CHAPTER 3   **THE IDEOLOGY OF VICTORIAN RESPECTABILITY**

SUBPROBLEM 2   Defining the key concepts of Victorian respectability.

PRÉCIS 2   In this chapter the key concepts of Victorian respectability are investigated. The polarised understanding of gender and the notion of 'separate spheres' are critically analysed. The implications of the ideology of respectability for middle class men and women are established.

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Respectability dictated specific gender definitions and was organised around an involved set of practices and representations, which covered every aspect of an individual's life. Victorian ideals of femininity, masculinity, separate spheres, sexuality, marriage and the family were constructed along the precepts of gentility, in an endeavour to maintain order in a period of change.

This chapter provides an overview of the key concepts of Victorian respectability. The ideologies of respectability and domesticity are discussed. Thereafter, the Victorian notion of gender and the subsequent ideals of femininity and masculinity are considered. Further, the historical debate around separate spheres and public/private is thoroughly investigated. Finally sex, marriage and family are studied. The chapter serves to clarify a number of Victorian ideals, as well as the historical argument over separate spheres.

3.2   VICTORIAN RESPECTABILITY

Respectability was a code of behaviour influenced by Christian values (cf. 2.3 & 2.7), governed every aspect of the lives of the Victorians. The centre of this refined behaviour was common to both men and women, yet in every nuance, close attention to gender definitions was essential to gentility (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 397).

Davidoff and Hall (2002) argue the key role played by the Evangelical movement in the cult of respectable domesticity (cf. 2.7 & 3.3). However, Houghton (1957: 184) adds that the middle classes' drive for respectability was powered by a struggle for social advancement and wealth.   The Victorian middle class was not a single or unified entity (cf. 2.8); therefore, what was important was the creation of a coherent and distinct class identity which would distinguish the middle class from the social and economic classes above and below it. Nead (1988: 5) concurs that class coherence was in many ways established through the development of shared notions of morality and respectability.   At the same time norms of domestic life and religious observation helped to establish key boundaries between the 'respectable' members of society and the degenerate masses (Nead 1988: 156).

Respectability meant different things for men and women. Victorian man's social power emanated from his ownership of property, professional and business activities and service to charitable activities (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 398). For women it was defined in terms of their location within the domestic sphere and their consequent sexual respectability (Nead 1988: 28). The smallest details of daily life, personal behaviour, dress and use of language became their arena to judge and be judged. Respectability was organised around a complex set of practices and representations which covered every aspect of an individual's life; it defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance and these social rules and moral codes worked to regulate both gender and class identities (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 398; Nead 1988: 28).

3.2.1 Morality

Morality, a component of respectability, was seen as essential to a civilising process of an imperfectly organised and newly urbanised society (Seaman 1973: 12; par. 2.7). Davidoff and Hall (2002: xviii) argue that the disparate elements of the middle class were bound together by an imperative moral code within the revised domestic world. Definitions of manliness and femininity were key categories to the construction of this moral order. Furthermore, Seaman (1973: 13) states that members of the middle classes felt sure that the weaker among them would inevitably fall into decadence if they did not adhere to the principles of respectability. Not only did the religious keep the demands of respectability but also those who had abandoned supernatural religion. The non-believer claimed that since their behaviour was not based on the expectation of reward or punishment, it was a purer and more exalted morality than Christian morality. Thus, the best of the Victorians accepted a moral code of duty, sobriety and gravity and commitment to work (Seaman 1973: 15; Houghton 1957: 228).

Moreover, Victorian moral earnestness was the result of forces beside religion and high-minded morality. The early Victorians lived under the shadow of the political upheavals which had taken place in Europe, especially France. Political change and industrialisation had produced a condition which was steadily threatening and periodically violent. The British feared that a French Revolution, with its violence and attacks on religious beliefs, would also explode in England. The main causes of the turmoil were considered moral not merely economic or political, therefore the basic solution lay in a reform of character of the landed and moneyed aristocracy (Houghton 1957: 242). In the middle class the avoidance of idleness, the importance of work for

the development of the individual and the sense of calling to serve society in one's particular vocation and in broader social causes were uppermost. Success in hard work was a reflection of one's moral state.

3.3   DOMESTICITY

The cult of domesticity held a dominant place in Victorian public discourse and its realisation in everyday life. The values of domestic life were highly appreciated and like respectability and morality, the cult of domesticity blurred class relations for it came to appear above class (Tosh 1999: 78). Domesticity held an idealised view of the home, and its power exercised over the middle class remained undiminished. Yet, it has been argued (Vickery 1998) that domesticity was not unique to the Victorian age. However, Davidoff and Hall (2002: xx) contend:

> If attention is paid to generational change, rather than taking decade by decade snapshot approach…both beliefs and practices…around domesticity, which have been found in earlier periods, had become more widespread by the early nineteenth century. By that time more people among the expanded middle classes had greater resources to practise the domestic ideal.

Furthermore, Hall (1998: 188-189) argues the impact of the Evangelical movement in establishing the Victorian ideal of domesticity. The Evangelicals believed that home was the one place where attempts could be made to curb sin, thus the household was seen as the basis for a proper religious life - morality began at home. Connecting the religious with the domestic was extended to the division between the public and the private sphere. The latter was seen as dangerous and the private sphere was seen as a safe haven. Although as Tosh (1999: 78) asserts, the ideal of the home was part of any and every Christian denomination, it was also a priority in the moral virtues proclaimed by sceptics.

Hall (1998: 181) posits that Evangelical belief and the separation of public and private sphere involved a re-codification of ideas about women. Central to those new ideas was an emphasis on women as domestic beings, as primarily wives and mothers. However, Hall (1998: 193-194) maintains that the Evangelical ideology of domesticity was not an ideal constructed for others, but an attempt to reconstruct family life and relations between the sexes on the basis of 'real' Christianity. The Puritans had developed many similar views on marriage in an earlier period. Both needed to provide a safe space in a hostile world. The home was an area to be controlled and relatively independent of what went on outside it.

Within the household men and women had their separate spheres. Separate spheres were derived from 'natural' differences between the two sexes. Among those differences women were expected to sustain and even to improve the moral qualities of men (Hall 1998: 190). Home was considered a sanctuary from worldly evils, a place of rest and moral regeneration for men as well as for all members of society. This view gave women a measure of importance, which was in itself an anomaly as the very place that limited them also gave them power. Women had power of influence in the moral sphere by reforming morals and manners. The Evangelicals expected and thus in some way empowered a woman to model by example, privately within her home and family, and publicly through philanthropic work. Herein lay a further contradiction: through their philanthropic works women were able to negotiate public space, traditionally held as a masculine domain.

Tosh (1999: 47 & 124) however, argues that despite the unmistakeable feminine quality of the rituals of home, the labelling of home as 'the woman's sphere' obscured the true relationship between home and gender. The popular image of Victorian domesticity is almost entirely focused on women and children and their needs in the home. Yet, Tosh (1999: 48-50) notes that much of this culture was determined by the needs of men. Domesticity was in all respects as much the creation of men as of women. Given that cultural power was concentrated in the hands of men, the domestic ideal reflected masculine as well as female sensibilities.

3.4   GENDER

Tosh (1999: 46) posits, "Victorian middle class culture was structured around a heavily polarized understanding of gender. Both character and sexuality were seen in more sharply gendered terms than ever before or since." The place where these differences were concretised was the home. Gender (cf. 1.5.1) became inseparable from home: the site of complementary masculinity and femininity, while public space was encountered with less clarity and was seen as the masculine. The middle class ideal of home enforced dichotomies: men were associated with reason, authority and purpose; the 'Angel Mother' denoted the moral standard. The binaries of activity and rest, intellect and feeling, purpose and flexibility were seen to distinguish people into two contrasting categories (Tosh 1999: 47). Feminine morality was associated with home while masculine morality was displayed in public, although the husband's home became his most striking symbol of moral status. Moreover, the moralising of woman's

nature resulted in a clear understanding of the division of labour in family life. Tosh (1999: 47) states, "The husband was to govern, the wife to manage; the husband to provide, the wife to distribute; the husband to inform, the wife to nurture." This was the supposed code for living, yet real conformity to domesticity was full of contradictions. Nead (1988: 32-33) also asserts the separation of work and home had a profound effect on the construction of gender identities; women were defined as domestic beings and men were best suited to public sphere. Masculinity and femininity were defined in relation to the different fields of activity occupied by each. Thus, gender identities became organised around the ideology of separate spheres.

3.4.1 Femininity

In *The second sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1953) wrote: "It is evident that woman's "character" – her convictions, her values, her wisdom, her morality, her tastes, her behaviour – are to be explained by her situation." Moreover, Parker (1984: 2-4) argues:

> Femininity, the behaviour expected and encouraged in women, though obviously related to the biological sex of the individual, is shaped by society...It is important…to distinguish between the construction of femininity, lived femininity, the feminine ideal and the feminine stereotype. The construction of femininity refers to psychoanalytic and social account of sexual differentiation. Femininity is a lived identity for women either embraced or resisted. The feminine ideal is a historically changing concept of what women should be, while the feminine stereotype is a collection of attributes which is imputed to women and against which their every concern is measured.

This is true of the image of woman emanating from the Victorian ideal of respectability. There are a range of stereotypes of the Victorian woman: the passive, the prudish and the frivolous wife. The ideal woman according to the Victorian ideology of respectability is the 'Angel in the House'. Finally, some portrayals of actual Victorian women gleaned from their diaries and letters fit the stereotype and the ideal; others deviate. Branca (1975: 2) argues that "...too many of our images of Victorian women assume a settled state, a complacency, whereas in reality the dominant problem was assimilation to a very new life-style."

Campbell Orr (1995: 1) asserts:

> It is incontestable that the proper role of women was a much debated issue during Victoria's reign. Consensus was never reached, nevertheless between 1837 and 1901 a revolution in British property rights occurred when the law relating to married women was changed; new laws on divorce and child custody were enacted; and the educational prospects and work experiences of all kinds of women

were transformed. Persons of the female sex did not share a uniform social economic or cultural experience, so to speak of women as though they constituted an undifferentiated historical category is in itself misleading.

3.4.1.1 Stereotypes and ideals

The traditional historical image of Victorian woman is a passive, leisurely, frivolous, dependent, prudish and boring wife. Perhaps this was true of some, but in reality she was invariably modest, unassuming, unaffected and rational, bound by codes of respectability and with a sense of duty to her husband, family and home. Hall (1998: 191) states that women were relegated to a dependent role, worthy of their husbands for whose happiness they were responsible. Nead (1988: 28) accedes, "The notion of respectability was defined for women in terms of dependency, delicacy and fragility; independence was unnatural, it signified boldness and sexual deviancy. Female dependency was secured through economic, legal, medical and cultural discourses." However, Nead (1988: 29) argues that "…the notion of dependency should not be seen in terms of a repressive exercise of power. The condition of dependency was believed to be a natural and gratifying component of respectable femininity." This natural aspect of femininity was in line with prevailing conceptions of a deep gulf between the sexes, founded on a theory of natural or biological difference (Tosh 1999: 103).

Hall (1998: 191) and Nead (1988: 13) postulate that the Victorian woman was a "relative creature" whose role was defined through her relationship to men: husband, son and father. In these three different relationships to men, there were shifting patterns of power and dependency. As established, a woman was naturally dependent on her husband. However, sons were her dependants. Her father had absolute control over her as a child and young woman until she married, when he transferred his authority to her husband. Fasick (1995: 75) argues, "Women as relative creatures, [were] 'incomplete'" when 'independent', which was based on…a conservative belief in women's innate differences from (and intellectual inferiority to) men."

Maternal instinct was increasingly invoked to define woman's nature. Poovey (1988: 8) contends:

> Maternal instinct was credited not only with making women nurture their children, but also with conferring upon them extraordinary power over men. Women may have been considered physically unfit to vote or compete for work, but, according to this representation, the power of their moral influence amply compensated them for whatever disadvantages they suffered.

Parker (1984: 18) elucidates, among the contradictions that besieged the Victorian middle class, the place of women was one of the most irreconcilable. The status attributed to women in the family not having to go out and earn wages placed pressure on young girls to remain at home and gain accomplishments. Although it meant that material circumstances for women had improved, their legal and financial dependence deepened. Davidoff and Hall (2002: xiv) concur that the general view was that middle class women should not be gainfully employed and most women led a domesticated life in their suburban villas and gardens. Their homes formed a bulwark of morality in a changing and even perilous world. Compulsory domesticity was, thus, the context of life for middle class Victorian women.

3.4.1.2 The married woman

According to Branca (1975: 5), the situation of the married woman is the most representative of the middle class Victorian woman's life-style. Most middle class women spent their entire lives in their parental home till about age twenty-five and then in their own home until their death. However, Branca (1975: 5) notes that the middle class family has been more stereotyped than researched and requires further investigation. Middle-class daughters were brought up to regard marriage and motherhood as their main purpose in life (Thompson 1988: 59).

Within the home, woman's scope for self-assertion was also limited. Fasick (1995: 78) argues, "Although Victorian gender ideology assigned women to the private rather than the public sphere, it did not authorise women to assert themselves openly even in the home." Moreover, Branca (1975: 7) states that, as the middle class man achieved his position in the cruel, harsh, competitive outside world, he sought refuge in his home, which became his sanctuary. As her husband's 'helpmeet', the Victorian wife was to provide the proper environment of respectability. She became the guardian of morality and bastion of respectability. 'Helpmeet' to her husband required that she be righteous, gentle, sympathetic and primarily submissive. This image, combined with the traditional sanctions of religion and law, ensured the inferior relationship of the wife to the husband. Notwithstanding, Hall (1998: 190-191) argues the alternative: home offered women an area where they could wield some power and influence within the moral sphere, although this emphasis on the moral power of women considerably modified their subordination elsewhere. Home was the wife's centre, where she could influence to the good.

The title, married woman, indicated a woman who had no existence in common law apart from her husband. The woman's economic dependency was complete. She did not work, and even if she did, her earnings belonged to her husband. Branca (1975: 8) points out that this stereotype of Victorian woman (the useless, idle female, a victim of patriarchy) has been much distorted by feminist scholars. In their efforts to analyse the injustices of the society, they have tended to focus solely on the inequalities and in doing this, they have downgraded the real situation and ignored the actual struggle of the women they seek to portray. Indeed inequities were, in theory, present and reform needed, but inequities were beginning to be addressed during this period. Nevertheless, both Branca (1975: 9) and Vickery (1998: 209) admit, "This is not to imply that women did not suffer from inequalities of the society. No doubt there were husbands who ruled their domiciles in despotic fashion. No doubt there were women who were bored by a life that gave them very little to do."

In contrast to the stereotype as mistress of the house, the middle class woman gained a new position in society. Her personal influence grew greatly; she became an important decision-maker in her realm of home and family, she gave instructions to staff and was responsible for the household budget and control of servants. Thus, the middle class housewife was an active agent in the family (Branca 1975: 22). The importance of the role of mistress of the house was widely acclaimed in nineteenth century English society. The household manuals, which were a product of the new functions of middle class women, were clear in their emphasis of the importance of her position, thus guiding the young wife in her role as model wife and home-maker. Yet the household manuals also produce a misconception about the middle class housewife. Although they reflected real domestic problems and responsibilities, beyond the recipe level, most advice in the manuals was irrelevant, aimed at a group above the real middle class. Moreover, the tone of most manuals was sharply critical of middle class women, comparing them to some bygone utopia (Branca 1975: 22). The aim of these journals was to stress the desirability of becoming a model wife socially as well as domestically. Randall (1989: 9-11) speculates whether this concern for feminine behaviour did not suggest that women were inclined to forget what their 'true' role really was.

The middle class housewife became an active moulder of her personal situation. Within the context of the family, her role was not only functional but central and crucial.

Yet, despite seeking more autonomy and control, many never really fully realised their personal goals because they lacked public sanction (Branca 1975: 62 & 152).

3.4.1.3 Housekeeping

To be a 'lady of leisure' became the hall mark of respectability. According to Hall (1992: 63), "For women not to work reflected the success of their men – whether father or husband. The education and training of girls was to prepare them for courtship and marriage...If she did not marry, her life was likely to be a hard one." The image of the housewife as lady was therefore propagandised by the dominant class in the nineteenth century. Middle-class women forced to work by economic necessity were barely able to maintain an aura of gentility (Hall 1992: 64-65). However, the increasingly complex world of work had few opportunities for middle class women and by the mid-nineteenth century, *work*, when it meant gainful employment, was becoming a particularly problematic activity for a particular group of middle class women (Davidoff & Hall 2002: xv). In middle class vocabulary, 'work' generally referred to sewing for the family, preferably embroidery. The work of reproduction, however, as the particular responsibility of women, continued to be critical to the establishment: women produced and serviced people.

Dickerson (1995: xxi) contends that Victorian women assumed various positions along a continuum that ranged from an aspiration for the power and acceptance associated with successful domesticity to the immobility and lack of power also associated with it. The activity that most informed woman's place was housekeeping, where evidence is found of feminine agency: to use and transcend the home and its contents. According to Dickerson (1995: xxi):

> To keep house…was also to keep bodies, spirits, souls. To keep house was not only to cook, clean and nurse, but also to regulate and police, to draw, paint and write, to hold, own, save and consume. Housekeeping meant not only keeping but also being kept, trapped, confined, sweated. Yet housekeeping could also mean empowerment and freedom.

The average Victorian household kept the middle class wife busy from morning till night, whether physically working alongside a servant or supervising a team of servants. Large families, typical of this period, meant large houses, with many rooms and staircases, high ceilings and much ornamentation to keep in order. According to Davidoff and Hall (2002: 395), middle class women were at the centre of the master-servant relationship. Personally and daily, this meant that they experienced the ambiguities of managing subordinate relationships across class lines in a family setting,

in addition to bringing up their own children and any other young people attached to the household. If a woman ran the household efficiently and firmly, she had to do so with personal strength combined with strict routine. She had to be firm and business-like, qualities in contrast to feminine softness, gentleness and self-denial which were considered key to feminine influence.   Another important task was managing household accounts. "It was for the wife, as 'faithful steward of your Husband's income' (a concept with religious overtones), to keep account of the income which it was his 'duty as it will be his pleasure to provide' " (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 384). Girls, were thus, taught arithmetic to cope with budgeting. This expertise enabled the wife to feel an interest in the couple's joint prosperity, now missing in her segregation in the home (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 384; Randall 1989:41).

Although the model wife appears to have been dedicated to her home, she was not all house-bound. She went out on shopping trips, visited relatives, made calls, attended functions with her husband or fulfilled charitable duties (Randall 1989: 157). Philanthropy presented woman with a legitimate reason to move beyond the home. Many women entered enthusiastically and actively into philanthropic cause/s and were supported by their husbands. This area of work presented women with a 'borderland' (Digby in Campbell Orr 1995:4), where they could be active agents in the public realm, yet within the confines of respectable feminine behaviour.

3.4.2   Masculinity

Masculinity was based on the idea that masculine 'self-respect' was defined as different from and materially superior to the female. Man identified his selfhood with superiority over the female (Fasick 1995: 85-86). Tosh (1999) posits that although middle class masculine identity essentially rested on a man's occupation or 'calling', domestic circumstances were the most overt and reliable indicator of a man's level of income and moral standing. The expectation that men spent their non-working hours at home assumed a companionate marriage, based on love, common values and shared interests. Time spent at home by men was more than just personal preference. Yet, masculinity often coexisted uneasily with this ideal of respectability. Davidoff and Hall (2002: 401) argue Victorian gentlemen had special problems in proving full-bodied manliness with refinement. Men, in their business and sporting life, had to understand or use more uncouth language; over-refined language and general behaviour implied a departure from masculinity.

Nevertheless, Tosh (1999: 77) asserts that some men refused the logic of separate spheres, which portrayed them as full-time breadwinners and accumulators who spent time at home for only the minimum hours of physical restoration. Tosh (1999: 77) contests the doctrine of separate spheres, in that it neglects the distinctively masculine privilege of enjoying access to both the public *and* the private sphere. Middle class men proclaimed their need to spend a significant proportion of their adult lives at home, and to a remarkable extent they did. Patriarchy remained close to their idea of masculine self-respect. Most wives knew little about their husbands' working lives and were inhibited by female propriety from exploring them. For most Victorian couples the husband's career stressed the gap between them rather than uniting them in shared endeavour. Moreover, the requirements of domesticity engendered unreasonable expectations in men which burdened their wives with household responsibilities and which distorted their relationship.

However, men's investment in the home was not only strictly financial and legal nor did men dictatorially occupy domestic space (Dickerson 1995: xix). Domesticity for men implied a life spent, as far as work allowed, within the home or with family. After men had met the material needs of the family through earning a living and fulfilled their responsibilities as employee or partner, according to the dictates of the moral discourse, the foremost demand on a man's time was his home, with the exception of religious duty. The moral soundness of the home and its pure type of entertainment was expected to uplift middle class men while reinforcing their place of authority in the family. This ideal was coloured in by a prescribed set of domestic activities for men (Tosh 1999: 123). Most entertaining was done at home. Acceptable leisure activities were gardening and home-improvement. Moreover, Davidoff and Hall (2002: 387) state men also took an active part in setting up the home. Men were responsible for buying certain items: wine, books, pictures, musical instruments and wheeled vehicles. They accompanied their wives to buy furniture and carpets, while both men and women painted and papered rooms.

The most visible forms of homosocial leisure had to meet the demanding standards of respectability. However, Tosh (1999: 126) states:

> It would be a great mistake to assume that middle class husbands were living out the code of domesticity to the letter…the lengthy years of bachelorhood established a taste for masculine companionship which marriage was unlikely to replace completely...One way to make space for their male friends was to go on holiday with them, for example, shooting or fishing.

Another was to become a member of a gentlemen's club. Despite club premises often being described in quasi-domestic terms, it was the absence of constraining femininity that made the club attractive to the married man. There is no doubt too that attendance at the club could serve as a cover for less reputable forms of pleasure (Tosh 1999: 128-129).

At this point it is important to clarify the stereotype that male 'pleasure' meant consorting with loose women. The typecast of the prostitute's client as the rich bourgeois husband cheating on his 'angel' wife has been seen as the sharpest criticism against the moral pretensions of the Victorians. According to Tosh (1999: 129), "Recent scholars are agreed that those who consorted with prostitutes were a representative cross-section of society as a whole: middle class men were proportionately no more forward then lower- or upper-class men." Unmarried men were the prime market for commercial sex. Moreover, Thompson (1988: 59) asserts, the postponement of marriage by middle class men to their late twenties or early thirties is commonly held responsible for the Victorian's 'double-standard' which worked for or even stimulated the sexual activities of bachelors while demanding chastity from unmarried women.

The conflict between fireside and homosocial pleasures is comparatively one-sided, because virtue was clearly on the side of home. Tension arose when public duty came to the fore as it always transcended the duties at home. Another danger to domesticity and society was the husband for whom work was everything. Private virtue and public duty were mutually supportive, indicative of a man's gentility (Tosh 1999: 136-141).

3.4.2.1 Patriarchy

The companionate marriage turned on two issues: patriarchal authority and sexual difference. According to Dickerson (1995:xxii), the omnipresence of man even in matriarchal territory, as woman's space, whether under the aegis of the father or husband or set up in spite of or outside of it, remained within the domain of patriarchy. The most influential universal of women's history is the concept of patriarchy, although the term has been much criticised and debated.

Household authority was essential to masculine status, a centuries' old tradition. The husband as head of the household was expected to exercise general control and dominion over the household. If his authority was lacking, he was not equal to his

fellows. Analysing the 'Angel in the House' ideal, Dickerson (1995: xvii), points out "…that for every angel in the house there was a God on the premises too…though the Victorian angel presided over the house…[the] final and real authority rested with the male who was head of the family." Davidoff and Hall (2002: 391) state that the master was responsible for his dependants and retained ultimate authority. Acceptance of patriarchy was, however, not unqualified. The middle class showed reservations about the boundaries of patriarchy not about the principle. In particular, enforcement, in the form of wife-beating and other physical coercion, was no longer being tolerated by society. Tosh (1999: 62) notes, "...the husband's ultimate and overall domestic authority was accepted by almost all female advice book writers of the period, including those who were intent on raising the status of wives." What justified this subordination was the protection and material support supplied by the husband. While the husband provided for and governed over the family, management of the family belonged to the wife.

3.5   SEPARATE SPHERES

Following nineteenth century nomenclature, the 'separate sphere' of women became a dominant theme, particularly in relation to the nineteenth century Victorian middle class (Davidoff 2003: 11). The term denotes the separation of work from the home, public from private, male from female. The ideal of separate spheres also penetrated the ambitions of the working classes, who recognised a distinction between those who were 'respectable', as defined by the middle class and those who were not. Wolff (1988: 118) states that the continuing process of the 'separation of spheres' of male and female, public and private, was on the whole reinforced and maintained by cultural ideologies, practices and institutions (cf 3.2; 3.3). Victorian middle class culture was dedicated to separate spheres: separate single-family houses, separation of work from home and separation of women from work (Thompson 1988: 197; Wolff 1988: 128). Furthermore, Poovey (1988: 11) states that the representation of woman as one who was both dependent and who needed to be controlled was integral to the separation of the spheres and everything that followed from it, because this image provided a defensible explanation for inequality.

3.5.1   Critique of separate spheres
The notion of separate spheres has also been sharply critiqued. Historians, in particular, have tended to confuse prescriptive ideology with actual practice and have

ignored alternative, dissenting points of view. Shoemaker and Vincent (1998: 178) argue, "These interrelationships between men's and women's lives tend to be obscured by the uncritical use of the metaphor which emphasises the separation of men's and women's spheres of activity." Vickery (1998), Poovey (1988), Peterson (1984) and Campbell Orr (1995) agree that the idea of separate spheres in the nineteenth century was neither new nor as clear cut as historians have suggested. In particular, Vickery, Peterson and Poovey have criticised their predecessors for confusing discourse and ideology with women's lived experience.

Vickery (1998: 197) attacks their systematic use of separate spheres as *the* organising concept in the history of middle class women, thus, assuming that capitalist man needed a hostage at home. She complains that many historians simply accept that the rise of the ideology of domesticity is linked to separate spheres. Vickery (1998: 199) points out that the theory of separate spheres is buttressed by three types of evidence: didactic literature, contemporary feminist debate and post-Victorian denunciations. Yet when cases of Victorian women are explored, they emerge just as spirited, capable and diverse as in any other century, which does not fit the stereotype of the passive female, a prisoner in her own home. Thus, she doubts the conceptual usefulness of the separate spheres' framework and argues that it has greater descriptive than analytical power.

Furthermore, Vickery (1998: 207-210) heavily criticises *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850,* by Hall and Davidoff (1989), in which they claim the significance of separate spheres as essential to Victorian class formation, yet fail to take into account 'difference'. Vickery feels that their use of the metaphor of separate spheres does not capture the texture of female subordination and the complex interplay of emotion and power in family life. In the revised edition of *Family Fortunes* Davidoff and Hall (2002: xv-xvi) defend their earlier thinking as a story of exclusion and contestation, of boundaries which could never be fixed, yet had to be dismantled. Central to their argument in the revised work remains the terminology of separate spheres; yet, they admit that this language carries heavy conceptual baggage, which they did not recognise at the time of the first edition. However, their intention was to move beyond the public/private divide and show how public was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of separate spheres. Both were constructions with specific meanings which had to be understood as products of a particular historical time. Davidoff and Hall (2002: xvi) note many

examples of the crossing of boundaries, both in their imagined and material forms. Separate spheres became the common-sense of the middle class, albeit a common-sense that was always fractured. Yet, something significant changed at the end of the eighteenth century; a historic break occurred and a realigned gender order emerged, more characteristic of modern times, capitalism and urbanism. This does not suggest that there were no discontinuities nor that the idea of separate spheres was invented in the 1780's. Rather, existing expectations about the proper roles of men and women were re-worked with a significantly different emphasis.

Digby (cf. 3.4.1.3) questions how clear-cut the demarcation between the public and the private sphere actually was and refers to a social 'borderland' – where women acted outside the immediately private sphere without drawing adverse attention to themselves. Furthermore, Wolff (1988: 118-119) argues that the continuing process of the separation of spheres does not presuppose either a ready-formed or static 'middle class' or a straightforward economic and ideological separation of spheres. Rather, this separation was constantly and fluidly produced and counteracted in a range of arenas, including culture and the arts. The material separation of work and home, which was the result of both the Industrial Revolution and the growth of suburbs, was clearly the precondition of the general process: for many families and many occupations this distinction did not always apply. However, women who continued to work outside the home were increasingly restricted to particular occupations. Physically, the separation of spheres was marked, as well as constructed, by both geography and architecture.

However, in defence of separate spheres, Shoemaker & Vincent (1998: 178) argue that:

> ...it is appropriate in describing gender roles at certain moments in time, notably the nineteenth century…. In England the ideology of domesticity in the nineteenth century rested on an assertion that the 'Home' was the natural place for women.

Although gender differences along the separate spheres model were not new in the nineteenth century, they were articulated in novel ways. Not only was the term used for the first time, but the foundation of arguments on a 'natural' difference (cf 3.4) and strong moral value were also new.

Social practice, however, did not always conform to the strict difference dictated by ideologies. Men and women in the nineteenth century often occupied the same

geographical spaces or performed the same tasks. In the middle class, separation of responsibilities existed, but not along the private/public boundaries rather according to activity: women active in home and abroad, with issues of maternity, morality, religiosity and philanthropy, while men dominated 'high' politics, institutional management and most forms of paid employment (Shoemaker & Vincent 1998: 178-179). Cognisance is therefore taken of the danger of a mechanistic use of the metaphor of separate spheres. It can be applied with the understanding of a greater likelihood of a convergence rather than a separation of spheres.

3.5.2 Public/private

Although the Victorian model of separate spheres is intrinsically related to the public/private division, the one should not be mistaken for the other. According to Ryan (2003: 14), public/private incorporates complex but consistent gender assignments far more effectively than the geographical shapes of separate spheres. Further, Landes (2003: 32) states that the rigid framework of separate spheres provides a world all too neatly divided into male and female.

Davidoff (2003: 11-12) asserts that, in both conceptual and empirical terms, the separate spheres paradigm has been criticised with particular regard to its chronology, location and actual practice. Public and private are categories of relationship posed as mutually exclusive terms. Yet, like many of the binary concepts, public and private are complicated and shift according to context. Constant throughout this variation are two distinctions: the open and revealed versus the hidden or withdrawn; and the collective versus the individual. Davidoff (2003: 22) concludes:

> Public and private, with their multiple and shifting gender connotations, have to be recognised within particular contexts and particular times... . Their status as a set of blueprints, whether these result in boundaries of social convention or bricks and mortar, has to be taken seriously...[H]owever insubstantial the barriers between these spheres may seem to us now, in certain historical phases and among certain groups their power was defining and tangible... . Examples may be found of women in public but this does not change the underlying way public was...defined.

However, Davidoff (2003:22) does not altogether concede the separate spheres framework; she feels it should rather be viewed as a special case of the Western cultural division between private and public or home and the world. Within the separate spheres theory the existence of a private sphere is linked to the hegemony of men and modern masculinity within the public realm. Sexual segregation worked to impart meanings to divisions between home and the world. Moreover, this strict

pattern was further complicated by men's access to forms of private intimacy and sociability outside the home as well as by women's forms of communal life. However, norms of respectability and sexual protection prevented women from enjoying the same freedom as men in the public sphere. Public and private space, a luxury that some could not afford, is related to social class. Thus, a definite connectivity exists between the public/private divide and respectability. Those with few resources, "…who literally with no home, lived entirely under the public gaze…", were outcasts, being altogether removed from the public/private divide. Therefore, Davidoff argues the continued relevance not only of public/private but also of separate spheres for understanding the class specific yet gendered organisation of British public and private life across the nineteenth century. Landes (2003: 34) and Ryan (2003:14) concur with Davidoff that the category of public and private remains an indispensable framework for gender analysis.

3.6   SEX

The dominant belief in Victorian England was that women were not only inferior to men, but fundamentally different from them. They were set apart from the 'superior sex' by natural physical endowment for specific tasks requiring distinctive attributes. Traditionally in Western society men regarded women as not essentially different, but less perfect versions of themselves (Tosh 1999: 43-44). However, the rise of 'sensibility', in the eighteenth century, led to a new trend for analysing human behaviour in terms of the nervous system. Subsequently by the end of the eighteenth century, the mental differences between men and women were being increasingly stressed. Women were considered more sensitive to the emotional life around them, which gave them special qualities in the moral sphere. Thus, the moral gap between husband and wife was widely acknowledged. Dickerson (1995: xvi) notes, "More than in any other period, Victorian women and men agreed that women were the more spiritual sex. But because their spiritual role was based in the home, they could not exercise public authority."

Women's sexual nature was adjusted to conform to this moralised femininity. Modesty, departing from the conventional view of being a discipline imposed by men on the lascivious sex, came to be seen as an inner quality that arose from a lack of sexual desire (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 401; Poovey 1988: 5; Tosh 1999: 44). Medical specialists had different views as to the extent that passion was natural to women. According to

Tosh (1999: 44), "The most quoted contemporary opinion on the subject is Dr Acton's in 1857, that 'the majority of women (happily for them) were not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind' ". Acton's view was popular among the public as the idea of the passionless woman had been firmly established in respectable middle class culture. Conveniently for men, this lack of passion was not regarded as typical of prostitutes whose sexual appetite was seen as proof of their decadence. Lack of passion and morality met in the ideal of motherhood.

According to Tosh (1999: 45):

> The implications for men's sexuality are much less clear and not surprisingly they were much less written about it. Women were still 'the sex' – bearers of most discourse about sexual difference. Men, as controllers of that discourse, were also the standard by which women were judged. Yet the effect on men of the shift in understanding women's nature was of great significance.

Within the culture of respectability, men became the sole bearers of sexuality. Middle-class Victorians held a deep fear of male sexual energy; consequently, a fear of excess and need for restraint were expressed. The good wife deployed her purity as a means of cooling her husband's ardour, and so protected him from the dangers of immorality. Victorian men's dilemma was that their sexual energy was considered very potent but appropriate ways for expressing it were very closely circumscribed (Tosh 1999: 46).

Nevertheless, there is no reason to suppose that the average middle class Victorian did not have a satisfying married life that conformed to the professed standards of sexual morality. Equally, Thompson (1988: 259) states:

> ...sex within marriage was not invariably a joyless and purely functional operation. In an area where the direct evidence of diaries, journals and correspondence is necessarily extremely scant there is, at any rate, room to believe that the great public parade of strait-laced prudery and apparent sexlessness, which for many is the essence of Victorianism, was an effort to subdue and direct into manageable channels, but not suppress, what were seen as naturally exuberant and devouring passions.

Tosh (1999: 57) concurs that "good taste dictated a reticence about sexual matters."

The apparent stark conflict between public morals and the private behaviour of the Victorians, enshrined in the notorious double standard of female purity and faithfulness and male indulgence and unfaithfulness, has been frequently written about. Thompson (1988: 257) notes that prostitution, a serious and increasing social problem in much

Victorian religious and social thinking, was seen as a case of double exploitation: of females by males, and of lower-class girls by their social superiors. Although some clientele clearly came from middle class and aristocratic men, the overwhelming majority were from the working classes, notably soldiers and sailors (Thompson 1988: 257, Tosh 1999:129). Toleration of the double standard by society was justified by an ideology: male sexuality was far greater than that of female, which was as much a class issue as it was a sexist statement.

3.7   MARRIAGE

The idea of a companionate marriage was the practical expression of the ideology of respectability. The upper class and middle classes operated in highly structured and practical arrangements in their social rituals and codes of etiquette. The effective determination of marrying standards and their enforcement were substantially women's business. Women devised and organised the system of chaperoning, which was intended to channel young women's daughters' social contacts and marrying opportunities into clearly defined acceptable circles (Thompson 1988: 103). In such controlled situations, factors such as property ownership, birth, common background, shared values and the interests of large and powerful families, as well as love and affection would enter into the marriage bond, since that was the object of the controls (Thompson 1988: 109). Men often married late, once their career had been established and they could comfortably provide for a family. As a result men often married women much younger than themselves.

Yet, the middle class ideal was of a marriage based on love and friendship, although this did not presume that the wife would be her husband's intellectual equal. The trend placed greater emphasis on love and affection with a greater scope for individual inclinations and choice from the early eighteenth century onwards (Thompson 1988: 111). Tosh (1999: 54) states that husbands looked for a partner in life to whom they could confide their anxieties, doubts and aspirations. However, wives were not to expect the same emotional support. They had to act as sympathetic listeners who gave support and encouragement. In this way home acquired a restorative power. Meeting the needs of a husband took priority in exchange for the material sustenance and protection received by a wife.

The benefits of a companionate marriage were intimacy and leisure: spending time together at meals, playing music, reading aloud and leisurely Sundays. According to Tosh (1999: 60), a satisfying companionate marriage was best served by a husband who regarded the home as the first call for his leisure but who spent his working hours elsewhere. Evenings and Sundays were billed as domestic time for the conscientious husband, but they also gave him scope to assert his mastery over the household.

The most reliable basis for a companionate marriage was shared cultural interests, which often attracted people together in the first place. Education was therefore vital. Typically it is believed there was a lack of formal schooling for girls, any education they did receive from their mother or a governess was focused on 'accomplishments' at expense of intellectual development. However, in practice there was more to women's education than this stereotype suggests (Tosh 1999: 67; Peterson 1984). Professional men, like doctors and clergy, tended to pay more attention to the education of their daughters. Many women attended courses or public lectures, kept up with journals and learned foreign languages. In this way they developed many intellectual interests to share with husbands.

3.7.1   Moral need

Victorian culture gave a distinctive twist to the duty of the wife to provide her husband with loving support. His need was a *moral* need. The Victorian intense moral tone was strengthened by a widely perceived demise of moral values in the workplace (Tosh 1999: 55). Men expected their homes to provide a moral vision of life which would influence their feelings. The women, especially wives, had to guard morality. The wife's function as a helpmeet was moral, "a selfless minister, whose mere presence had an uplifting effect on the moral needs of others" (Tosh 1999: 55). The redemptive power of home structured much interaction in the marriage. Many husbands looked to their wives to provide an active moral sensibility which would undergird their working lives in an uncertain or disturbing environment (Tosh 1999: 55).

The moral wife was an ideologically loaded label, which echoed the moralising tendencies of Victorian respectability; the result was a position with a greater burden of meaning. Husbands bore the tainted morality of the market place. The wife, although not inherently moral, was kept morally pure by her seclusion from the public realm (Tosh 1999: 67). Subsequently, husbands placed huge demands for emotional and

moral support on their wives, which was potentially overwhelming. Men were also adversely affected by it. Tosh (1999: 68) states:

> Given the immense prestige of motherhood at that time…the wife became hopelessly confused with the mother figure…Victorian notions of motherhood were so deeply identified with purity that identification of wife with mother was likely to make her a highly equivocal object of desire…In these instances the perception of sexual difference distorted the emotional relationship between spouses and loaded the odds heavily against sexual fulfilment.

3.8   FAMILY

To the Victorians the family was a symbol of order, social stability and progress. The family was a unifying and universal norm (Nead 1988: 36) and marriage was its conventional starting point. However, Thompson (1988: 85) states many early Victorians felt that they were witnessing a 'crisis of the family' that threatened to undermine society. Despite other grave social problems, the disintegration of the family was considered the most serious and it was assumed that it was caused by the factory system, city living, irreligion and weakening traditional moral and social bonds. Feminine rebellion against the duties and functions of childbearing and home-keeping was also considered a danger by many. The demise of parental, particularly paternal, authority signalled to moralists and reformers the end of the family as basic unit of education and social training, and conveyer of moral habits and standards.

Whether these fears of middle class moralists were well grounded or not, these perceptions induced various reform movements and strengthened the ideology of respectability, aimed at reforming the material and cultural environment for the preservation of the family. According to Thompson (1988: 89), efforts of middle class moralists and social reformers reflected what were considered the habits and conditions of middle class families. The middle class felt that they had to protect family ideals by guarding morality, modesty, reticence, sexual segregation, parental discipline and authority and male dominance. Middle-class privacy and property had to be protected from the decadent aristocracy or the vulgarity of the masses. These defences may also reflect the need to protect the middle class family from its own potentially self-destructive appetites and desires.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 3 the hypothesis that respectability was a specific manifestation of the prevalent ideologies of the Victorian era was investigated. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, read from a scholarly critical perspective. The chapter was written in a narrative style, a framework of information on the subject was established, while at the same time acknowledging where sources colluded and differed. Respectability, at the core of Victorian life, was structured around a heavily polarized understanding of gender, which became inseparable from the home. The hegemony of modern masculinity privileged men with access to both the public and the private spheres. Women were seen as naturally domestic beings, limited to the private sphere. The separate spheres paradigm provided a rigid framework divided according to male and female. Sexual roles were demarcated: men became the sole bearers of sexuality while women were seen to lack any sexual desire. The middle class ideal of marriage was based companionship. Furthermore, the family was a sign of moral order, a unifying and universal norm. Thus, it was found that prevailing Victorian ideals were constructed along the precepts of respectability, in an endeavour to maintain order in an age marked by change. The hypothesis that respectability was a specific manifestation of the prevalent ideologies of the Victorian era is validated.

CHAPTER 4   **THE GENDERING OF VICTORIAN DOMESTIC SPACE**

SUBPROBLEM 3   How was domestic interior space gendered in the context of urban middle class England?

PRÉCIS 3   There are embedded and gendered discourses in Victorian domestic space that reveal the dichotomy in Victorian respectability. This chapter examines the gendering of Victorian architectural space. The notions of domestic space and power are investigated.   The organisation of space in and the decoration of the Victorian home are critically analysed.

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Architecturally the word, house, denotes a geometric object of planes and intersections; however, houses accrue much more significance when one acknowledges how divisions of space and social formations are intimately associated. Domestic space has seldom so powerfully, explicitly and strictly defined society as it did in nineteenth century England. Victorians were deeply involved with domestic things because they represented abstract ideas and sentiments, expressed timeless truths about art, truth and beauty, and purportedly contributed to the moral improvement of those who lived among them (Halttunen 1989: 189).

This chapter considers how architectural space, in particular domestic space, was used during the Victorian period to mediate patriarchal power. The evolution of specific housing typologies acceptable to respectable middle class Victorians is reflected upon. Thereafter, domestic space is analysed in terms of the structuring of space and application of decoration. Finally, the notion of 'Angel in the House' in relation to female agency is investigated to show how domestic space was elaborately differentiated according to a careful 'socio-sexual' code.

4.2   DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE AND POWER

It is simplistic to view architecture as indifferent, created innocuously as protection from the elements. As Weisman (1994: 2-9) and Dickerson (1995: xiii) argue, man-made (male-made) space is an active moulder of human identity and life's events. Furthermore, buildings, neighbourhoods, and cities are cultural artefacts shaped by human intention and intervention, symbolically declaring to society the place held by each of its members. Physical space and social space reflect and rebound upon each other. Weisman (1994: 2) states:

> Space, like language, is socially constructed; and like the syntax of language, the spatial arrangements of our buildings and communities reflect and reinforce the nature of gender, race and class relations in society. The uses of both language and space contribute to the power of some groups over others and the maintenance of human inequality. Architecture thus defined is a record of deeds done by those who have the power to build.

Spain (1992: 15-16) concurs, "Spatial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with less power." This is evident in Victorian architecture, where space was structured around the notion

of respectability (cf. Chapter 3). Men were accorded the public sphere as well as domination over the private, domestic sphere, while women were relegated to maintenance of the private sphere.

Weisman (1994: 10) posits that those who have the defining power of their society's symbolic universe have the power to construct a world where they and their priorities, values and operating procedures are not only dominant, but accepted and endorsed without question by the most of society. In a patriarchal society, such as Victorian England, men were by definition the dominant group; social, physical and metaphysical spaces were the products of male experience, male consciousness and male control. Moreover, man-made space encodes and perpetuates male power and superiority and the inferiority and subordination of women. Spain (1992: 15-16) attests:

> By controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced. Thus, spatial boundaries contribute to the unequal status of women. For women to become more knowledgeable, they must also change places.

According to Weisman (1994: 11), two precepts structure the patriarchal symbolic universe: dichotomy and territoriality. Dichotomy is the classification of people into opposing groups. In each case one group is afforded power and status and the other rendered powerless and inferior. Dichotomies define not only social space but also the way we conceptualise metaphysical and physical space. Territoriality is the claiming and defending of social, built and metaphysical space. Weisman (1994: 23) contends that the spatial dichotomies that define the dual realms of male superiority and female inferiority are protected and maintained through man's territorial dominance and control. Despite the Victorian home being feminised as 'women's place', ultimate authority still lay largely in the hands of the husband (Walker 2002: 826; Tosh 1999:62; Davidoff & Hall 2002: 391). Weisman (1994: 86) thus affirms, "The home embodies a male/female territorial dichotomy, both symbolically and spatially…men own and 'rule' domestic space, while women are confined to and maintain it."

According to Spain (1992: 7), architectural space plays a role in maintaining status distinctions by gender. Wright (1980) concurs, domestic space reveals norms concerning family life, gender, community relations and social [in]equality. Although architecture is not the direct determinant of human behaviour or identity, the associations that Victorian respectability established between a 'model' house and the

notion of the model family encouraged certain roles and assumptions. Spain (1992: 7) asserts:

> …analysis of gender and space would recognise that definitions of femininity and masculinity are constructed in particular places – most notably the home, the workplace and community..... The spatial structure of buildings embodies knowledge of social relations, or the taken-for-granted rules that govern relations of individuals to each other and society. Thus, dwellings reflect ideals and realities about relationships between women and men within the family and in society. The space outside the home becomes the arena in which social relations are produced, while space inside the home becomes that in which social relations are reproduced. Gender-status distinctions therefore are played out within the home as well as outside of it. The use of architecture to reinforce prevailing patterns of privilege and to assert power is a concept dating from the eighteenth century.

Weisman (1994: 86) observes that the Victorian era is unique in its celebration of the home as a repository for social values, which gave rise to the cult of domesticity. While home and work had been complementary to each other prior to the nineteenth century, compromising a unity of social existence for women and men, master and servant, by the mid-nineteenth century they had become two distinct and isolated spheres. Dickerson (1995: xiii) assents, the 'house' of the nineteenth century explicitly and absolutely reflected society. The home was re-invented as woman's natural or appropriate place: she belonged in the house because of biological imperatives. Whether a woman perceived the house to be her prison or her salvation, Dickerson (1995: xxviii-xiv) proposes her identity, status and being were strongly determined by the concept of house and home. The house kept her just as surely she was designated the one who ought to keep it. The privatised and compartmentalised Victorian house, no longer a multi-purpose space, was increasingly a space defined by an interiority shared with the female. Yet, this interiority, though supposedly valued, was still based in negation and separation and ultimately associated with subordination. The home was the 'other', a narrow and colonised female space that existed in opposition to and in support of the master space.

4.2.1   What is a home?

Wright (1980) states that the term, home, serves as a metaphor, suggesting and justifying social categories, values and relations. Furthermore, Spain (1992: 111) asserts spatial and social relations mutually reinforce one another. Dwellings reflect the cultural values as well as the technological and geographic characteristics of the societies in which they are built. Houses are shaped not just by materials and tools, but by ideas, values and norms. Davidoff and Hall (2002: 359) concur, in the

nineteenth century 'home' was as much a social construct and state of mind as an actual building. According to Jenner (1988: 212), the most ardent architectural concern of the Victorians was reserved for the most elementary unit, the home. The challenge of providing appropriate housing had strong moral as well as practical implications.

Both the desire for efficiency and moral purpose had elevated the ordering and separation of time, tasks and space to a central space in middle class life. In standards of housing, furniture, food, service, dress and behaviour, there was always a pull between demonstrating economic status and a religious, moral rejection of the material world. The value of home was reflected in many different ways. The home's appearance demonstrated one's economic and moral worth (Calder 1979: 12, Halttunen 1989: 159).

Victorian England saw the emergence of a variety of new domestic concepts whose main effect was to place the individual dwelling at the focal point of city building. The underlying trend of the period was a shift away from the dominance of grand architectural façades to the single house as an entity in its own right. The Victorian ideal was of the detached house or at least the semi-detached posing as such (Jenner 1988: 212-213).

4.3   VICTORIAN MIDDLE CLASS HOUSING

As mentioned earlier, the nineteenth century witnessed the gradual separation of home from work. Initially lodgings were located next to or above the family's business. These homes were designed to enhance privacy and respectability even when next to or part of the enterprise. At first there was some ambivalence about the desirability of separation as such proximity affected valued privacy and protection from the public (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 365-366).

The most extensive and significant building that took place during the second half of the century was in suburban building. Suburbs offered more space for less money, and a greater opportunity for certain significant symbols of upward mobility. People regarded the town as unattractive, dirty, uncomfortable and conducive to immorality (Muthesius 1982: 40). An atmosphere of containment and pleasant safety was offered by the suburb. The latter gave a sense of separateness combined with a sense of belonging to a community of similar people, but there were contradictions.   Suburbia

meant that the breadwinner had to travel further to work, was further from his home and it made the prison-like containment of home more obvious. At the same time the suburban home stressed many of the valued but negative characteristics of the Victorian home. The wife was likely to be more isolated and more dependent on house-bound activities. Most suburbs were developed without consideration given to providing shops and entertainment. The negative and introverted nature of many suburbs is partly due to this; the combination of family privacy and little civic life limited human activity. Although the front door could be shut on the world, a daily journey had to be taken, if only occasionally, by the wife and children as they could not be entirely confined. Home life was simultaneously consolidated and disrupted (Calder 1977: 187-189).

In the nineteenth century, dwelling places were mass produced for the first time. The rapidity of urban expansion is one of the most established facts of the Industrial Revolution. Calder (1977: 173) states another movement evident in cities in the Victorian period was a movement upwards. Housing, the type of housing and its situation were symbolic of this. Most new housing was put up to accommodate the increasing middle class. There was a self-conscious need to establish an identity in terms of external signs of respectability. Dixon and Muthesius (1978: 30) argue that the house not only reflected the social position of its occupants: it suggested their social aspirations.

During the period, 1780-1850, the idea had developed that such a dwelling should be a space enclosed from the intrusion of all strangers. Thus, property boundaries with gates, hedges and walls around house and garden became common. The passing view - shops, roads and the public - was cut off by fencing, shrubbery and trees (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 361). Victorian domestic architecture demonstrated an inward and well ordered life style and the Victorian middle class home was shielded by walls, steps and entrances (Calder 1977: 173). Yet, middle class housing had to provide more than just a haven for family withdrawal; the home was also the forum for social ritual and external show of status in the community (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 361-362). The simpler houses showed architectural features copied from the houses of the social class immediately above (Dixon & Muthesius 1978: 30). Various details in housing and furnishings copied from the gentry were transformed by the middle class for their own ends. Status was emphasised through architectural devices in house fronts, windows and doorways. With population and industrial growth, the burgeoning towns were

differentiated into areas of industry, professional offices, retail outlets and housing. The only way to escape the town was to build or rent a country house distant from the town's boundaries. Rural areas surrounding towns were marked by houses belonging to the wealthy. Gradually these were added to by purpose-built 'ornamental villas'. Thus, middle class families chose to live outside the town centre, in recently developed suburbs, to avoid noise, industrial pollution and the growing working class.

4.3.1 Housing typologies

Housing for the middle classes during the Victorian period was comprised of three distinct typologies: the villa, the terrace house and the apartment 'house'. In addition to stylistic trends in the façade, a commonality among these types was a highly specialised domestic layout: the allocation of a separate room for each and every purpose.

4.3.1.1 Suburban villa

Perhaps the most characteristic expression of middle class ideals was the detached house or villa, both in the country and the suburb. The small detached villa, with its own garden, was the goal of the businessman or professional man. According to Dixon and Muthesius (1978: 48), it became popular with the prosperous middle classes in the later eighteenth century and owed something to the cult of the Picturesque. Although the Georgian Classical styles, Greek and Roman, survived well into the Victorian period, the Picturesque Italian Villa and Cottage styles were increasingly adopted. Davidoff and Hall (2002: 369) concur that the typical middle class villa style allowed for much individual taste and moved away from Georgian uniformity. It often had "…an elegant veranda standing an agreeable distance from the road, shielded by neat shrubbery with a garden entrance for servants and tradesmen and a large well-cultivated garden, while inside were two parlours, five bedrooms plus kitchen…". These bland imitations of Tuscan villas, with low-pitched roofs, broad eaves resting on brackets, and often a flat topped tower, covered in soot and ivy, became models of respectability (Dixon & Muthesius 1978: 48).

Such villas were typically located in newly built suburbs, which guaranteed effective separation from the noisy and dirty surroundings of work. Halttunen (1989: 168) and Jenner (1988: 178) assert that suburban residential neighbourhoods tended to segregate housing by income level, thereby implicitly enforcing middle class standards of decorum and gentility. Although the immediate visual setting of the suburban

residence indicated personal independence, its larger social context provided a mechanism for mutual social supervision. Furthermore, the decoration of the villa showed the middle class endeavours to enhance social status; the same was true of the semi-detached house. All the residents of a specific neighbourhood were greatly concerned that nothing should lower the tone (Jenner 1988: 178).

The Victorian suburban villa found its highest expression in the larger and more spaciously sited mansions. The mania for villas is particularly evident in the homes of bankers and financiers. The businessman's villa supplanted the aristocrat's mansion as the pinnacle of domestic refinement (Jenner 1988: 213-214).

4.3.1.2 Terrace and semi-detached house

The terrace and semi-detached houses were by far the largest group of any Victorian building type and primarily determined the character of Victorian cities (Dixon & Muthesius 1978: 56). In towns and cities most houses were built in rows, all sizes and in all price ranges. The range of sizes varied enormously, but the wealthy and the working class lived in essentially the same type of house. The largest house was only twice the width of the smallest house, and its basic plan was exactly the same: two rooms on each floor, one front and one back, and the entrance and staircase are placed on one side. Variations of this pattern are rare. However, the depth could be varied more; during the nineteenth century the trend was to make the houses deeper and narrower. Height was the chief variable: there were quite comfortable versions of the row house on only one storey or four, five, even six storeys could be piled on top of a basement (Muthesius 1982: 56). The semi-detached house shared only one party wall with its neighbour and three storeys on a semi-basement, two bays wide, constituted the basic design.

At its simplest level, the terrace house is derived from the better kind of narrow house with its front facing the better streets. However, the eighteenth and nineteenth century terrace house does not just form a row of houses. A row has an architectural unity which provided an enhanced social image and suggested a special achievement on the part of the planners, builders, owners or tenants. By the end of the nineteenth century most people, including the middle and lower classes, dwelt in neatly ordered and at least moderately ornamented terraced houses (Muthesius 1982: 11).

However, the plans of terraced houses (and other kinds of houses) of the Georgian and nineteenth century tradition did not necessarily stress family togetherness. Separation and differentiation guided the development of the domestic plan. A strong interdependence of family members was more often found in the houses of the middle to lower-class family, where there was little entertainment outside the home, the children did not go to work or boarding school and where the mother had one or two servants, who assisted her but did not leave her unoccupied with household matters altogether, as in the upper-class houses (Muthesius 1982: 43).

4.3.1.3 Apartment or block flat

A notion of middle class respectability was barely maintained when living in a small apartment 'house' or block flat. The occupants only narrowly made it into the lower middle class, since loss of respectability was linked to giving up domestic help and living in a flat without a drawing-room (Kleinberg 1999: 143). This type of house never really became popular in Victorian England and was more common in Scotland. The plan was similar to the basic provisions for a middle class terrace, but the space allotted to each room was considerably smaller. The basic plan comprised a dining-room, drawing-room, three bedrooms, kitchen, scullery and possibly a room for a servant. Calder (1977: 184) states that some apartments contained spacious flats with similar dimensions to those of terrace houses, but many flats were very small, with no servants' quarters, containing perhaps three small rooms and a kitchen, adequate for a bachelor or a young couple, with a servant coming in daily.

4.4   VICTORIAN DOMESTIC SPACE

Geography and architecture increasingly marked the separation of spheres. Calder (1977: 138) argues that the paternalistic structure of the family, a reflection of the hierarchical social structure, usually appeared starker within the context of the domestic interior, although that interior was cushioned and padded so as to ameliorate it. As mentioned, the domestic ideal was inevitably inward and isolated. Victorian-initiated suburbia focused on the home within at the expense of the environment without. Privacy was desired; community was something that was paid for out of the rates. Life, especially the moral life, occurred within the home (Calder 1977: 135).

4.4.1   Division of space

Weisman (1994: 91) states the epitome of the Victorian home was a microcosm of society illustrating how gender relations were to be arranged. Interior space was elaborately differentiated according to a careful 'socio-sexual' code. Further, Calder (1977: 135) notes the structure of the Victorian home stressed the compartmentalisation of activities, fragmentation and the demands of the domestic ideal: order and organisation. Walker (2002) concurs that nineteenth century house design and planning were structured around segregation and specialisation. They illustrated dominant middle class beliefs about appropriate social relationships and gender roles and separate spheres were coded and built into the home. Walker (2002: 824) illustrates her argument of how separate spheres were inscribed in domestic architecture by the example of the upper class residence, Bear Wood Manor, built between 1865 and 1874 by English architect, Robert Kerr. Architects were instructed to install architectural and social propriety according to gendered ideals of the public and the private. In this way Victorian architects reproduced spatial and social hierarchies.

According to Walker (2002: 826) rooms and their use were identified according to the gender and rank of their occupants. Women's rooms were placed at the back of the house protected from the street and the public gaze. The male head of the household had his rooms near the front of the house. Most rooms were considered territory of one gender and were only used by the other with permission of the former. However, Walker (2002: 826) points out that despite the Victorian home being feminised, it was still very much patriarchal in terms of territory, control and meaning. The man was the head of the household and the largest proportion of overall space and prime public rooms were allocated to him. His manliness was enforced through spatial boundaries. Dickerson (1995: xvii) concurs, architecturally the house reflected a particular if not oversensitive concern for the needs of the male for space within the domestic arena. Rooms identified with and for the male owner included the office, cloakroom, billiard room, smoking-room, study, gun room, gentleman's workroom, dressing-room and bedroom and the dining-room (Walker 2002: 826, Spain 1992: 12). In a separate spatial sphere, not in direct communication with the male suite, the lady's quarters consisted of the drawing-room/parlour, morning-room, boudoir and lady's bedroom (Walker 2002: 826). Victorian domestic culture earmarked the drawing-room as the most important arena for the demonstration of respectable character (Halttunen 1989: 158).

From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onwards the privacy of the family and the individual became increasingly demarcated, which resulted in a change in the building layout. New domestic layouts were promoted by the rationalisation of domestic tasks, the more manual being increasingly taken over by servants. The roles of the different servants became more closely defined and at the same time they were increasingly segregated from the family. The family members were released for more cultural and social activities, carried on in the rooms kept for those purposes. Thus, the process of differentiation and segregation was intense and the home became more specialised, self-contained and the layout more complicated (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 375; Muthesius 1982: 39; Dixon & Muthesius 1978: 32). .

As mentioned, the house and the family as a whole became an object of moral considerations, a necessary haven, and a refuge from the growing pressures of professional work. Social commentators associated the virtues of sobriety, cleanliness and thrift with the notion of 'home sweet home' (Muthesius 1982: 40). Concern with dirt and disorder drew new boundaries between what was valuable and what was waste and in the process and moral or social criteria were often used rather than scientific standards of hygiene (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 382; Muthesius 1982: 43). Clean steps, doors and window ledges, shining brass knockers and starched white curtains dramatically demonstrated the gap between private decency and public squalor (Davidoff & Hall 2002: 382). Moreover, Davidoff and Hall (2002: 383) and Muthesius (1982: 46) attest that ideas about cleanliness and order directly affected the layout of middle class housing. Separating the mess and smell of food preparation from the social ritual of eating became an important feature of respectability and meant that the kitchen was ideally located as far as possible from the living rooms, no matter the cost in servants' or the wife's time and labour. Further, if one worked so hard to keep the home up, one would want to show at least part of it to people from outside, thus entertainment at home became popular. As a result the proportion of 'reception rooms' to the rest of the rooms in the later nineteenth century was about one in two, or one in three in larger houses, and one to one in smaller houses (Muthesius 1982: 43-45).

The Victorian principle of differentiation of room use was based on the separation of common and everyday activities from more formal rarefied ones, such as receiving strangers or guests. The most prestigious room was the drawing-room (or parlour). The term was derived from the 'withdrawing room' of the seventeenth century, usually situated near the bedrooms, where the ladies withdrew after dinner. This custom endured to some extent into the nineteenth century, when after dinner the men

remained in the dining room or went to the study or library, the male preserve. However, they were allowed to join the ladies in the drawing room later, after having sobered up a little.   In addition to large formal dinners, there were many other occasions of greater or lesser formality, like 'morning calls' or 'at homes' or piano playing; writing letters; and embroidery.   Having a drawing-room or not marked an important social distinction (Muthesius 1982: 46, 48).

The bedrooms constituted the other half of the house. The nineteenth century desire for privacy increased the number of bedrooms. There were also dressing rooms; in four-roomed houses at least the front bedroom, the master bedroom, had a small dressing room adjacent. Most houses had least three bedrooms to separate the children of different sexes.

4.4.1.1 Children and domestic space

Lasdun (1981: 44) asserts that the instilling of morality and behaviour in middle- and upper-class children was a factor responsible for their gradual removal from society. Both the growing concept of class, which by the eighteenth century precluded mixing outside one's own class and the strict moral code by which many parents sought to raise their children prohibited the free intercourse that children had hitherto enjoyed. This led to their continual sequestration and, in the home greater confinement to areas designated for their own use. As the nineteenth century proceeded, architects' plans, for improvement of old houses or to build new ones, included 'the children's wing', 'the children's floor' or 'the children's quarters'. However, Lasdun (1981: 44) notes the Victorian child's life was not all serious lessons and punishment. There were occasions of "…rumbustious party games played with their parents and relations, fishing parties…and family picnics and excursions."

4.4.1.2 The garden

According to Davidoff and Hall (2002: 370, 373-375), in both theory and practice the garden setting of the villa attested to the values of privacy, order, taste and appreciation of nature in a controlled environment. Gardens were an extension of the home. Non-utilitarian gardens surrounding a separate house became an integral part of the romantic, anti-urban individualism of the middle class. The garden provided strong visual confirmation of the middle class ideal; the moral force of the garden is often a theme in middle class writing. The garden had different connotations for men and women. After returning from work in the evening, the busy businessman found

comfort and peace in tending his plants. Gardening also made an absorbing and rational activity for retirement. Women's relationship to the garden was different. In the eighteenth century the female domain of medicinal and vegetable plants had been eroded. As market penetration grew, they were relegated to consumption or amateur gardening. According to garden imagery women were increasingly associated with flowers, their bright colours, fragility, perfume and existence for decorative purposes only. Considered a 'naturally feminine' occupation, women became responsible for decorating mantelpieces and tables with flowers. Women might also work in the garden themselves. However, garden work for women was problematic given its association with manual labour, the soil and manure. Digging appeared to be too heavy a task, particularly unsuitable for tiny, delicately formed hands and feet, a biological sign of genteel femininity.

4.5   DECORATION

In addition to spatial zones, sexual and social differences were formed and structured through furnishings, decoration and ornament that was gendered in terms of colour, style and detailing (Walker 2002: 827; Logan 1995: 207). The domestic interior reflected womanliness, not only in its rounded shapes, curves and ornamentation, but in its warmth and its neatness, suggesting love, security and efficiency (Calder 1977: 132; Lichten 1950: 170).

Both Davidoff and Hall (2002: 375) and Calder (1977: 92-93) contend that early nineteenth century Georgian taste which favoured lightness and space was too sparse, upright and unpadded for those who wished to purchase a comfortable life with new wealth. Comfort was experienced directly and sparse domesticity was replaced by carpets, curtains, redesigned grates, mahogany furniture, wallpaper, chintz covers and bedsteads. The bulk was partly the result of padding, but also a reflection of substance, contributing to an atmosphere of ease. Calder (1977: 93) however notes, an ambiguity: although wealth bought servants as well as furnishings, the impracticality of much Victorian furnishing was not reconcilable with the dominating influence of comfort. Comfort was accompanied by a proliferation of ornament, which was considered good in itself, indicating good taste, financial status and moral awareness. The 'lived-in' look was sought after because it signified a lack of idleness, reflecting the ideal of respectability and work as virtue (Lichten 1950: 170).

Campbell Orr (1995: 2) contends that what today would be called the design industries expanded to absorb the enlarged spending power of later Victorians, which was lavished on the new trends in domestic architecture, decorations, furnishings, gardening and fashion. Similarly, Parker (1984: 19) questions the reason for women adorning their homes in a style of decoration that has since been scorned. It should be asked why women selected objects, what secondary gains they received from absolute conformity to the feminine ideal, and how they gave them their own significance while overtly living up to the oppressive stereotype. Thus, recognition should be given to the different ways in which women conformed to and resisted the requirements of respectable femininity (Parker 1984: 14)

Victorian decoration refers to both the development of a consumer economy and to the ideology of separate spheres. A woman's duty toward the home was to secure its order, comfort and beauty. Feminine efforts to order and beautify the home were regarded as so natural and so familiar that the agency of individual women tended almost to disappear from masculine view. According to Logan (1995: 210), the middle class woman was taught to consider the tasteful decoration of her home as an important part of her duty, whose broader outlines included both the physical and spiritual well-being of her family. Decoration in this context became linked to morality. Moreover, Logan (1995: 210) states, Victorian social rituals required material objects for their successful performance, paraphernalia of gentility and respectability. If a family's prosperity increased, corresponding changes in domestic décor were expected to occur.

Lavish domestic decoration also served other needs besides social rank. All goods served as operative parts of an extensive system of communication. Logan (1995: 211) argues:

> Objects, including decorative objects displayed in the home, do say something about those who possess and display them…The characteristic Victorian accumulation of objects nearly always, for instance, included a proliferation of things crafted by the ladies of the household. These objects testified to their talent and industry…

Besides crafts, mementos and souvenirs, the middle class home contained many decorative objects with a straightforward narrative content, which communicated socially approved patterns of thought and behaviour. These objects related 'stories' of filial devotion or religious faith beneficial to the family and which indicated to outsiders

the family's wholesome views, thus helping to establish their respectability (Logan 1995: 211).

Another dimension of meaning that decoration carried was aesthetic experience. Logan (1995: 212) states that by decorating their homes, Victorian women must have found aesthetic gratification for themselves and generated such pleasure for others. Yet, while cluttered drawing-rooms reflected aesthetic tastes of the owners, Logan wonders whether the Victorian decorative endeavours of women constituted a more urgent need than just creative work. Lichten (1950: 170) argues a causal link between oppression and the production of ornament; the Victorian homemaker seemed desperate to make her home as inviting as possible. Logan (1995: 213) concurs that the sheer number of useless decorative objects produced by women were an indication of anxiety, boredom and depression rather than a satisfying healthy engagement with art. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981: 17) state that "household objects constitute an ecology of signs that reflects as well as shapes the pattern of the owner's self." Logan (1995: 215) concurs, "…it is possible to use concepts like self-expression in thinking about the practice of decoration while acknowledging that selves are always embedded in the social world." Decoration stresses the intersection of the individual and the social at the site of the domestic interior. The home is both public and private: its decoration articulates meaning in the personal and the larger social system, which also encapsulates private experience. Thus, decorative objects mediate between the self and others.

Furthermore, Logan (1995: 217) argues that behavioural psychology suggests a similarity between decorating and marking behaviours:

> Rather than the confident, aggressive statement 'This is mine!' decoration can be instead an attempt to assert authority and control on the part of subjects whose autonomy was constantly being undermined by legal, medical and religious discourse. Thus excessive decoration, from a feminist perspective, is not only a question of surplus but of lack: women filled their parlours with objects not only because they had plenty of time, money and consumer goods, but also because they lacked social power.

Logan (1995: 218) contests that the constrains that many Victorian women experienced had less to do with sexual experience than with the limits placed on living out their ambitions and the play of their egos. Thus, nineteenth century women's strategies of collecting decorative objects as a means of forming identity and making a place in the world can be viewed more sympathetically. Victorian interiors can be seen

as "womb-like bowers of materiality, a materiality that is literally domesticated and thus made safe and beneficent, capable of offering an antidote to existential anxiety" (Logan 1995: 219). Bachelard (1994: 7) imagines "Before being cast out…we are laid in the cradle of the house…" where "…being reigns in a sort of earthly paradise of matter, dissolved into the comforts of an adequate matter." Similarly, Calder (1977: 33) sees the change from early Victorian interiors, decorated in a sparse Georgian style, to increasingly cluttered, enclosed and sombre interiors as "…a part of the womb-like tendency of the Victorian home, to see the thick carpets and curtains as a significant element of sanctuary, and solid furniture as representative of solid virtues." The clutter typical of a middle class Victorian interior, added to the overburdened atmosphere, objects could protect as well as enhance and reassure.

4.5.1   Style versus taste

Although the style and taste of the periods overlap, late-Georgian precedes the mid-Victorian lifestyle. At the start of the nineteenth century design was elegant, delicate and light. The typical interior forty or fifty years later was identified by a changed lifestyle. Girouard (in Lasdun 1981: 10) describes them as comfortably patterned, padded and puffed out; just as the skirts of ladies had expanded so had the table legs. Girouard (in Lasdun 1981: 12) notes that even the aristocracy and the Royal Family seemed addicted to what might be regarded as middle class tastelessness, the whole sense of style in architecture and decoration passed to the middle classes. "The upper classes were looking for…a relaxed comfort that was trying so hard not to look too forced or arranged that it tended to become entirely shapeless." Calder (1977: 92) argues that "along with the curve went comfort, and comfort was, partly at least, responsible for the decline in taste."

Furthermore, decoration was a key word in the Victorian attitude towards what should go into the home. The home was to exert a moral influence and the moral effect of interior decoration was even greater. It was thought that the decoration of the house contributed much to the education of the entire household in refinement, intellectual development and morality (Halttunen 1989: 161). Through decoration a family expressed its proper understanding of life and beauty, which constituted a moral quality. Victorian decoration was not merely decorative, since decoration was considered essential and good taste was essential for choosing of decoration. Many Victorians saw themselves as judges of good taste and moral guides to the appreciation of beauty (Calder 1977: 83). By linking morality and religion with the

purchase and maintenance of a Christian home, the Victorians legitimised acquisition and display of domestic goods (Halttunen 1989: 163). The Victorians rejected the classical aesthetic, which regarded structural forms as beautiful in themselves since they adhered to universal standards of harmony and proportion. They argued that forms were beautiful in the sense that they stimulated 'proper' thoughts in the beholder's mind. To the Victorians true taste lay in the union of the beautiful and the significant (Halttunen 1989: 158-159).

Girouard (in Lasdun 1981: 19) states the "interplay between practical and symbolic or emotional needs is always intriguing. Very often one works against the other." In Victorian interiors practical elements, such as the large table placed near the fire or a window, where women congregated for embroidery, drawing, or to read books, tended to disappear under less practical collections of objects.

> The desire to display objects of no use went to much further lengths in the period than it had ever before… More and more people were collecting more and more objects, partly because there was more money around, partly because large numbers of mass-produced, decorative objects were available at comparably little expense, partly because collecting something or other became…a widespread craze. (Girouard in Lasdun 1981: 19)

Despite what may appear as a lack of 'good taste', taste was highly topical in the Victorian period. Calder (1979: 6) states that, in spite of overcrowding interiors with bulky furniture and covering all available surfaces with useless objects, good taste in home-making was considered to be extremely important. A family, especially the wife and mother, was often evaluated by the decorations in the home and their arrangement. Tastefulness, along with efficient household management was regarded as vital. An education in taste was considered to be essential for the homemaker as taste was not just an expression of aesthetic judgement, but primarily a moral quality. Taste had connotations of standards and morality; 'good' taste was less a question of artistic sensitivity, more a question of understanding what was proper" (Calder 1977: 32).

The middle class home was an attempt to create a comfortable and secure environment, a haven to which the family could retreat and forget about the difficult and dangerous world outside. Tastefulness was, thus, embedded in the need for security and comfort.

4.5.2   Proliferation of the decorative object and ornament

According to Calder (1977: 32) the objects in the house were immensely important. Things cluttered one's drawing room not because they were beautiful but because they were symbols of one's standards. "Ornament appeased the anxious appetite of the new rich and the prosperous middle classes for visible evidence of their status" (Gloag 1962: 136). Objects lent security when life was uncertain. Women, in particular, lived out their lives in veritable jungle of decorative objects, bought and hand-made.

Girouard (in Lasdun 1981: 20) argues that the accumulation of objects take many forms:

> Certain symbolic images do tend to present themselves when one is looking at Victorian rooms. Some are naturalistic ones: the image of the cave, a forest, a nest. Most Victorians were incurable nest makers; but their equivalents of twigs, straw and leaves were Japanese fans, vases, photographs, bronze statues and clocks, which they wove together into a richly indistinguishable fuzz.

Some, on the other hand

> ...created a forest, lined with leaves and foliage of Morris wallpaper and embroideries, and filled with mysterious light percolating through hangings and stained-glass windows. Other interiors combined elements of both nest and forest, the forest being almost literally provided by potted palms and other greenery which spilled over from the conservatory into all the living rooms of the more prosperous Victorian homes. Both nests and forests suggest an element of escapism, just as the accumulation of objects suggest a desire for security.

Although the Victorian age is often considered a self-confident age, it was plagued with doubt, despair, fear of revolution and a dislike of change (cf. 2.3.2.2). In this context many found comfort in 'things'. Gloag (1962: 137) asserts:

> The excessive ornamentation of nearly every article used in the Victorian home made even the spacious rooms of large houses seem overcrowded, and in small rooms the effect was overwhelming: yet this excess of ornament, this restless conflict of motifs, helped to create an atmosphere of solid unshakeable comfort.

Most clutter was found in the public rooms, in the drawing-room, morning-room and dining-room. Bedrooms tended to be more sparse, although bedroom furniture was cumbersome. Kitchens could be cluttered, but the emphasis was utilitarian rather than decorative (Calder 1977: 35). Mass production meant the abundance of items which were generally cheap, although often useless. In particular, Lichten (1950: 170) contends, the creation and procurement of decoration was time-consuming and ironically gave some respite from the social and emotional predicaments of Victorian

women. A good education and chances to compete with men in cultural, artistic or economic fields were seldom possible and decorating filled time. Women were encouraged to be satisfied with creating a pleasant home with funds supplied by successful husbands.

4.6   'ANGEL IN THE HOUSE'

During the Victorian age one of the most powerful dictums was the phrase Coventry Patmore (1854) made popular through his poem about the ideal woman and wife, *The Angel in the House*. Dickerson (1995: xiv) contends that the angel *in* the house was a realistic possibility. Walker (2002: 826) concurs, the wife was considered 'Angel in the House', therefore the presence and work of her body was essential to the concept of the Victorian home. The home itself was associated with the female body and its enclosed interior. Woman in her role of angel was the keystone of the 'moral' Victorian home. This position extended to the maintenance of Britain's social and political order.

Dickerson (1995: xiv-xv) argues that:

> ...equating the Victorian woman as angel was as much a subtle depreciation as an elevation of woman's position. The concept of 'Angel in the House' is double-edged and consequently troubling. What are the semantic and spatial implications of removing an angel from heaven and stationing that being in a household? At once one is confronted with notions of blessings and of an earthly paradise as well as dislocation, displacement and confinement. In this way the terms 'angel' and 'house' problematise each other.   [Moreover]...to call woman an angel was to deify her as a being with special powers; however, to relegate the angelic woman to the house was…to fix her at centre of a dwelling increasingly bounded…The expression 'angel of the house' is cloaked in a spatial arrangement that…reinforced status differences between men and women.   The angel experienced…a debilitating segregation.

Her ability to comfort, quieten and morally sway held a certain power, thus the spiritualised woman in the house was not as passive as she initially appeared, which suggests less of a passive withdrawal from life (Dickerson 1995: xvii). 'Angel in the House' suggests that the true woman could spiritualise the home, enhancing its maternal features; "...the angelic woman would create if not a sacred space then at least a place apart from the flux of that arena [in which] the hostility of men and the universe accumulates" (Dickerson 1995: xv). The house, like woman's body, is a place where "life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house" (Bachelard 1994: 7). The Victorian woman cultivated and enhanced the features of her home, even re-inscribing them in her very body.

Furthermore, Peterson (1984: 677) states:

> ...the term covers widely disparate and even contradictory notions. In the narrowest sense the angel is one near to God, the pious one who kept the family of the Christian path. In secular terms the angel provided the home environment that promoted her husband's and children's well-being in the world; she provided a haven from its worst pressures through her sound household management and sweetness of temperament.

However, Peterson differs from Dickerson and Walker in that she argues that 'Angel in the House' should be viewed as a stereotype which many Victorian women transcended. She argues that Victorian women should be seen in all their complexity and variability while operating within the stereotype and this reveals how much freedom certain women had.

As has been argued (cf 3.4.1.1), although 'Angel in the House' presents an oversimplified stereotype, it remained an acceptable ideal for many during that time. A cancelled sentence in the longer version of Patmore's text defines the Victorian woman and wife as 'the woman that men wished women to be' (Woolf 1993: 80). As Peterson (1984: 708) observes, the angel represented both a vision of unachieved gentility for some women as well as a nightmare of potential repression for others. Thus 'Angel in the House' presents a valid tool for evaluation of domestic architecture, as a means to ascertain the extent to which the ideal was attained and evidence of possible subversion.

4.6.1 Female agency

Logan (2001: 26) claims Victorian middle class women "…were responsible for deploying objects to create the interior space identifiable as 'home'". However, Cohen (2003: 1001-1002) argues that while Logan presumes that it was women alone who decorated Victorian homes, there is evidence of the contrary. Tosh (1999) has demonstrated the investment that mid-Victorian middle class men made in their homes and domesticity. While the decoration of the parlour was widely regarded in the advice literature as the woman's prerogative, it is erroneous to extrapolate from the decoration of the parlour to the whole enterprise of decorating and furnishing in the rest of the home. During the period of 1830-1880, decorating seems to have been a shared responsibility between man and wife. Woman's sovereignty in outfitting of the house was limited. Even Rhoda and Agnes Garrett, the decorators and pioneering suffragists, wrote their *Suggestions for house decoration* (1877) for the benefit of men.

The quality of the home, its taste, organisation and the moral qualities it reflected was the aim of homemaking. This was considered a woman's task in which she had to demonstrate her dedication and hard work. It was supposed to be personally rewarding and she was expected to derive great satisfaction from her efforts. It was meant to make her feel indispensable to the comfort and well-being of everyone in the home and it was usually her only means of achievement and importance (Calder 1977: 103).

Furthermore, Calder (1977: 105) states:

> Home-making was both a practical and a moral function, and thus represented exactly the ideal of womanhood. But its objects and results had, in the kind of emphasis home-making was given, nothing to do with expression of personality, or individualised taste, or particular interests and special activities. It was a generalised quality of comfort and good taste that was aimed at, and it was this that numerous books and magazines concerned themselves with. Taste seemed to have nothing to do with personal likes and dislikes, and everything to do with what was considered acceptable by its arbiters.

However, the ideally decorated home was not necessarily uniform. The common denominator was that home had to be different from the world outside. Beside this, domestic reality had considerable variations.

4.7   CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 investigated the hypothesis that domestic space is a vehicle for the encoding of socio-cultural values. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, read from a scholarly critical perspective. The chapter was written in a narrative style, a framework of information on the subject was established, while at the same time acknowledging where sources colluded and differed. The encoding of socio-cultural values is manifest in architectural space, which maintains gender distinctions and is evident in Victorian architecture where space is structured around respectability and man's dominance of public and private. The separation of work from home resulted in new domestic layouts, activities were segregated and space compartmentalised according to a specific 'socio-sexual' code. Moreover, sexual and social differences were formed and structured through furnishings, decoration and ornament that were gendered in terms of colour, style and detailing. In this way the hypothesis is affirmed.