, points out that the true woman was expected to be submissive:

> It is, however, certain, that in whatever situation of life a woman is placed from her cradle to her grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper, and humility of mind are required from her. (199)

Although Mary was frugal, using her husband's resources carefully, she nevertheless was not properly submissive on at least three occasions. One of those times involved the hundred dollars she had put away. The Reverend Richards needed money for his Negro Mission in the slum area of Middlehope. Mary knew of his prayers for money but did not give him her savings. Indeed, she did not even tell him about it until she knew she was dying. More than the money, what Mary seems to be withholding from her husband is her unquestioning support of him and his endeavors. She has been neither obedient nor submissive in this instance.

Another example of rebelliousness is apparent during Mary's illness. She banishes her husband of thirty years from their bedroom. She does not even want him to visit.
When he does try to visit, she tells him, "Be Quiet!" (TIN 104) or "Go away, Paul" (TIN 113). Once again we see the home-angel facade crack. One would expect a home-angel to dispense "disinterested love" (Van de Wetering 23), to offer comfort and reassurance regardless of the cost to herself. Mary has ceased to concern herself with the needs of her husband, but has, instead, turned her focus inward to herself.

The third example of Mary's rebelliousness actually happened early in the Richards' marriage although we do not find out about it until after her death. Reverend Richards, cheered by the news that his daughter Rose and her husband Rob Winters plan to go to China as missionaries, tells his children that when he and Mary had been married a year, he had received a call to go to China as a missionary. When he told Mary, she refused to go: "She said God had to call her, too. I have regretted it all my life" (TIN 137). Mary did not follow the advice of Caroline Gilman to brides to help them insure the "proper order" in marriage, as quoted by Welter: "Reverence his wishes even when you do not his opinions" (201). Although Mary has given the appearance of being a model home-angel, her home-angeliness has been a facade, hiding a strong-willed and independent spirit. Buck seems to be
suggesting that a woman can be both an independent individual and a creator of a serene and loving home.

When her mother becomes ill, Joan takes over the management of the household. She plans the meals, takes care of the house, and endeavors to guide and counsel her siblings. In addition, Joan nurses her mother, fulfilling one of "the most important functions of woman as comforter" (Welter 203). Joan also becomes Mary's protector, screening visitors so Mary sees only those people she wants to see. At her mother's request, Joan keeps even her father out of her mother's room.

When Mary dies, in the midst of sadness and loss, Joan takes over the responsibilities of her mother. Mary Richards had acted as a nurturing home-angel. She had taken care of the family's needs with love and with some sacrifice. As Joan takes over the responsibilities of her mother, both she and the reader realize the extent of Mary's loving care for her family. Francis is in high school and yet his mother, and now Joan, cracks his boiled eggs and butters his toast. Just as her mother anticipated her father's wishes at the dinner table, Joan finds herself making certain that his coffee cup is kept filled and food is passed to him. When Mr. Richards misplaces his appointment book, he appeals to Joan to find
it for him because Mary had always kept track of his belongings.

Just as her mother had found ways to save money out of the household budget, Joan finds ways to save pennies and nickels and dimes, including the quarter her father gives her once a month for the foreign missionary society. She tries to take care of the family's need for food and clothing, to counsel her sister and brother, and to do the things she knew her mother would have done. "But it was not easy to be her mother. She had not the years it had taken to temper her mother, to make her patient" (TIN 134). It appears that Joan has a difficult time acting as a home-angel. Suddenly thrust from the security of an extended childhood where her mother took care of her, she must adjust to being the one to care for others. She is impatient with her brother, her sister, her father, and even with herself. She is hurt when her brother tells her to leave him alone and when Rose will not confide in her. And she is restless, wanting to go some place, do something besides take care of other people. In her impatience she loses her temper with the housekeeper—something she could not remember her mother ever having done. Nor does Joan have the authority her mother had. Her brother Francis gets angry when she puts his clothes away or tries to counsel him as their mother would have
done and her sister Rose becomes quietly stubborn, refusing to return to college. Instead, Rose insists that she and Rob Winters are going to be married and go to China to be missionaries. Joan, unable to persuade her otherwise, helps Rose sew dresses and pack. Often she sees herself doing things her mother did, wanting to care for her family as her mother cared for them, feeling almost like her mother at times:

The useful dark dresses were packed into the square trunk her mother had bought for her in college and which Rose had in turn. She had seen her mother kneeling before it ... now Joan knelt, feeling herself almost in her mother's body, folding the useful clothes. (TIN 144)

On the one hand, Joan wants to take care of her family as her mother took care of them, but she is impatient and finds that she does not feel rewarded for her efforts.

According to Van de Wetering, the home-angel's "own nurture was ... self-furnished, or it came from other women" (24). Nancy Chodorow, in The Reproduction of Mothering, supports this idea of self nurture:

Most theoretical accounts agree that women as wives and mothers reproduce people--physically in their housework and child care,
psychologically in their emotional support of husbands and their maternal relation to sons and daughters.... What is hidden, in most accounts of the family is that women reproduce themselves through their own daily housework.... Men are socially and psychologically reproduced by women, but women are reproduced (or not) largely by themselves. (36)

In Joan's case the tasks she performs do not bring enough satisfaction to her. She has no friends her own age; they are either gone or married and busy with their own families. The women came to her mother for advice or to exchange recipes do not come to her; she does not have the status or the experience of her mother. She is isolated and does not receive any praise or recognition for doing her mother's work.

With Rose gone, Joan and has only her father and her brother to care for. Joan's father withdraws into his faith and his communion with God. Joan knows that all she can do for him is to make certain his food is as he likes it and that his clothing is taken care of as Mary would have taken care of it.

Francis presents a different problem for Joan. She wants to counsel with him as their mother would have done, but she can only make his bed and mend his clothes because
he is seldom home, and when he does come home, he stays in his room so he won't have to talk to Joan. His unwillingness to confide in Joan is explained when Joan learns from old Mrs. Mark, a long-time resident of Middlehope, that Francis has been seen with Fanny, a Negro prostitute. Joan realizes that Francis must leave Middlehope immediately to protect their father's reputation. Joan gives Francis the eighteen dollars she has managed to save, finds the name and address of a pilot he can talk to because he wants to learn to fly, and helps him leave for New York. In sending her brother away from temptation, she is fulfilling, according to Samuel Miller, one of the duties of the home-angel: she "endeavors to render him more virtuous" (qtd. in Welter 208).

For Reverend Richards, home seems to continue very much the same as before Mary died: "Sometimes he [Reverend Richards] almost forgot Mary was gone. He looked up from his plate to speak to Mary, but it was Joan, so he remained silent" (TIN 150). But for Joan, home is not the same as when her mother was the one in control. Rose's wedding would have been different, "not grave" (TIN 147); Francis would have gone to school until he was twenty-two because her mother had planned it that way. And there is no one to take care of Joan: "Now the silent and empty house became full of her own longing and
restlessness" (TIN 174). Nevertheless, Joan feels that "she must stay, here in this house, so long as her father lived.... It was all the life she had" (TIN 174).

When her father dies, Joan is left not only alone, but houseless as well. Because her father was a Presbyterian minister, the house which held her childhood home, and most of the furnishings, including dishes and linens, belong to the Middlehope Presbyterian Church. The members of her father's congregation are kind, at least on the surface. They invite her to come home with them after her father's funeral so she does not have to spend that day alone. She is also told by members of the hiring committee that she need not hurry to move out of the parsonage, to take her time. But three days later, the new pastor and his wife arrive, "Not to hurry you, Miss Richards" (TIN 209), but to look at the house. Joan has no one and, literally, no place. She has been displaced physically and emotionally. Because Joan no longer has a family or a home, she cannot function as a home-angel or a true woman. Without this role, she seems almost invisible to society--to the people who have known her all her life.

Joan needs a place to live, and she wants a family, her family to be with her. But, her sister Rose is in China, and it will be weeks before she learns of her
father's death. However, Joan hopes her brother Francis will get the cable telling of his father's death and be able to get back to Middlehope for the funeral. "She desperately wanted him to come. She needed the sense of her own beside her" (TIN 208). He does not come and it is not until a week later that she gets a short note from him asking for money. Because he has moved from New York City to Detroit, he has not even received the news of his father's death. Joan, who has been able to comfort and care for the members of her family, is unable to comfort herself. In her loneliness and despair, hoping to gain a home and security, she marries a man she does not love--Bart Pounder, a farmer who has been persistent in his attempts to convince her to marry him.

In this decision to marry Bart are the seeds of Joan's failure to create a home for herself and Bart. Bart informs her that they will live in his parents' house so he can have the farm when his father dies. Joan expects to find in Mrs. Pounder's home the sort of love she received from her own mother. Mary had displayed, at least toward her children, the kind of selflessness and caring implicit in the "disinterested love" of which Van de Wetering writes:

nearly always it was the female who dispensed ... 'disinterested love,' a love which was given
without qualification and which was consistent and reliable despite the circumstances or the possible short-comings of the beloved. The woman's love did not require meritorious conduct or character ... Her disinterested love was a joyful giving, unobligated and unobligating.

Instead of finding the same loving atmosphere as in her mother's home, Joan moves into an alien environment, her mother-in-law's household. The strangeness of the environment is symbolized by the strangeness of the countryside surrounding the Pounder farm. It is not just the difference between Mrs. Pounder's home and Mary Richards' home that is strange and alien, but the countryside itself is strange to Joan, representing, as it does, the loss of her earlier home, her own displacement, and her mother's replacement in the guise of Mrs. Pounder. Buck uses the journey of Bart and Joan by horse and wagon from the quiet, but peopled town of Joan's life to the hilly, remote country of the Pounder farm to subtly symbolize, not only the many differences in the two homes, but also the great emotional distance Joan must travel before she is able to create her own home.

After arriving at the Pounder home, Joan stands in the room which will be "home" to her and Bart. Looking
out the window, Joan feels afraid of the hills and trees and especially of the absence of any other houses. The dark, empty country is a metaphor for the lonely, silent "home" in which Joan now lives and for the lack of family she continues to experience.

Buck defines the contrast between the Richards home and the Pounder home in *To My Daughters, With Love*, when she writes that "not all housewives are homemakers. Some women put house ahead of home and then they are only cleaning women and cooks" (181). Mrs. Pounder falls into this category; she does not manifest the qualities expected of a home-angel. Mrs. Pounder cooks and cleans and mends, but in her work there does not seem to be a sense of loving sacrifice or of nurturing, both important characteristics of the home-angel and the true woman. Mary Richards seemed interested in her family as individuals, as people. Mrs. Pounder seems only interested in not having extra work to do, in keeping the house clean, not in the emotional needs of the other people in the household.

Joan's childhood home where her mother had given her family the best and the richest that she had is, despite physical similarities to the Pounder place, the antithesis to it. Both houses are two-story structures with many rooms, large kitchens, and indoor plumbing. There the
similarities end. One characteristic of the nineteenth-century American home was "the table, heavy-laden, and the fireplace, surrounded by the rosy-cheeked family group, singing or reading together..." (Van de Wetering 27). Where food was plentiful in Joan's childhood home, there is stinginess in the Pounder house. Where there was music and conversation in Joan's childhood home, there is silence in the Pounder house. Joan's childhood home was a refuge and a place for growing, but the Pounder house is cold, closed off, and deadening.

The difference in attitude between Mary Richards and Mrs. Pounder contributes to the difference in the homes they create. Mary Richards worked at providing for her family, but Buck describes her as having a "brisk, cheerful step" (TIN 12), "a ready smile" (TIN 57), and Joan remembers her mother saying with "gaiety, 'Let's have a party!'" (TIN 233). Mrs. Pounder, on the other hand, sees life only in terms of work. Because her husband and two sons eat a pie in one sitting, she no longer bakes them, considering that the "work's gone for nothing, seems like" (TIN 232). She does not like her large kitchen because "it makes work when you have everything to do yourself" (TIN 221). For the same reason, all but the kitchen and sleeping rooms are closed off. The piano is not played because it is in the sitting room and if people
go in there, they may get the room dirty. Mrs. Pounder wants material possessions--piano, furniture, front stairs--to stay clean, new, dirt-free and unused so she won't have any more work to do than she already does.

For Joan, Mrs. Pounder is the antithesis to the home-angel, who, as described by Van de Wetering, is expected to provide an "atmosphere of peace and harmony" (16), "unqualified love" (23), a "hearty abundance of domestic bliss" (27), and "personal nurture" of others (24).

When Joan marries Bart, moving into her mother-in-law's house, she moves into a different manifestation of home than her mother's home. Joan rejects this particular version of home and tries to re-make it into her image of home. As a new bride eating the first meal with her new family, Joan tries to make conversation, but is met by silence and indifference. She tries to help with the dishes, but is rebuffed because she doesn't know where things go.

About two years later, when she learns that she is pregnant, she wants to make a place for the baby in the house. Because no one, including Mrs. Pounder, uses the attic, Joan decides to make it into her own private place. She mends an old broken armchair to sit in while gazing out the gabled window, dreaming of raising her child in love and security as she was raised. When her brother,
Francis, comes to stay, she uses soft quilts and her mother's linens to try and create a home place for him in the attic, the one place Mrs. Pounder would let him sleep. The Pounder family does not welcome Francis. The silence, usual in the Pounder home because Mr. Pounder dislikes any unnecessary conversation, indicates dislike as obviously as if it were spoken: "They were pushing him [Francis] out by their silence, their steady, disapproving silence" (Buck 256). For Joan it is natural to open her heart towards her brother and to want to open "her" home to him. However, the Pounder family does not know Francis. For them, he is a stranger and just as Mrs. Pounder did not want her boys to invite children to come over after school, she does not want this strange man in her house because he may cause extra work. Joan's attempts to convince Mr. Pounder that Francis can be of help are rebuffed. When she suggests to Bart's father that Frank can shell corn, he replies, "I've shelled it myself for thirty-five years" and when she tells Bart's mother that she and Frank will gather the eggs, she is told "the hens don't take kindly to strangers." Once, Frank stumbled and spilled milk on the cellar stairs and Mrs. Pounder reacts with bitterness, "You better go and set somewhere" (TIN 256). There is no room for him in the Pounder's closed and silent lives.
The Richards' home was characterized by elements of the ideal nineteenth-century home: music, an abundance of food, and an acceptance of people. These elements are missing in the Pounder home. Yet, for the Pounders, this is home as they know it. For Joan, it is not. Joan does not accept Mrs. Pounder's concept of home, but as long as she lives in the Pounder house, she cannot create her own idea of home.

Despite Joan's emotional rejection of the Pounder "home" and of Bart, she stays there because she is Bart's wife. Does Joan stay with Bart out of a sense of duty or social pressure? Certainly, when she receives $500.00 from her father's insurance, the reader may wonder why she doesn't leave Bart, find a way to support herself and her child, and create her own home. She does not, however, even think of leaving:

She was held now to this house. She must keep this house to be a home for her child, a family into which he could be born. Money could not buy her freedom. She had taken their blood into her and mingled it with her own blood. She could never be free. (Buck 239)

Her response is, no doubt, an indication of several probably conflicting emotions. If she leaves Bart, she will be without a place to live, without physical shelter.
Also, in Joan's experience wives live with their husbands, children with their fathers. This has been a pattern with which Joan is familiar and familiar is easiest and least threatening. And it is also probably that her decision to remain in the Pounder house is based on the same wish as her decision to marry Bart after her father's death. As a young, single, college-educated woman, Joan could have taken the little money she had saved and gone to Philadelphia, or back to her college, to look for work. There is no indication in the novel that she even thought of these possibilities. We understand these two decisions if we remember that she has admitted to herself what she really wants to do. At the end of her first summer home from college, she realizes that she must find something to do and she thinks of music,

but she knew in her secret heart what she wanted to do, and what she could do well. She could love a man well and keep his house clean and make it beautiful and bear his children. (TIN 62)

In Joan's experience, women marry and bear children. Her friends and the older women she knows, her mother's friends, are all wives and mothers. In creating Joan, Buck has created a young woman who accepts the idea that "the home [was] the female's only proper sphere" (Barbara
Harris 33). Marrying Bart and deciding to remain with him are attempts to fulfill her desire to "love a man" and to take her proper place in society. Despite this however, her frustration and impatience with the Pounders and their concept of home grows as does her longing and desire for home as she remembers it. To Joan it seems that the Pounders consider material possessions important, but not people:

Nothing but things and things. This house was full of silent, lifeless things, things to be taken care of. She'd like to walk straight out of it, walk away down the road, anywhere, never to return. (TIN 302)

In spite of her anathema to the Pounder home, she does not consider alternatives nor make any sort of plans for trying to change her situation.

Her frustration with the Pounder house and her growing desire for her own home increases when Fanny, a Negro prostitute, comes seeking financial support for the boy Francis fathered. Joan wants to be able to take care of Frankie, to give him a real home, not a rented room her has to leave whenever his mother brings a man home. Joan's desire for her own place is strengthened further when she receives word that Rose and her husband are dead and their two children need a home. Joan wants to take
these children in, to care for them, and to make a home of love and security for them. She decides that "under this roof she must somehow make a place for them," (TIN 312) but she remembers Mrs. Pounder's words: "Children are a lot of trouble. They mess the house up" (TIN 232). Nevertheless, she does not contemplate leaving Bart and the Pounder house. Not until Bart is caught in adultery with a neighboring farm girl is Joan presented with an acceptable reason for leaving the Pounder house. She has already left Bart emotionally and physically; she has continued to live in the attic with her retarded son Paul because of her desire to create a place of her own for herself and Paul, and because she will no longer live as a wife to Bart. In these decisions, Joan has gone against the concept of the home-angel, who "clings with increased fondness, even to the very being who thus violates the sacred claims of her heart..." (Van de Wetering 24).

Bart's adultery with the girl from a neighboring farm creates an opportunity for Joan to do something she has wanted to do all along, to escape the Pounder house. She recognizes that she shares part of the responsibility for Bart's behavior because she has "been unjust to Bart" by coming "into this house of simple people, good people" and failing to accept or value what they had to offer (TIN 322). She knows that she has been unfair to Bart by
refusing to live with him as his wife. Her reaction to Bart's infidelity surprises the Pounders:

   I've done very wrong," she tells Bart. "I don't blame you ... Maybe this girl would have made you happy. I've injured you.... The only thing I can do for you is to go away. You can live as you did before I came. After awhile you will forget I was ever here" (TIN 322).

While the family continues to talk and discuss and argue, she takes her son and what she can carry in a bundle and leaves the house. Joan goes to Mrs. Mark, hoping that Mrs. Mark will take her in and then "in a week or two she could find something elsewhere" (TIN 323).

When Joan and Paul arrive after dark, Mrs. Mark does indeed take them in. The next morning as Joan fixes breakfast for the three of them and takes care of Paul, she finds it impossible "in this quiet free house to keep from telling Mrs. Mark everything" (TIN 329). In the warmth of Mrs. Mark's interest and good sense, Joan finds comfort. In significant ways, Mrs. Mark acts as a nurturing home-angel for Joan. She provides, not just shelter, but non-judgemental acceptance, "a love which was given without qualification" (Van de Wetering 23). For Joan, Mrs. Mark and her home are the first real nurturing she has experienced since her mother died.
Shortly after Joan's arrival, Mrs. Mark dies, willing the house to Joan. It is difficult for Joan to be sad at the death of Mrs. Mark because Mrs. Mark has made it possible for Joan to make a home:

This house was her own! Every room was hers to do with as she liked. There was no feeling of strangeness anywhere in it. It had been given to her and she had taken it. The other house to which she so foolishly had fled for shelter could never have been hers. It was shaped from the beginning by alien life. (TIN 339-40)

With her own house, Joan is able to fulfill her desire to make a home for Rose's two children and for Francis' son. Joan becomes the home-angel, creating her concept of home, recreating the atmosphere of her childhood home for the four children she is now responsible for. In this home, Joan is the home-angel. Joan's "re-creation" of "home" for herself and the children for whom she has accepted responsibility is possible only because she has gone against the accepted behavior of a home-angel, of a wife. She has left her husband and taken responsibility for her own life, for the making of her own home.

Joan seems to be closer than Edith Chardman to Cornillon's woman as hero. She has questioned the role of
home-angel, of true woman, of wife that she expected to play. She has found that role unsatisfactory and has dared to find "other metaphors for existence than men" (Cornillon XI). It appears that Buck has created a somewhat successful female character who stays at home with her children, but on her own terms.
Marginal Women

Buck's female characters are strong women. They solve their problems in ways other than madness, illness, suicide, death. They meet their problems head on, solve them, and continue as strong, intelligent women. Whatever the difficulty one of Buck's female characters must confront, she (as suggested in the introduction) will overcome that difficulty and will end as a stronger individual.

Upon closer examination, however, Buck's female protagonist does not fulfill this wonderfully freeing promise. Despite her stated philosophy of equality for men and women, Buck does not deal with the problem of woman's place outside the home-angel/true woman stereotype. In creating Nadya, Edith, and Joan, she has been unable to create a model different than the home-angel. Wherever women do belong, Buck's attempt to write of them with "other metaphors than men" (Cornillon XI) for the center of their existence has not been wholly successful.

In All Under Heaven, the almost simultaneous presence and absence of secondary women is. perhaps, more telling even than Nadya's story hidden inside Malcolm's story. The secondary women we meet first are Malcolm's two
sisters--Corinne and Susanna. Because Malcolm has spent the last twenty-five years in China as a United States diplomat, his wife and two children have never met his sisters.

Corinne, the older sister, keeps a spotless, perfectly decorated house, cooks meals worthy to be served to kings and presidents, and in all ways appears to be an ideal homemaker. And we find that, as the perfection of her home leads us to expect, she does appear to fit the concept of the home-angel. Because she does seem to be an image of the perfect home-angel, we might expect her to feel secure in her place. However, she feels excluded; she lacks an emotional place—even in her own home. She blames society for her exclusion, when in fact she is responsible for it. She feels excluded because she does not love her husband. She admits to Malcolm that for years she has loved a married man. She married her husband because of his position as a banker, because of his kindness, because he could give her a physical and social place, and because she believes that women are expected to marry. She rails against the society which expects women to all be a certain, unquestioning way:

The system is wrong, Malcolm! There is something wrong with the way women have to stumble into marriage. Maybe it is all right
for men--I don't know. But for women like me, too well-educated, perhaps, or educated in the wrong way--I don't know. We're supposed to be equal to men, but we never can be so long as we have to stand and wait for an invitation to marriage. And the devil of it is we still want marriage. (AUH 60-61)

Corinne does not accept her position as a home-angel nor enjoy it as Nadya accepts the situation of her life. For Corinne, being a home-angel is a duty, and performing that duty does not bring her happiness nor contentment. Corinne's unhappiness and frustration indicate a flaw in the home-angel concept, but Buck does not use Corinne to explore possible alternatives to the traditional home-angel role. Although Corinne could be helpful in understanding why the home-angel role does not always work, she is relegated to the margin of the novel. Whatever insight might be gained through Corinne's story is lost because after this conversation we never see her or hear of her again. She is in and out of the pages of the book and never even wrinkles the plot.

Malcolm's second sister, Susanna, is not the perfect housekeeper or cook. However, her house is full of love. Nadya feels the difference in atmosphere in the sisters' two homes. Susanna's joy and love, however, are not
generated solely by her husband and two children. She is having an affair and although her lover is never introduced into the novel, the implication is that her life is more her own because she loves and is loved by two men. What consequences this affair has on her life, the lives of her children, or her relationship with her husband, how this woman affects Malcolm is never explained. Nor does she help clarify the validity or the falseness of the home-angel concept. Her appearance does, however, raise questions about the way in which a home of love and peace is created. It is true that Susanna provides a home that is welcoming, meals that are nutritious, and an unquestioning acceptance or love of her husband and children—all marks of the home-angel. It is also true, however, that she does not focus only on her family; part of her attention is with her lover. A true woman, according to Welter, was to be pious, submissive, pure, and domestic. It appears that Susanna meets only the criteria of domesticity. She cannot be considered pure, nor pious, nor submissive to her husband if she is having an affair with someone else. Yet her husband and children feel loved and secure. Here is an opportunity to question the criteria by which woman are judged, by which women are counted as successful, but whatever light Susanna might have been able to shed on this question of
woman's place is lost. As in the case of Corinne, Susanna is in and out of the novel, leaving behind no trace of ever having been there. Neither Corinne nor Susanna overtly change the accepted perception of what a successful woman is, but they do seem to covertly challenge the idea that a successful woman focuses only on her husband and her children. Once again Buck ignores an opportunity to explore a perception of the role of women different than that of the home-angel/true woman.

Several other minor women in the novel also have no importance to either Malcolm's story or Nadya's home-angel role. However, the lack of significance of one of these minor women points toward an important characteristic of Buck's female characters in the presence of a male protagonist. This woman, a Mennonite, is introduced and quickly dispensed with. She and Nadya meet as they walk in opposite directions along a path near the MacNeil house. Nadya asks her if she is looking for someone, but the woman has come to look at the house where she was born. Nadya invites her in, but the woman declines the invitation, content to see how the outside of the house and the surrounding lawn and gardens have been changed. Later, when Nadya thinks of passing the woman, she wonders "Had she or had she not really seen the woman?"
As readers of the book, we might ask ourselves the same question of all the women, including Nadya, in this novel. None of the secondary women have any importance to the story line of *All Under Heaven*. None of them play a role in Nadya's life; they are virtually nonessential. Cornillon characterizes the invisible woman "as the Other, the thing, the non-cognating phenomenon for the hero to test himself against as he would against hurricane or high mountain or disease, as symbol" (Preface XI). These peripheral women do not even have that function. In this novel, they are extraneous, irrelevant, inconsequential. In writing a novel told from the male protagonist's point of view, Buck was unable to write her women out of obscurity. Indeed, the needlessness of these secondary female characters seems to emphasize Nadya's hiddeness in the novel. These nonessential, inconsequential, irrelevant woman may help us understand Nadya better—and in so doing, help us understand the impossibility of seeing a woman from a man's perspective. As Nadya asked about the Mennonite woman, we need to ask about Nadya—have we or have we not seen the woman? The answer, of course, is no. What we have seen is Malcolm's reflection of Nadya.

Corinne and Susanna are Nadya's introduction to American women, to their role and place in American
society. The other women are variations on that role and place. But this knowledge is kept from Nadya. In fact, as readers, we become aware, even before Nadya does, that she has no friends. No woman comes to visit her. No one, other than Malcolm and the children, shares any part of her life. At one point in the novel, she counts on her fingers the people she knows:

butcher and mason, carpenter and grocer, and clerks and shoppers ... people who were gentle and friendly at the accident of touch or the necessity of service and ready at a moment's talk but never going beyond the moment ... no one came to see her ... Nadya could count on her fingers all such people but she had no friends.

(AUH 132)

Nadya is not just hidden in Malcolm's story, she has no story, no voice.

Nadya accepts her position, her place in life, and except for the brief mention that she has no friends, she appears to be happy and content. Whatever problems the home-angel idea poses for women, Nadya appears to accept it as her role, as her life. The atmosphere of acceptance does not surprise us. We are used to women in literature who hold a place similar to Nadya's. Despite her stated belief in the equality of men and women, Buck has been
unable to write women in any meaningful way into a novel told from a man's point of view. Perhaps the function of such nonessential women in this novel is to indicate that Nadya is also nonessential to Malcolm's story.

Malcolm's attitude towards Nadya reinforces her lack of importance. Once, as Malcolm writes of his experiences as a member of the diplomatic corps, ridding himself "of wastes accumulated in his memory" before dealing with the present, he recognizes he has "no wish, as yet, to discover friends" (AUH 105). He also thinks of Nadya's position, wondering if she is lonely:

He thought not. She was still learning how to live in the house .... She was a woman complete in herself, she had experience in life and love, and nothing more was necessary, or so he felt. Besides was he not here? (AUH 105)

Malcolm assumes that because he doesn't want friends right now, Nadya doesn't need friends. This, coupled with his "knowledge" that because he is here for her nothing else is needed for Nadya to be happy, is another indication of Nadya's non-person status in the novel and a comment on the non-person status of women in stories told from the point of view of a male protagonist.

Because The Goddess Abides and All Under Heaven are written from the female protagonist's viewpoint, neither
Edith nor Joan suffer from such overt marginality or obscurity. The novels are their stories. I have suggested earlier that, at least in intent, Edith and Joan are drawn as women moving from Cornillon's Woman as Heroine--the "'sugar 'n' spice and everything nice' stereotype that insults most fiction"--to her Woman as Hero--"people in the process of creating or discovering their wholeness" (Preface X-XI).

Part of the reason Edith and Joan do not suffer from the same blatant invisibility as Nadya is that they are the central figures of the novels in which they appear. Both these novels have narrators who stay in either Edith's or Joan's mind and show each woman's experiences from her perspective. Edith speaks for herself as does Joan.

What effect does such a perspective have on the idea of the home-angel? In the case of Edith, the concept of home-angel explains woman's place, but without accounting for the difficulties a woman faces as she fits herself into that concept.

Had we the story of Edith's life before she was widowed, we would no doubt find that she was a marginal woman, hidden in the shadow of her husband's place as a successful, brilliant, well-known lawyer. Edith tells us as much when she says that
in the shadow of his superior age, his success as a famous lawyer, she had felt no stimulus except to be what he wished her to be, his wife, the mother of intelligent and reasonably obedient children. (TGA 52)

But in this novel, we have an account of Edith's life after the death of her husband, Arnold.

The near-absence of other women in Edith's story is as telling as the nonessentialness of the women in All Under Heaven. Edith is looking for herself. She wants to know who she is, what she wants, and "whether her life had meaning beyond wifehood and motherhood" (TGA 12).

Chodorow writes that "women are reproduced (or not) largely by themselves" (36). Van de Wetering, in describing the concept of the home-angel, makes a similar statement when she writes that the home-angel's "nurture was ... self-furnished, or it came from other women" (24). Chodorow points out that in the family as it is currently constituted no one supports and reconstitutes women affectively and emotionally .... [In] the current period of high mobility and familial isolation ... support is largely removed, and there is little institutionalized daily
reconstitution of mothers. What there is depends on the accidents of a particular marriage, and not on the carrying out of an institutionalized support role" (36).

Buck shows Edith struggling to emerge from the isolation of her role as a home-angel to become a person, an individual in her own right. Although Buck creates for Edith a childhood friend, Amelia Darwent, the only conversation of any length between the two elicits the following mental reaction from Edith:

She must not, she reflected ... fall into the mistake of becoming involved with woman friends and their ever-narrowing interests in themselves and each other. She must take up an intellectual pursuit, she must discover an individual activity alone and for herself. (TGA 58)

Men in the novel, on the other hand, are not characterized as having narrow pursuits. The mind of the respected philosopher, Edwin Steadley, is described as "crystalline in purity" (TGA 58). Jared Barnow, the young artist and inventor, is brilliant, talented, his mind sparkling. Edith views Jared as "imaginative, dedicated, uncompromising in his creativity" (TGA 181). The contrast between Edith's reaction to a conversation with Amelia and
the descriptions of the men as intelligent, brilliant, and creative suggests that Buck unconsciously accepted the social prejudice "that females were intellectually inferior to males and, therefore, rightfully kept in a subordinate position" (Barbara Harris 3). As a consequence of this prejudice, conscious or unconscious, on the part of Buck, Edith has no women to help her discover her own individuality.

Edith is a woman looking for herself as a woman, and yet she turns away from other women. It would seem natural for a woman in the process of trying to find out who she is as an individual woman to seek out other women with whom to talk and compare notes, to find out how other women cope with being women. Instead, she rejects them because they have narrow interests--themselves and other women--as if women are unimportant and uninteresting because they are women. Edith decides she needs an intellectual pursuit--as if women (other than herself) and intellectual pursuits are mutually exclusive. Given Edith's perception of women--and by extension herself--as being uninteresting and unintellectual, she has no choice but to choose a man as the center of her existence, as the purpose of her life.

Other women mentioned in this novel serve to reinforce this attitude. Edith remembers that her mother
was impatient with her father, Raymond Mansfield, the brilliant, famous scientist, when he talked about his work with cosmic rays. Because of her mother's impatience, Edith has schooled herself to listen with interest and understanding, first to her father, then to her husband, next to Edwin's philosophical excursions into the meaning of love and death, and finally to Jared's discussion of creativity and engineering. The point here, however, is the derogatory memory Edith has of her mother. In rejecting her mother, Edith seems to be rejecting women as guides, as friends, as people worth knowing. Because women are inconsequential to Edith, she makes herself inconsequential. Buck, instead of writing a woman protagonist into her novel has effectively written her out.

The problem of secondary women in *The Time Is Noon* is different from the problem of secondary women in *The Goddess Abides* and *All Under Heaven*. In the two novels already discussed, the women are marginal, peripheral, and nonessential. In *The Time Is Noon*, the secondary women are not marginal to the novel although they are secondary as women in the world of this novel.

On the surface at least, Mary Richards (Joan's mother), is a pious, submissive, pure, domestic woman. She takes care of her husband and children; she keeps the
household running smoothly, ensures that nourishing meals are served, and that family members are clothed. She counsels the women of her husband's congregation who come to her. In many ways she seems to be the image of Welter's true woman. She is basically a joyous woman, frequently singing as she works in the house. However, as pointed out in chapter four, she is not totally submissive. She refused to go to China as a missionary when her husband wanted to go; she kept back small amounts of the household money each month and hid it from her husband; and when she became ill she rejected her husband's presence in her bedroom. These acts of rebellion indicate that Mary is not the model of true womanhood. They do indicate that, although she functions as a home-angel, she does so because other possibilities are not open to her. It is possible that these acts of rebellion indicate that she is an individual in her own right and that her life does not center on her husband, although her tasks do.

Unfortunately, despite her acts of rebellion against her husband, her unwillingness to be totally submissive in all areas of her life, we do not see Mary as an individual, but only as a role, a reflection of a good wife and mother. Joan realizes this about her mother at the time she is going through her mother's belongings:
"They all took from [Mary] ... without seeing that she also needed something from them for herself" (TIN 128).
We wonder, does Mary read? Does she play a musical instrument? What are her favorite colors? What are her aspirations? Who is Mary?

After Mary's death, Joan finds a letter Mary had written to her sometime before the novel begins: "I always think a lady's gold watch is nice, perhaps because I have always wanted one" (TIN 130). We wonder what other things Mary wanted. Did she want a new dress? Her own house instead of living in the parsonage? Did she long to go to college as Joan and Mary did and as she planned for Francis to do? Although Mary Richards is necessary to the novel, she is marginal in the sense that we do not know her as a person, but only as a role, an image reflected through the tasks she performs for the comfort and well-being of her husband and children.

Joan's sister, Rose, is a secondary character who is also marginalized. After Mary's death, Rose becomes her own non-person. She chooses to marry Rob Winter and go to China as a missionary with him. We see Rose erasing herself in small ways. She chooses only brown, drab colors and serviceable materials for her trousseau, rather than the bright colors Joan wanted for her. She refuses to wear a wedding dress, but instead wears a plain dress
in which to be married. But it is the contents of her
diary that indicate how much an image she is. After Rose
dies at the hands of rebellious Chinese soldiers, Joan is
given her sister's diary. Joan expects to read Rose's
reaction to living in China, her feelings about being a
mother, her descriptions of people and events and places.
Instead, every entry seems to be much the same: "'We must
thank God today for____.' 'We must endure hardships as
brave soldiers of Christ'" (TIN 352-53). In Rose's diary,
Joan is unable to find any evidence of Rose. Rose is not
a person, but an image of a missionary. She is more an
image even than Nadya in All Under Heaven.

Mrs. Pounder is also a secondary female character in
the novel, but her marginality is problematic. In her own
way, she creates a place for her family to live. As
discussed in chapter four, she cooks the food, cleans the
house, and prepares the milk to be sold. People,
including her husband and two sons, mean work for her.
Her goal in all she does is to not have any extra work to
do. Is it an act of rebellion against her role of
housekeeper when she allows no one to use any rooms
unnecessarily or just a means of not increasing her
workload? We cannot be sure. It is her husband who
determines the rhythm of the day. At supper each evening,
he tells the other family members what their tasks are for
the next day. Whatever needs to be done, determines the hour when Mrs. Pounder must get up the next morning. He decides what produce will be sold and what Mrs. Pounder can use to feed the family. At night, he decides when the family will gather to read a chapter in the Bible and to have prayers. In all these things Mrs. Pounder is submissive. Not allowing the men to bathe in the house is the only indication of any possible rebellion on her part. Although Mrs. Pounder creates a home that does not fit Joan's idea of a warm and loving home, in many ways she seems least problematical for the concept of home-angel. She is domestic, apparently pious, submissive, and probably pure in so far as she does not accept her son's unfaithfulness to Joan. As with Nadya and Mary, Mrs. Pounder is the image of a woman, not the reality. As with Mary and Nadya, Mrs. Pounder's personal world is ruled by a man--her husband. It appears that when a man is present, the home-angel concept is strongest and we "find not women but images of women" who "exist only in relation to [the] ... male (Russ 5) rather than as "whole people or as people in the process of creating or discovering their wholeness" (Cornillon Preface XI).

Mrs. Mark, another secondary woman in The Time Is Noon, is important in Joan's history and as a person, but she only makes a brief appearance in the novel. Mrs. Mark
lives in a small house on the outskirts of Middlehope, bedridden by a "creeping paralysis," which leaves her less ambulatory each year. Her husband died sometime before her daughter, who died at age six. She has been excluded from life by several things: she lives on the edge of the village; she can no longer walk without crutches and so sees only those people who take the time to visit her; she has ceased to believe in God because of the misfortunes that have befallen her. Perhaps it is her own exclusion that makes it possible for her to take Joan in after Joan leaves her husband. She is the only one Joan can talk to about her retarded child. And she is the one who makes it possible for Joan to live independently of her husband and to care for the four children for whom she takes responsibility. Because Mrs. Mark left her house and $134.00 in cash to Joan, Joan is able to live away from her husband and is also able to function as a home-angel to the children. Mrs. Mark acts as a home-angel to Joan, providing her with shelter, with the means to sustain life, and with nonjudgmental, accepting love. However, Mrs. Mark does not seem endowed with any of the characteristics of a home-angel or true woman. She is not pious. She has no husband on which to focus her energies. She is not submissive, having no one to submit to--and she certainly complains about dying slowly and not being able
to get around. She blames God for her predicament. Nor is she domestic—at least not when we meet her. Mrs. Mark is unencumbered with a husband or a male authority figure in her life and so she seems independent.

As we look at the secondary female characters in each novel, it becomes apparent that both Nadya and Edith are marginal as are the secondary women in their novels. Joan is not marginal nor is Mrs. Mark. It is apparent that when a women character is placed in a patriarchal situation, she has no choice but to be the image expected by the male protagonist. Even Buck, believing that men and women are equal, does not create a female protagonist who is an example of Cornillon's whole person when there is a husband involved. In novels where men are privileged, women apparently must be marginal. Nadya is marginal in a novel told from Malcolm's viewpoint. In The Goddess Abides, Edith is the protagonist. Her story is told, but the other women are marginal. They serve no purpose in Edith's journey of self-discovery; however, the men—Jared and Edwin—are not marginal. Edith listens to and learns from both Edwin and Jared. Although it is Edith's story, she writes herself out of it—out of her life as an independent person in order to make Jared the center of her life.
In *The Time is Noon*, the positions are reversed. In this novel where a woman, Joan, is not only the protagonist, but somewhat successful in creating her own idea of home, men are peripheral--can, in fact, be said to be marginal.

Deciding that women are marginal in the presence of a male authority figure raises several interesting questions. What happens to men in novels peopled with successful women? What is a successful woman for Buck? Is Buck able to create successful men and women in the same novel? Perhaps by examining her other novels set in the United States, we could find men and women successfully living and working together in a spirit of equality and mutual respect.


Demos, John, "Images of the American Family, Then and Now." *Changing Images of the Family*. Ed. Virginia


Goodwill, Sanoma Irons
Pearls Buck's Concept of the Home-Angel in Three Novels:
The Time is Noon...