VICTORIAN RESPECTABILITY: THE GENDERING OF DOMESTIC SPACE

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For my father, Hermanus Richard Lemmer (1948-2003)

You who come of a younger happier generation may not have heard of her – you may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House...She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught, she sat in it – in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or wish of her own, but preferred to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all she was pure.

It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her...She died hard. Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality.

Virginia Woolf (1995)

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Space once it is…bounded and shaped…is no longer a merely neutral background: it exerts its own influence. Ardener (1981: 12)

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Space is socially constructed. The spatial organisation *of* buildings and the organisation of space *in* buildings reflect and reinforce the nature of gender relations in society. In this way, space contributes to the power of some groups over others; architecture becomes a record of those who have the power to build. This is evident in nineteenth century architecture, particularly domestic architecture, where space was structured around the ideology of respectability. Domestic space has never defined society so powerfully, explicitly and strictly as it did in Victorian England. Thus, within the discipline of interior architecture, this study analyses selected texts[1] from the Victorian period (1837-1901) to investigate the relationship between the Victorian middle class obsession with respectability and the gendering of domestic space.

Victorian respectability, a complex combination of moral, religious, economic and cultural systems (Nead 1988: 8), contains a dichotomy structured around a heavily polarised understanding of gender. Respectability was an essential objective of Victorian existence and defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance; these social rules and moral codes worked to regulate both gender and class identities (Davidoff & Hall 2002: xiii). Respectability wove a persuasive strand that bound the disparate elements of the middle class together. Hence, respectability was substantive in the creation of a coherent and distinct class identity which functioned to set the middle class apart from the social and economic classes above and below it. Respectability became inseparable from the home, the site of complementary masculinity and femininity, and can therefore, be used to understand the gendering of domestic space.

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[1]Texts refer to artefacts from the demarcated period (1837-1901) that contain embedded meanings or discourses, such as buildings, architectural drawings, user objects from the home, paintings, photographs, manuscripts and journal entries.

However, as Poovey (1988) and Nead (1997) caution, the smooth surface of Victorian respectability, like that of an unhappy family keeping up appearances, is artificial and deceptive. There was a disjuncture between the fantasy of femininity and everyday practice. In reality, Victorian respectability was fragmented, self-contradictory, contested and developed unevenly. The Victorians constructed notions of gender using the reductive, double categories of a binary opposition and wrote up sexual differences as ontological polarity. Men and women were two radically different beings who inhabited *separate spheres*. The latter refers to the prescriptive ideals of important sections of Victorian society, which provided a rigid framework of a world divided into male and female (Landes 2003:32). However, the paradigm of separate spheres, which has become a contentious issue amongst historians, is not to be confused with – although related to – the public and the private divide, which incorporates complex gender assignments that shift according to context (Davidoff 2003:11). Therefore, the notion of separate spheres and the public/private divide, against the context of Victorian domestic architecture, require re-visitation and provide a site of ongoing research.

The literature reveals a connection between respectability and the gendering of architectural space. Prevalent middle class beliefs about proper social relationships and the different roles of men and women were coded and built into the home (Walker 2002). In consequence, space was gendered and gender made spatial (Rendell 1998). Architects were instructed to install architectural and social propriety according to gendered ideals of the public and the private. Thus, the organisation of domestic space had to do with maintaining and indicating middle class gentility.

Within the didactic spaces of the home, the task of decorating and beautifying was seen as essentially feminine. However, the literature shows that women did not exclusively decorate their homes; middle class husbands demonstrated an investment in their homes and domesticity (Cohen 2003: 1001-1002; Tosh 1999). Furnishings, decoration and ornamentation of the home formed and structured sexual and social differences. Moreover, these physical attributes served as operative parts of an extensive system of communication. In so doing, the home, which is simultaneously public and private, articulates meaning both in the personal as well as in the larger social system, which envelops and enables the private experience.

Finally, an overview of the literature (cf Chapters 2, 3 & 4) shows that while intense and extensive study has been made of the Victorian period, it has been conducted within the disciplines of social, cultural and art history, as well as gender theory. Despite the significance of the nineteenth century home to the Victorians and scholarship alike, the subject of the Victorian domestic interior has been surprisingly neglected. While there is much published about what the Victorians said about their homes, little is known about why their interiors looked as they did (Cohen 2003: 1000-1001). Consequently, research on the relationship between the Victorian ideology of respectability and domestic architectural space and decoration is scant and has certainly not been exhausted. The area is open to critical analysis and the re-visiting of certain concepts, as well as the study of the relationship between these and the gendering of architectural space. To that end, this study aims to extend the scope of existing research on Victorian respectability and the gendering of domestic space within the discipline of interior architecture.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the above background, the main research problem is formulated as follows:

How does the ideology of respectability influence the gendering of Victorian domestic space?

The main research problem can be further subdivided into the following sub-problems:

1.2.1 Sub problem 1
How did political, social, economic and religious factors contribute to the ideology of respectability?

1.2.2 Sub problem 2
How are key concepts of Victorian respectability defined?

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

1.2.4 Sub problem 4

How can embedded and gendered discourses in selected key texts associated with domestic space in the Victorian period be analysed to explore the dichotomy of respectability?

1.3 HYPOTHESES

Main hypothesis

There is a specific ideology of Victorian respectability, which is embedded in the making of Victorian domestic space.

1.3.1 Hypothesis 1

The political, social, economic and religious context of Victorian England contributed to the ideology of respectability.

1.3.2 Hypothesis 2

Respectability was a specific manifestation of the prevalent ideologies of the Victorian era.

1.3.3 Hypothesis 3

Domestic interior spaces are vehicles for the encoding of socio-cultural values.

1.3.4 Hypothesis 4

There are embedded and gendered discourses in Victorian domestic space that reveal the dichotomy in Victorian respectability.

1.4 DELIMITATIONS

The study is limited to urban England during the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837 to 1901. Married middle class women are chosen for this subject of the literature study because marriage provided the most typical role for the middle class woman in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the study is limited to domestic space and its interior attributes.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following key terms are defined here for clarification:

1.5.1 Gender

Gender, originally used as a grammatical term in English, was adopted by feminist scholars in the 1970's to describe and analyse sexual difference. Gender allowed masculinity and femininity to be theorised as social constructions, separate although in some sense related to biological sex. Gender designates the socially constructed, mutually dependent nature of femininity and masculinity. Therefore, manliness is what is not feminine; femininity is the opposite of manliness. Furthermore, those definitions are not fixed in essence but are constantly changing as they are contested and reworked. Masculinities and femininities are thus historically specific (Shoemaker & Vincent 1998: 1; Spain 1992: xiv; Wolff 1990: 1; Hall 1992: 13).

1.5.2 Ideology

Poovey (1988: 3) defines ideology as a set of beliefs, the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence with two different emphases: the first is that ideology is coherent and authentic, the second refers to its internal instability and artificiality. Ideologies exist not only as ideas; they are given concrete form in the practices and social institutions that govern people's social relations. By definition ideology suggests something that is internally organised and complete.

1.5.3 Dichotomy

A dichotomy is a conceptual division into two mutually exclusive kinds. In each case one group is afforded power and status and the other group is rendered powerless and inferior. Feminists have demonstrated parallels with the male/female and public/private dichotomies to denigrate everything aligned with the female, containing it within private, controlled social spaces (Code 2000: 135; Weisman 1994: 11).

Terms that do not occur in the above paragraphs will be defined in the text.

1.6   METHODOLOGY

The problem is investigated by means of a literature review and a critical examination of suitable examples of Victorian domestic architecture, interior space and the decoration of domestic space. Literature selected for review is representative of a wide range of disciplines (art history, history of architecture, social and cultural history, and women's studies). This multidisciplinary approach has been taken consciously in order to gain a comprehensive view and critical understanding of the subject and the

circumstances which produced it. A set of criteria has been developed from the literature review and has been used to analyse the chosen texts. Five texts have been chosen as follows:

- The architectural drawings of the floor plans of Samuel Hemmings' £1,550 Model villa (c 1855);
- The architectural drawings of the floor plans of Lewis Cubitt's (1799-1883) Terrace, Lowndes Square, London (1841-43);
- The architectural drawings of the floor plans of Henry Ashton's (Apartment houses, Victoria Street, London (1852-54);
- Drawings documenting interiors by George Scharf (1820-1895) of four rooms in his house at 29 Great George Street, London (1869);
- The photographs of three rooms in the Sambourne House, 18 Stafford Terrace, London (1877) and the associated diaries of Mrs Marion Sambourne (1851-1914).

A detailed explanation of choice of each text is given in Chapter 5.

This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. A narrative and interpretative style has been used to read the literature. A narrative style seeks to integrate a scholarly critical perspective within a narrative form (Kridel 1998:10). An interpretative research stance emphasises the detailed examination of a text, which can refer to spoken or written discourses, pictures, buildings or artefacts. This examination is carried out to discover meaning embedded within the text (De Vos & Schulze 2002:7).

Finally, the importance of the presuppositions of the researcher is recognised. I hold a feminist self-identity and consciously use a feminist critical approach. The complexity and diversity of feminist theory(ies) are acknowledged (Broude & Garrade 2005; Wolff 1990). However, in this study I understand that feminism broadly endeavours to give women a voice and to correct the male-oriented perspective that has predominated in the writing of the social sciences (De Vos & Schulze 2002: 7). Nochlin (1989: xv-xvii) summarises it as "'thinking…history Otherly'", that is, one sees history from the point of view of the Other. Central to the project of studying history from the perspective of the Other are the questions of sexuality raised by feminism, and with those, concepts of power. More specifically feminist art history re-problematises and reconstitutes the central issue of how meaning is produced in art and architecture. In this study it will be of particular use to analyse the male/female polarity in which the Victorian ideology of

respectability situates itself. Furthermore, with regard to critical theory, "Feminism's relation to critical theory is a contested site of theory and practice that generates new understandings of modernity and new types of social and political critique. Within critical theory, feminists address problems involving identity, exclusion, history, power and culture" (Fleming 2000:110-111).

1.6.1 Data collection

The primary data consists of architectural drawings, sketches, photographs and artefacts of the demarcated period. The secondary data consists of scholarly articles and monographs dealing with the demarcated period as well as correspondence and interviews with recognised experts in the field of Victorian history and architecture. The literature was sourced locally from the libraries of the University of Pretoria and of the University of South Africa, as well as nationally and internationally through an inter-library loan system. Literature was purposely selected across the disciplines (cf. 1.6). Most recent publications and relevant works cited in other works were given preference in an endeavour to establish a comprehensive view of both the period and current debates thereon.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the problem and its setting.

Chapter 2 considers the political, social, economic and religious context in which the ideology of respectability emerged.

Chapter 3 investigates key concepts of Victorian respectability. The notion of respectability and its implications for Victorian women is critically examined.

Chapter 4 investigates the gendering of Victorian architectural space. The notion of interior and domestic space is defined. The gendering of Victorian domestic interior space is critically analysed.

Chapter 5 analyses selected key texts associated with domestic space in the Victorian period to explore the dichotomy of Victorian respectability.

Chapter 6 provides a discussion and proposes a model, based on the overall research findings, to be used to examine Victorian respectability in domestic space in other contexts. It includes a recapitulation, conclusion and recommendations for further study.

1.8   SUMMARY

This chapter provided an introduction and background to the problem, the research questions, aims and methodology used in the study. Key terms have been defined and an outline of the organisation of the study has been given.

CHAPTER 2   **THE CONTEXT OF THE IDEOLOGY OF VICTORIAN RESPECTABILITY**

SUBPROBLEM 1   How did political, social, economic and religious factors contribute to the ideology of respectability?

PRÉCIS 1   In this chapter Queen Victoria's accession to the throne, her personal life, as well as the political, social, economic and religious context of Victorian England are considered, so as to elucidate the emergence of the ideology of respectability.

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The adjective, 'Victorian', is not a precise term.   Victorianism long antedates the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837. It owed many of its outstanding characteristics to developments which took place between 1780 and 1837 and the late Victorian era can be considered as part of the twentieth century (Seaman 1973: 5; Webb 1980: 130). The Victorian age cannot thus be thought of as being encapsulated in the sixty-four years of the monarch's reign, since ideas and attitudes changed more slowly than the mortality of the Queen.

The Victorian era is not merely part of continuity greater than itself, but contains within itself many discontinuities and incongruencies. Yet the ideal of respectability, which permeated every aspect of the conscientious Victorian's life, remained constant throughout.

This chapter provides a study of the context of Victorian England out of which the ideology of respectability emerged. Victoria's accession to the throne and her personal life as a model for respectability are briefly discussed. Thereafter, the political, social, economic and religious contexts are critically considered in their contribution to the Victorians' obsession with respectability. Finally, the middle classes as the main instigators of Victorian respectability are discussed. This chapter serves to depict the historical context of this study in an endeavour to reveal how the ideology of respectability permeated and dictated every aspect of Victorian England, and in so doing, illustrating its influence on the gendering of domestic space.

2.2   QUEEN VICTORIA

> *May children of our children say,*
> *'She wrought her people lasting good;*
> *Her court was pure; her life serene;*
> *God gave her peace; her land reposed;*
> *A thousand claims to reverence closed*
> *In her as Mother, Wife and Queen.'*
> Tennyson (1858)

Queen Victoria provides a dichotomy in the ideology of respectability. She embodied respectability's feminine ideal. She was charming, pure, hardworking and excelled in the tricky arts of family life. Yet, at the same time, she was its antithesis; she was

strong-willed, opinionated and firmly held the position as her country's sovereign. Thus, she is an example of the many incongruencies characteristic of her age.

Victoria was only eighteen years old when she ascended the throne in 1837 and ruled until her death in 1901. At the time of Victoria's accession Britain was in a state of social, political and economic turbulence. Despite her youth Victoria assumed her new position with gravity, composure and dignity. The public received the new queen enthusiastically, in particular, impressed by the stark contrast between Victoria and her uncles, who had been decadent, selfish and disreputable (Strachey 1921: 37). Victoria's youth and gender were symbols of hope for her subjects, reminding them of the prosperity England had enjoyed under previous female rulers (Thompson 1990: xv, xvii). As a sovereign, she remained securely on her throne throughout her reign unlike many of her European counterparts, while the institution of the monarchy strengthened as she grew older (Seaman 1973: 436). Victoria exhibited distinctive personal qualities: she sketched and painted, performed and enjoyed music, and wrote letters and kept diaries which afford much insight into her life and into the conventions of the period (Ford 1992: 3). She displayed sound common sense, a strong awareness of dignity and a lack of pretentiousness, but most striking of all was her remarkable will-power (Seaman 1973:436-439; Strachey 1921: 37; Thompson 1990: 3 & 24). Victoria's childhood was shaped by a sober German influence: her mother, the Duchess of Kent; her uncle, Prince Leopold, and her governess, Baronness Lezhen. Her good, homely and thrifty mother, disgusted by the frivolous and undisciplined English court, was determined that her daughter would be most respectable. She was intent to establish Victoria thus so that when the time of accession came Victoria would deal with her new situation soberly. In so doing, the virtues of simplicity, regularity, propriety and devotion were impressed upon Victoria (Strachey 1921: 25).

In 1840 she married her cousin, the German prince, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg, whom she had met a few years prior and had considered very handsome, kind and honest. Albert was invaluable in sobering her judgement and ways (Strachey 1921: 31). He was intelligent, a systematic thinker, more directly involved in the arts than she and was keenly interested in the sciences and their relation to technology (Ford 1992: 4; Seaman 1973: 440; Thompson 1990: 33). One of his most valuable characteristics was the keen interest he took in politics. Initially this interest was met by opposition from the English Parliament who thought that he, as a foreigner, had no right to take part in British politics. However, gradually his political acumen was appreciated and he

made several valuable contributions. Victoria was greatly influenced by him and sustained his political opinions into widowhood (Strachey 1921: 84-85).

Among the changes in the way of life of the royal family which took place during Victoria's reign, the most striking were the changes in sexual, marital and family behaviour (Thompson 1990: 15). Victoria was passionately in love with Albert and he himself showed great concern and affection for his wife and children. Their marriage provided the respectable ideal of a happy nuclear family (Thompson 1990: 33), lacking the intrigue and infidelity that typified other royal unions. Victoria and Albert settled into the harmony of married life and life became an idyll of happiness, love and simplicity, underscored with a strong sense of duty and hard work (Strachey 1921: 87). Hard work, a moral sense of duty and family were in line with their subjects' values and a means to maintain the political and social order of the country. The affairs of state co-existed happily with their pleasant domestic routine and suited the prevailing idea of respectability. The public, the middle classes in particular, approved of a love-match within a household which combined the advantages of royalty with virtue. The remains of the frivolous eighteenth-century were apparently subsumed by duty, industry, morality and domesticity (Strachey 1921: 98).

However, in 1861 Victoria experienced the loss of both her mother and later, in December, of her beloved husband (Strachey 1921:139). The death of Albert signified a watershed in the history of Queen Victoria, who went into mourning for many years. Yet she was determined to follow the goal of her husband to work tirelessly in service of her country. Her mourning period marked by her stoical devotion to duty also shaped the character of the age.

The character of the age is fully discussed in the ensuing section.

2.3   CHARACTER OF THE AGE

The Victorian mind was composed of a variety of often paradoxical ideas and attitudes (Houghton 1957: xiii). As a result, the character of the period appears fragmentary and incoherent, yet there is interconnectedness. Moreover, the frame of mind according to which Victorians lived and thought reveals some primary sources of the modern mind (Houghton 1957: xv).

The Victorian period has been described as the age of transition (Houghton 1957: 1). By definition an age of transition has the dual aspect of destruction and reconstruction. As the older order was being attacked, modified or discarded, the new order was being proposed or inaugurated. Beside overall transition and progress a distinctive characteristic of the Victorian age was its high sense of moral responsibility (Seaman 1973: 6). Various factors were responsible for this respectable consciousness, the most obvious being religious revival (Davidoff & Hall 2002: xviii). Victorians were almost always acting with reference to their all-pervading belief in the moral imperatives of personal responsibility, of duty and of living for something other than the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the self (Houghton 1957: 59; Seaman 1973: 6).

2.3.1   The state of society

By the late nineteenth century the feudal and agrarian order of the past had been replaced by a more democratic and industrial society. Democracy was significant not only in the transference of political power from the aristocracy to the people but also in the appearance of the phenomenon known as a *democratic society* (Houghton 1957: 4). The cause of this displacement of the old concept of status was more closely related to economics than politics. The economic impact of the Industrial Revolution underlay the democratic revolution and saw the rise of the middle classes. Once the middle class gained political and financial power, their social influence became decisive. The Victorian way of thinking was largely constituted by their characteristic modes of thought and opinion (Houghton 1957: 5).

The Victorian period is perhaps best known for its tremendous industrial development, which introduced new machinery for manufacture, communication and locomotion. However, Vickery (1998: 206) criticises classic assumptions about the impact of economic change between 1780 and 1830. Revised economic histories suggest a number of factors that contributed to social development. Nevertheless, the old system of fixed regulations which in turn fixed social relations was replaced by the principle of *laissez-faire*, in which the manufacturer used the cheapest means possible to make the most money (Houghton 1957: 6). Simultaneously, this free-wheeling society felt the enormous pressure of work. Further, Seaman (1973: 15) states that the Victorians' huge energy and commitment to work was also driven by their moral consciousness, an obligation to God or to fellowmen. Another characteristic of life in the nineteenth century was speed as both the tempo of work and the tempo of living increased.

Houghton (1957: 7) describes this fast life, stating, "They felt they were living a life without leisure and without pause; it was a life of haste and above all excitement."

2.3.2 Intellectual and emotional context

The radical transition in human thinking was less overt in society but was gradually seen in an atmosphere of unrest and paradox pertaining to moral and intellectual issues. Old certitudes were no longer fixed and a reconstruction of thought was required. The Victorians lived between two worlds: moral certainty and doubt (Houghton 1957: 9-10). All intellectual theories, including those of morality, were in some sense insecure. John Morley (in Houghton 1957: 11) asserts, "It was an age of science, new knowledge, searching criticism, followed by multiplied doubts and shaken beliefs." The proliferation of scientific knowledge which almost overwhelmed the Victorians contributed to doubt and uneasy feelings that their beliefs were no longer quite as secure as before (Houghton 1957: 12). However, the belief in reason and morality held by the majority endured the age and were largely able to displace doubt (Houghton 1957: 21; Seaman 1973: 6).

Thus, the Victorian age was an *age of transition*, societal and political, and an *age of doubt* about the nature of humankind, society and the universe (Houghton 1957: 23). Yet, the products of the age, scientific positivism and the ideology of respectability, provided the Victorians with a sense of order and hope.

2.3.2.1 Optimism

The start of the Victorian period saw a revival of hope based on the idea of progress. Pearce and Stewart (2002: 11) assert that optimism was a common attribute of Victorian thought. It was also accepted that in a progressive country change was constant. Change was considered progress and the age was thus considered a transition to an even greater one. The Victorians felt they were on the threshold of an even greater era. Although political and economic developments created a favourable environment, scientific theory and invention together created an atmosphere of supreme optimism about the present and the future (Houghton 1957: 33). The intellectual achievements of the nineteenth century had extended scientific assumptions and methods from the physical world to the whole life of people. Intellectuals felt that finally the human mind had been liberated from false methods of theology and metaphysics that had explained the universe to humankind in past centuries. They felt they possessed the key to Truth through science (Houghton 1957:

35). Furthermore, progress through applied science was associated with material and moral improvements. The Victorians believed that both the quality of life and moral habits could be improved through education, better drainage and ventilation, railroad travel and the achievements of the arts (Houghton 1957: 41; Pearce & Stewart 2002: 11).

Their other vision of Utopia had less to do with scientific advance. It was a metaphysical conception of the universe founded in the theory of natural evolution (Houghton 1957: 36). Progress in this sense was not accident but necessity (Houghton 1957: 37). Ironically, out of this political, economic and scientific progress, the Victorians developed and maintained their fixed idea of the social roles of men and women: Victorian man could transform himself and his circumstances because of progress; Victorian woman was relegated to a particularly static position. The Victorians were already satisfied with what they had become and were confident in their expectation that they would become more of what they already were (Houghton 1957: 38, Seaman 1973: 6). Pearce and Stewart (2002: 12) state that optimists believed freedom and individual effort to be the keys to progress, although this was largely the privilege of middle class men.

Nevertheless, the decline of the old order of political and religious institutions caused alarm in some Victorians; others viewed it with relief and joy as they shook off the yoke of aristocratic privilege and theological dogma (Houghton 1957: 45). The optimism of political progress rested chiefly on the advance of social freedom than on social equality. The Victorian desire for liberty was headed by the middle class who desired political and economic freedom.

2.3.2.2 Anxiety

Paradoxically the era was also pervaded by doubt. At the same time as expanding business, scientific development, the growth of democracy and the decline of the old order filled Victorians with hope for the future; there were also sources of distress. Davidoff and Hall (2002: xiii) posit:

> The early nineteenth century in England was a time of heightened fear about both social and economic chaos and the perils of daily life. Partly as a reaction, among the middle strata at this period there was especial fascination with carving up their world into discrete categories and classes. These preoccupations show in the forms of nascent science, the filters of evangelical religion, the intense grading of social and economic groups, particularly of men and women.

Despite the seeming solidity and strength of Victorian society, it was filled with dread of some outbreak of the masses, which would overthrow the established order and confiscate property (Houghton 1957: 55). Democracy was seen by some to be incompatible with property ownership and therefore incompatible with civilisation (Ford 1992: 27). Seaman (1973: 12) suggests that middle class morality was a bulwark against the lack of civilised standards amongst the new urban masses.

Houghton (1957: 58) states that this period also saw a decline in Christian belief in England due to intellectual and scientific developments and that this along with the prospect of atheism had social implications. It was assumed that any collapse of faith would destroy morality. Seaman (1973: 21) differs: the second half of the century did not imply the demise of Christian belief but a gap opened between the theology of the people, which was bibliocentric and congregationally minded, and the theology of the theologians. The non-intellectual quality of the people's theology did more to weaken the hold of religion over the people than science did but the Church survived this intellectual crisis in relatively good order. Pearce and Stewart (2002:8) contend that religion figured more deeply in the lives of Victorians than the findings of a census conducted during the period indicate. Seaman (1973: 6) posits that the strict moral code was foremost a result of religious revival. Religion contributed to the period's close adherence to laws of respectability; if the moral code disappeared, society would disintegrate.

Anxiety was also fuelled by the Victorian commitment to work; the pressure of work resulted in worry and fatigue. For the lower classes work meant grinding toil for barely sufficient wages, the ongoing fear of unemployment and the awful conditions of their slum dwellings. At the same time the business and professional classes also worked hard and long hours in the face of the constant anxiety of financial failure. The ambition to climb the social ladder also added pressure as financial failure meant loss of social status (Houghton 1957: 61).

The breakdown of traditional thought led to an emotional state of ennui and doubt. The traditional Christian idea of the universe was being displaced by a scientific picture of a vast mechanism of cause and effect, acting by physical laws that governed humankind itself (Houghton 1957: 68). Indeed, isolation and loneliness, characteristic of the modern era, is first detected in the nineteenth century. Houghton (1957: 77) attributes this to the demise of a long-established order which led to the fragmentation of both

society and thought. In this process people became acutely conscious of their alienation. Democratic-industrial society was not a cohesive society; society was now a collection of individuals driven by self-interest. The modern city was the creation and symbol of this liberal-industrial society. People's connection with rural neighbours or ancestral villages was lost in the exodus to factory towns or London; as a result the sense of community was permanently lost.

2.4   POLITICAL CONTEXT

A continuing 'democratic revolution' (Ford 1992: 27) occurred throughout the nineteenth century, which involved not only the extension of the suffrage but also the identification of new democratic issues, derived from the ideas of the French Revolution. This process was conflictual and depended on who was in power, which made it uneven and confused. Although the reign of Victoria never saw Britain become a true democracy, the British political system succeeded in providing certain elements of a modern political system: stability without stasis and dynamism without destruction (Pearce & Stewart 2002: 16).

The monarchy was theoretically like that of most European countries of the time. However, in practice it belonged to the dignified part of the constitution; it was decorative, aroused reverence but held little political sway. According to Pearce and Stewart (2002: 16), Victoria could advise, even irritate and was possibly useful in foreign policy, but otherwise her influence was limited.

The cabinet was central to the British government and was comprised of policy-making ministers responsible for all major decisions. All the cabinet ministers were male and largely landowners; no Prime Minister was without landed estate. As Pearce and Stewart (2002: 17-18) indicate cabinet ministers not only governed the country, they also owned a large section of it. However, wealth alone was insufficient to gain the position of Prime Minister, which required a capacity for extremely hard work, political cunning, oratory and absolute ambition. The number of government departments was limited and their activities narrow, operating through a small civil service. No qualifications for government or civil service were laid down and family influence and personal networks determined appointments. Cabinet ministers were answerable to Parliament for their decisions and for the mistakes of their civil servants. The House of Lords was composed entirely of hereditary peers and bishops, who received great

social respect. In theory it was the equal of the House of Commons but in practice the Commons exercised greater power and influence.

In geographical terms there were wide discrepancies in representation. According to Pearce and Stewart (2002: 19), new urban England was grossly under-represented in Parliament. The Great Reform Act of 1832 allowed males the right to vote based on property ownership. Thus, the voters were mainly made up of middle class males. Women could not vote because it was believed that they were emotionally and intellectually unsuited. At the same time it was held that their husbands and fathers could effectively exercise the vote for them. Similarly where workers were excluded, it was felt that their employer could speak and vote for them.

Clearly the democracy of the British government was limited but Pearce and Stewart (2002: 20) show that it did not only consider male interest or the interests of the landowning aristocracy. The burden of tax was largely carried by the rich who, while they governed the country, also paid for its government. Basic satisfaction with the political system was revealed in the failure of radical reformers to arouse popular support to reform Parliament itself. There was a fear that to extend the franchise would lower the tone of politics, strengthen corruption and replace serious political debate with increased alcohol consumption and cheap slogans.

2.5   SOCIAL CONTEXT

During the Victorian age Britain became a predominantly urban society, unique in the world's history of which the implications were enormous. Its population increased rapidly through the nineteenth century, in part due to industrial wealth but social conditions were poor (Ford 1992: 19). The birth rate increased; the death rate doubled. Many were undernourished. Causes of death were related to the seasons: in winter the cold caused deaths and in summer water-borne diseases were the reason, in particular, cholera which was the result of poor almost non-existent sanitary conditions in urban areas (Pearce & Stewart 2002: 2; Seaman 1973: 42). In industrial towns which had sprung up around factories, city planning or sanitary provision for the masses was absent. Seaman (1973: 48) states that the squalor of the new towns until the mid-century was, to a certain extent, a consequence of the general mind-set of the public at the time: free-trade and the doctrines of self-help and individual responsibility. Socially the English were lacking in any tradition of civic pride, derived from either

public or private enterprise. Pearce and Stewart (2002: 2) and Seaman (1973: 48-50) concur that eventually the state of cities could no longer be ignored and public health was at risk. Efforts were made by Public Health reformers in the 1830's and 1840's but progress was slow and met with resistance in government. Seaman (1973: 51) suggests that the impetus for sanitary regulation came from sensible professional men and influential locals who reacted angrily but intelligently to the conditions of the new industrial landscape. Ford (1992: 20) agrees: health was achieved not only by doctors but also by the engineers who implemented urban sanitation. In the last quarter of the century market forces, state and municipal action combined to produce a dramatic improvement in life expectancy. The state finally grasped the importance of public health and legislated such basic needs as sewerage disposal and clean water supply.

Social order was achieved not by the re-organisation of the police in 1857, but through the strength of the individual, family disciplines and codes of conduct (Ford 1992: 20). This is significant, indicative of the regulatory role that the ideology of respectability played in Victorian society. Thus, respectability grew from the idea of family and domesticity and not from legislation. People were not compelled to be respectable by external factors, rather by the covert notions of morality, gentility and fear of disorder.

2.6   ECONOMIC

During the Victorian age Britain became a predominantly industrialised society. By the mid century the growth of Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow reflected the importance of textile manufacture, which had become a vital component of national wealth. A large portion of the cloth produced was exported. The factory system and factory life were the norm. Coal-mining, iron-production and ship-building were the other great industries which made Britain foremost in the world by 1867. The 1860's also saw the steam engine emerge as indispensable. The railway was the vital exponent of the economic scene which had been invented and developed first in Britain. By the late 1860's an extensive rail network covered the country and created a new lifestyle. As a result the country was connected not only in time and space through travel, but also ideas were able to circulate widely. (Pearce & Stewart 2002: 3-5).

During the period Britain achieved the world's richest economy entirely out of her own resources (both local and those obtained by the exploitation of her colonies): materials, finance and skills. Seaman (1973: 45) states that the entire industrialising process in

Britain was an improvisation, undertaken without benefit of sophisticated techniques of business organisation, supporting professional skills or planned government action. Most inventors and entrepreneurs never had formal training; the profession of engineer was officially developed out of the iron industry with the building of bridges and need for structures for factories and railway stations. According to Pearce and Stewart (2002: 6), in 1870 approximately one-third of all manufactured goods worldwide came from Britain. She left all her rivals behind and established a staggering economic lead.

Seemingly the average Briton was considerably richer than the average continental citizen. However, wealth was rather unevenly distributed and poverty was still rife. Despite this, Pearce and Stewart (2002: 8) suggest that the Victorians made great strides in attacking poverty through ingenuity, capacity for hard work and a substantial amount of greed. Furthermore, Seaman (1973: 41) attests that it is misleading to overemphasise the effects of industrialisation on the workers' way of life. One cannot generalise about conditions among 'the working class' in the nineteenth century. Nor can it be assumed that the majority of workers were to be found in factories or mines. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that, because coal-mining and power-driven factories were a result of the Industrial Revolution, so too were poverty, gruelling hours of work and filthy living conditions. The pre-Industrial Revolution period had not necessarily been better when it had been estimated that most of the population had been dependent on charity or poor relief (Seaman 1973: 44; 73). In the second half of the nineteenth century, economic expansion was so great that almost everyone benefited from it although the gap between rich and poor continually widened till 1900.

Women and children of the working classes had work to supplement low wages. Yet, in this way the basic unity of family was maintained to some extent. Furthermore, the tempo of industrial work was no longer related to the seasons. There was no slowing down in the winter; workers had to labour continuously. The length of the working day no longer depended on seasons either; regardless of daylight hours workers had to work the hours required by their employer to produce uniform outputs. Circumstances were very competitive and as a result entrepreneurs had to try producing the most at least cost, which meant wages were minimal. Workers put up with it because it was better than starvation.

Finally, Thompson (1988: 29) sums up the effect of the new economic conditions:

> It was not a question of the Victorians improving, reforming, institutionalising, and more or less cleaning up a rough and raw society

which they took over from the preceding half century of headlong economic change; it was rather a matter of their fashioning the elements of a new society in step with the appearance of its material and human components.

2.7   RELIGION

The Victorian moral imperative was in part the result of the religious revival embedded in Wesleyanism and the Evangelical movement within the established Anglican Church (Seaman 1973: 6; Thompson 1988: 250-252). According to Houghton (1957: 220), the Evangelical movement transformed the character of English society and imparted to the Victorian age the moral earnestness which was its distinguishing characteristic. Evangelical religion inspired an obsessive belief in work, sobriety of behaviour, respectability and self-help. According to Hall (1998:181), Evangelicalism provided a crucial influence on the nineteenth century definition of home and family. Between 1780 and 1820, in the Evangelical struggle over anti-slavery and the reform of manners and morals, a new view of the nation, of political power and of family life was forged. The Evangelical emphasis on the creation of a new lifestyle, a new ethic, provided the framework for the emergence of the Victorian bourgeoisie. The uncertainties of commercial and manufacturing activities in an unstable and constantly changing environment, the demands of international trade and the hope for progress for the rich or survival for the poor, lay in conducting one's life with a conscious and sensible regularity (Seaman 1973: 7). While these ideals of behaviour were not entirely new, originating as part of a Puritan ethic, Seaman (1973: 7) states they became the predominant creed of the Victorian period because they were socially useful. Christianity was a religion of personal salvation and a social religion for the moral improvement of society. Seaman (1973: 8) posits that the reason that a moral code which fitted the period's economic and social needs emerged from a religious revival in the eighteenth century was because the thinking and feeling of all, except an intellectual minority, could be formulated in no other way but the religious idiom of the time. However, Tosh (1999: 34) argues that to interpret religious observance, particularly in the home, as merely a feature of social change, is to underestimate the power of religious belief at that time.

Revivals continued to occur throughout the Queen's reign. John Wesley's uneasy relationship with the Anglican Church led his followers into gradual separation as the Methodists. Methodism ultimately found itself outside of the Established Church (Seaman 1973: 10). His emphasis on a consciousness of sin and the necessity of

personal conversion was responsible for a new intensity and sobriety among the lower-middle and working classes (Webb 1980: 128). According to Webb (1980: 39), Methodist sermons appealed particularly to those whose lives were bleak and uncertain; the dry, scholarly sermons of High Churchmen repelled them. Within the Established Church revival was located in the evangelical movement, which revived Christianity in the middle to upper classes. Evangelicalism began partly as a response to Methodism and like Methodism it emphasised the sense of sin, the weakness of man without God, the profound psychological experience of conversion and dedication to service (Webb 1980: 128). On another level, William Booth's Mission, formally constituted as the Salvation Army, did much for the working classes. The morality emanating from religious revival was seen by the middle class Victorians as essential to a civilising process in the newly urbanised and chaotic masses. The respectable dogmas of self-help and personal responsibility contributed to making life under the social conditions of Victorian England (cf 2.6) more bearable.

However, Vickery (1998: 207) questions the extent to which Evangelicalism was an exclusively middle class project. Vickery cautions that it would be mistaken to see Evangelical enthusiasm thriving in every middle class home. The religiously cold, backslidden and utterly indifferent also existed. Houghton (1957: 60) maintains that the Victorian devotion to the moral code was such that those who abandoned a supernatural religion still believed in the validity of morality itself and saw their morality to be purer than that of Christian morality.

2.7.1   Religion and domesticity

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the separation of work from home. The home became a refuge from the world, the site of religious observance. According to Tosh (1999: 34), the notion of home as a refuge from worldly labour had a strong religious basis, as did the whole of nineteenth century domesticity. Various denominations placed new emphasis on the saving power of the godly household, thus the character of Victorian domesticity was defined by religious input.

The husband had a responsibility to sustain the faith of the converted and to show the way to those who were not, usually children and servants. In the theology of most Evangelicals the loving authority of the earthly father was seen as a microcosm of divine authority, sanctified by God himself. The husband's sacred authority was subsequently balanced by his wife's high moral status (Tosh 1999: 35). Religion was domesticated; the home was the site of Sunday Bible-reading, daily family prayers,

keeping of spiritual diaries and the death-bed. In this way the gulf between home and the world was emphasised. Tosh (1999: 36) contends:

> The home might no longer be the site of production, but its deeper, more moral purpose now became clear. By drawing religion into the home at the same time as work was being taken out of it, the hold of domesticity over the middle class was greatly intensified and produced much of its tone and character.

2.8   THE MIDDLE CLASSES

The Victorian middle class was comprised of a number of strata, bound together by their commitment to an imperative moral code.   Nead (1988: 5) points out, "It is inaccurate to imagine the Victorian middle class as a singly unified entity. The middle class was composed of a diverse range of occupational groups and levels of income." Furthermore, Thompson (1988: 64) contends that while the progression from the crowded city streets to the tranquil elegance was typical of the Victorian rising middle class, only some occupations, chiefly the professions, could be assumed as wholly middle class or upper-middle class.   The professions which made up one great segment of the Victorian middle class were medicine, law and the Church. Tosh (1999: 11) states, "Membership of these 'old' professions received gentlemanly status because of the requirement of formal education and partly because giving advice for a fee held little of the commercial taint attached to buying and selling in the market place." Other professions secured recognition too, such as accountancy, engineering, surveying, architecture, men of letters and journalists. Yet men of trade and business constituted the majority of middle class. The most successful enjoyed meteoric careers and became fabulously wealthy. Below them were owners of medium-sized factories, bankers and merchants, who were the backbone of the commercial middle class. In the Victorian period middle class dignity required an annual income of no lower than £300 per year and the same was true of the professions. Such an income could run to a commodious house and at least three servants (Tosh 1999: 12). At the bottom came a broad base of less-highly considered occupations. This level of society became known as the lower middle class.

Middle class men and women placed themselves in opposition to an indolent and dissolute aristocracy and a potentially subversive working class (Davidoff and Hall (2002: xviii). Tosh (1999: 13) states:

> The distinctions of status and wealth to be found in the middle class were greater than in either the working or upper classes. The middle classes were distinguished from the aristocracy because they worked

regularly for a living, and from the working class, because they did not do manual labour. Within the moral economy of Victorian society these were significant distinctions. Moreover, such status was more valued because it could not be taken for granted. They were keenly aware of how precarious all forms of business were. The risk of failure could never entirely be discounted.

Houghton (1957: 191-2) posits that failure was the worst fate one could imagine in this environment. To be left behind in the race of life was not only to be defeated; it was to be exposed to the same kind of scorn and humiliation dealt out to poverty. Failure was attributed to a weakness of character, a symptom of moral corruption.

The Victorian period was marked by a continued separation of work from home. The middle class ideal was a home in the country, or as close as possible to it – in a leafy, green suburb. However, Tosh (1999: 15-17) points out that many middle class families still lived over the shop or immediately adjacent to their work premises. Nevertheless, the dominant tendency was from being a site of productive work, the household was increasingly becoming a refuge from it. Moreover, according to Tosh (1999: 17):

> The most critical precondition of middle class domesticity was the withdrawal of the wife from direct involvement in the productive work of the household. Once breadwinning was removed from the home, it soon came to be accepted that wives should have nothing to do with it. With work being located outside the home, the implication of intruding in the public sphere and perhaps forgoing her husband's protection were disturbing.

The husband's status as breadwinner, thus, confined the wife to the role of home-maker.

The changing character of the household went beyond just space and locality; it became a badge of social status and moral standing. Branca (1975: 6) states "…in the middle class life-style…the drive for social esteem became an obsession." Tosh (1999: 17) and Branca (1975: 6) concur that a non-working wife, a contingency of servants and an elegantly furnished home was a more convincing symbol of a man's status than his business or profession. This new image brought dramatic and direct changes in the life-style of the middle class woman. The house had to provide more than just a haven for family withdrawal for the home was also the stage for social ritual and outward manifestation of status in the community (Dickerson 1995: xviii).

2.9   CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2 the first hypothesis that the political, social, economic and religious context of Victorian England contributed to the ideology of respectability was investigated. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. 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. It was found that the character of the age was marked by transition and doubt, the products of which, positivism and respectability, provided the Victorians with the sense of hope and order. Order was maintained not through civil action, but rather the strength of the individual, family discipline and codes of conduct, indicative of the regulatory role that respectability played within Victorian society. However, the factor that most contributed to the Victorian moral imperative was the result of religious revival, in which the home was central and which inspired an obsessive belief in work, sober conduct, respectability and self-help. Respectability became the most compelling strand binding together the disparate elements of the middle class within the revised domestic world. In this way the initial hypothesis was confirmed.

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.

CHAPTER 5   **THE DICHOTOMY IN VICTORIAN RESPECTABILITY IS REVEALED IN THE EMBEDDED AND GENDERED DISCOURSES IN VICTORIAN DOMESTIC SPACE**

SUBPROBLEM 4   How can embedded and gendered discourses in selected texts associated with domestic space in the Victorian period be analysed to explore the dichotomy?

PRÉCIS 4   Criteria derived from the theory and the literature study are applied to critically analyse Victorian domestic space. Texts are identified, selected and interpreted according to the aforementioned criteria, revealing how space was gendered and gender made spatial.

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter two showed that the Victorian age was one of transition and doubt, yet belief in reason and respectability provided stability and displaced much doubt. Order was maintained through the strength of the individual, family discipline and codes of conduct, not through civil action. The nineteenth century saw the continued separation of work from home, which became a place of refuge from the world. A diverse range of occupational groups and levels of income constituted the Victorian middle class who were bound together in their common endeavour for respectability. Further, Chapter three revealed that respectability was a complex combination of moral, religious, economic and cultural systems, and dictated specific gender definitions. Women were seen as naturally domestic beings, the 'Angel in the House', yet this positioned the middle class housewife as an active agent in her family and home. Chapter four established that architectural space maintains gender distinctions. It encodes and perpetuates male power and superiority, which was evident in Victorian architecture where space was structured around respectability and male dominance over the public and the private. The separation of work from home resulted in new domestic layouts. Domestic space was structured around segregation and specialisation, differentiated according to a specific 'socio-sexual' code. The house became a symbol of upward mobility, a means to establish identity in terms of outward signs of respectability.

The preceding chapters provide a contextual as well as a theoretical framework of Victorian England and its domestic architecture. Against this context, five texts (cf 1.1) are identified and selected. The texts are presented and discussed according to criteria derived from the literature study.

5.2   CRITERIA FOR ANALYSIS

The following criteria derived from the literature study are used uniformly for the analysis of each text.

5.2.1   Pubic/private

It has been argued (cf. 3.5.2) that while the public/private division must not be mistaken for the Victorian model of separate spheres, the two are intrinsically related. The separate spheres paradigm provided a rigid framework for a world neatly divided into male and female. Public/private incorporates complex gender assignments that shift

according to context. Within the theory of separate spheres the existence of a private sphere is linked to the hegemony of men and modern masculinity within the public realm. The separation of public from private, work from home, male from female, held implications for the organisation of architectural space. Therefore, both public/private and separate spheres provide a relevant model for understanding the class specific yet gendered organisation of Victorian English public and private life.

5.2.2   'Angel in the House'

During the Victorian age one of the most powerful and notable registers of woman's sphere was the phrase made current by Coventry Patmore (1854) in his poem about the ideal woman and wife, the 'Angel in the House' (cf. 4.6). Thus, the Victorian housewife was her family's moral and spiritual guide. The 'Angel in the House' is situated within the ideology of respectability and positions woman as naturally domestic. It is both double-edged and problematic: it projects an image of a passive and subordinate woman, yet it positioned the middle class housewife as an active agent in her family and home. It has been argued (cf. 4.6) that '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.

5.2.3   Decoration and ornament

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. Victorian decoration refers to both the development of a consumer economy and to the ideology of separate spheres. Through decoration a family expressed its proper understanding of life and beauty, the latter was deemed a moral quality. In particular, the decoration of their homes was seen as the outflow of their gentility (cf. 4.5.1 & 4.5.2).

5.3   SELECTION OF TEXTS

Three types of texts were identified: architectural drawings; sketches documenting interiors and photographs of a house interior with associated diary. The architectural drawings comprise the floor plans of Samuel Hemmings £1,550 Model villa (c 1855), Lewis Cubitt's (1799-1883) Terrace, Lowndes Square, London (1841-43) and Henry Ashton's Apartment houses, Victoria Street, London (1852-4). The sketches documenting interiors comprise drawings by George Scharf (1820-1895) of four rooms:

library, study, bedroom and his mother's room, in his house at 29 Great George Street, London (1869). The photographs and associated diary comprise photographs of three rooms, drawing-room, dining-room and studio/study, in the Sambourne House, 18 Stafford Terrace, London (1877) and the accompanying diaries of Mrs Marion Sambourne (1851-1914).

The following criteria were used for selection of these texts from the limited number of possibilities (cf. Chapter 1). Firstly, regarding the period, the text had to originate from 1837-1901, and secondly the graphic and written documentation surrounding the texts needed to be comprehensive and establish context. In the case of the architectural drawings, the floor plans chosen are representative of the three middle class housing types current in Victorian England: the detached villa, the terrace and the apartment. George Scharf's drawings are highly detailed and reveal both his culture and scholarship. Scharf was a bachelor and lived with his elderly mother and aunt. Moreover, although they represent the antithesis of the Victorian archetypal middle class family home, they remain an unusual but lucid illustration of the extent to which domestic space was gendered. The Sambourne House provides an excellently preserved and documented example of Victorian domestic life. The photographs and diaries offer rich and detailed texts for analysis.

5.3.1   Architectural drawings of three housing types

5.3.1.1 £1,550 Model villa (c 1855)

Designs for Villas, Parsonages, and Other Houses...from £200 to £5000 by Samuel Hemming of Birmingham is a publication for the use of builders. The book contains plates lithographed in two or three colours, a detailed and businesslike set of specifications provided with each design. In Hemming's design for a £1,550 villa:

> ...rustication covers the entire ground storey, and the middle section of the façade projects, although only very slightly. But the triple windows in this central section give a richer and busier effect to the whole façade. Their cornices are supported on deep scrolled brackets and they also have curved pediments over the wider central windows...The entrance is place on one side so that the front façade may be regular; but the symmetry toward the street was not allowed to restrict the free grouping principal rooms of varying size. The service wing and the stable yard ramble off to the rear and side with real functional ease. The upper storey has an open gallery at the rear intended, apparently, for the children of the family. (Hitchcock 1954a: 429-430).
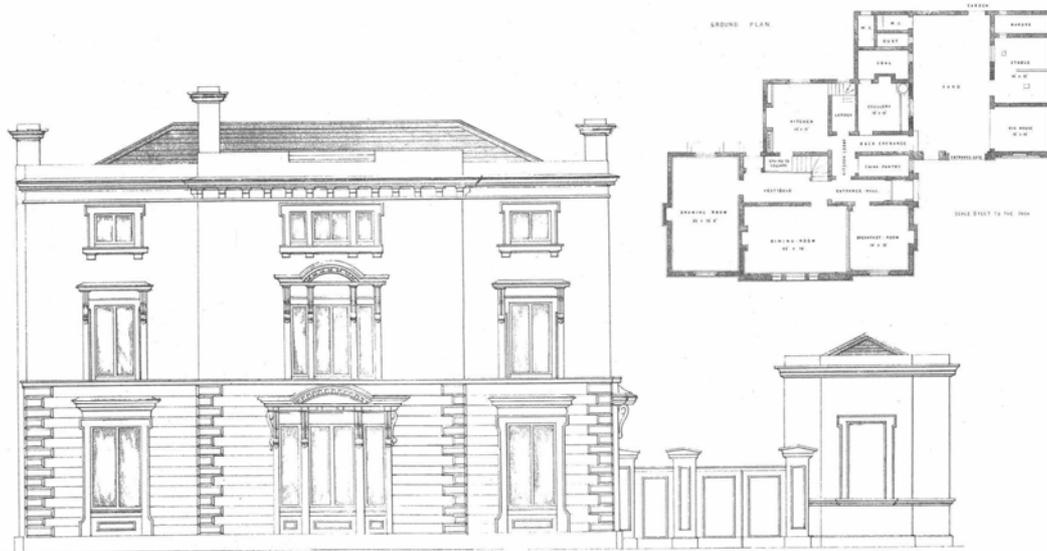
Figure 5.1   Elevation and plan of £1550 Villa, by Samuel Hemming, c. 1855

Samuel Hemming's model villa (Figure 5.1) is an example of a purpose-built 'ornamental villa' to be located in newly developed suburbs outside the town centre, which allowed the middle classes to avoid noise, pollution and the lower classes (cf. 4.3). The ground floor is divided into three sections: the first section spreads straight ahead and to the left of the front door and leading off of the entrance hall and vestibule are the breakfast-room, dining-room and drawing-room. Separated by the principal staircase, the second section is a service area and includes the kitchen, scullery, various storerooms and a servant's staircase. In so doing, chance encounters with the lower servant class could be limited. Across the yard from the service area is the third section, the stables and gate house. A drawing of the second floor and attic have not been included by Hitchcock (1954b), however, it is assumed that the second floor was comprised of the principal and spare bedrooms, with dressing-rooms, possibly a bathroom and the day and night nurseries for children.   These intensely private spaces are, thus, kept separate from public, safeguarded against intrusion. The attic space was most likely used for accommodation of the servants.

5.3.1.2 Terrace, Lowndes Square, London (1841-43)

The terrace in Lowndes Square (Figures 5.2 & 5.3) is one of the few examples built at a known date by a known architect. It has further interest in that it probably initiated the first important new Victorian mode of terrace design. The prestige of the Belgravian

location and their builder, if not so much the architect, was the primary reason for the unusual acknowledgement given these houses by the press and the particular interest of other builders in emulating them. At the time of its construction, Belgravia was seen as an excellent example of speculative building (Hitchcock 1954a: 431).

Figure 5.2   Elevation of Terrace, Lowndes Sq, Belgravia, London, by Lewis Cubitt, 1841-43
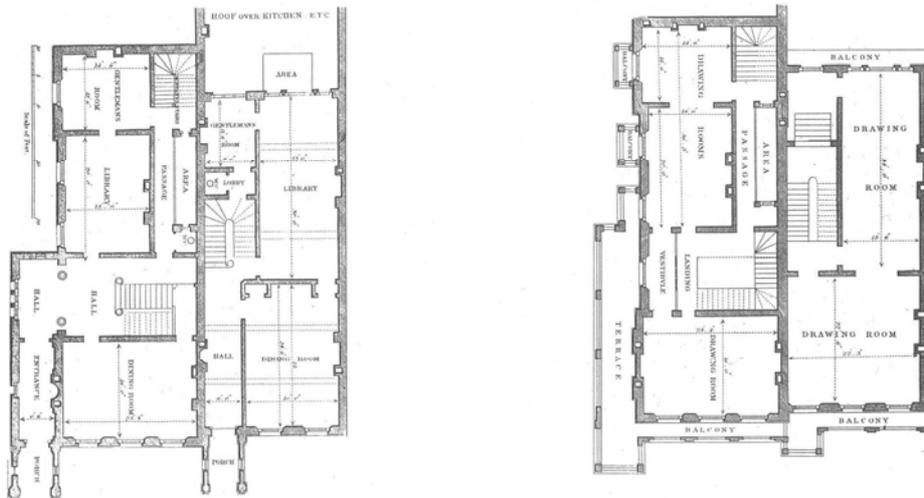
Figure 5.3   Plans of two units of Terrace, Lowndes Sq, Belgravia, London, by Lewis Cubitt, 1841-43

The building of Grosvenor Estate in Belgravia was far from complete and in the mid 30's Thomas Cubitt obtained the lease of a narrow tract of land lying between Wilton Crescent and Sloane Street beyond the northwest edge of the Grosvenor lands. In 1836-37 Cubitt laid out on the Lowndes tract a long and narrow square. Lowndes Square was not built up until 1849, except for this short terrace of five houses at the south end which was erected in 1841-43 according to the designs of Thomas' brother, Lewis Cubitt (Hitchcock 1954a: 431).

According to Beresford Chancellor (in Hitchcock 1954a: 432), Lowndes Square was in the 40's supposed to have been built up with greater regard to architectural effect than any other existing square in London and broke with Georgian convention.

> One end house of the terrace on the south side...stands almost free, with a low projecting entry along its open side; the other end house, at the closed corner of the square, has no such appendage. But this slight asymmetry in the layout is minimised in the elevation; for the two end houses stand equally from the main range of the façade between. Despite five irregularly spaced doors in the ground storeys of the houses, the composition suggests a single palazzo with...strong end emphasis... . There is no central motif at all such as had long been usual in pretentious terraces, particularly those running along the sides of squares...Many terraces hitherto had been without orders merely because they were modestly designed but none had hitherto been 'astylar'... (Hitchcock 1954a: 432).

In this regard the design of the terrace was influenced by Sir Charles Barry's architecture. Furthermore, evidence of a second influence of the "...plastic gusto of [Charles] Parker's characteristic peasant-Baroque detail..." (Hitchcock 1954a: 433) is present in some elements of the detail. "The bold cornices on the chimneys and their ornamental chimney pots, although they are used in a Barry-like way, are more wilful in their picturesqueness than Barry would have approved of" (Hitchcock 1954a: 433).

The terraced house (cf. 4.3.1.2) is based on the principle of shared party walls. The basic plan of the regular terraced house is simple: two floors, with two rooms each. For variation and enlargements there are further floors on top, a basement and back extension, or both. The house plans (Figure 5.3) are of a regular upper middle class terrace type. The narrow hall widens towards the rear to make room for the stairs. From the hall little beyond the stairs can be seen so the visitor's experience of the house is controlled. The more intimately related acquaintances were allowed to enjoy more of the house. The library behind the dining-room is long and narrow, with a smaller 'Gentleman's Room' opening off it behind the stairs. "A 'Gentleman's room' in

the modern sense, a ground-storey water closet, is approached by a tiny lobby which leads back to the hall under the stairs" (Hitchcock 1954a: 433). On the first story, away from the public gaze, the principal drawing-room runs across the whole front of each house; from this a large secondary drawing-room extends to the rear of the house. The two are connected by a wide opening and they form a characteristic L-shaped reception suite which is practically one big room occupying most of this floor. The opening connecting the two spaces of the drawing-room could be opened or closed with sliding doors that slid back into recesses in the wall, thus controlling public in private or private in public. Each house is provided with a principal staircase and a servant's staircase at the rear, separating the two classes of occupants from each other within 'shared' space.

Hitchcock (1954b) does not include the plan drawings for the basement, second and third floors and attic. However, the drawings for a terrace of similar size and class, Albert Houses, Queens Gate, London, 1859-60 (CJ Richardson architect) include these floors. Due to the regularity in layout of terrace houses it is assumed that the layout for Lowndes terrace basement, second and third floors and attic would have been similar (Figure 5.4). The kitchen and its ancillary spaces are located in the basement which extends well beyond the rear of the main block of each house. The bedrooms and their associated dressing-rooms are located on the second and third floors. Servants were accommodated in the basement and the attic, as in Hemming's villa.

Figure 5.4   Plans of Terrace, 'Albert Houses', 44-52 Queens Gate, London, by CJ Richardson, 1859-60

5.3.1.3 Apartment houses, Victoria Street, London (1852-54)

In 1852 the architect Henry Ashton was asked by the entrepreneur, Mackenzie, to design the first London apartment houses or flats. Ashton gave the design of his building a definite continental character, although recalling Vienna or Berlin more than Paris, and subsequently more respectable in the eyes of the middle classes who would occupy them (Figure 5.5) (Hitchcock 1954a: 476-7).

> The undomestic scaling and the foreign look might help to make more palatable the fact that there were shops below. These shops were not modest sales premises in the West End manner... . Rather Ashton provided a range of wide-arched shop windows, with a mezzanine above in an arch, quite in the grandest manner of the new banks and insurance offices in the City. Prince Albert...inspected some of the apartments in 1854 when they were available for letting and was 'pleased to express his approbation of them architecturally'. Mackenzie's project included a long multiple block between Carlisle Place and Howick Place on the south side of Victoria Street, with two additional blocks to the east and west... . Discussion may well be confined to the central and largest of Mackenzie's three blocks, about which the most information is available, since all the blocks are quite similar. This one...was not built as a unit but as four attached 'houses', each with its own staircase. The façade, however, was treated as a continuous composition like a terrace. The arched ground storey and mezzanine were broken into four rusticated and pedimented doorways that provided the entrances to the apartments above, as well as by wide rusticated piers between the bay. Above there are four storeys, each containing within the over-all length of the multiple block eight apartments arranged in pairs on either side of the four staircases. (Hitchcock 1954a: 476-7).

Figure 5.5   Apartment houses in Victoria Street, London, by Henry Ashton, 1852-54. General view looking east

According to Hitchcock (1954a: 478), although the layout of the floor plans (Figure 5.6) is quite poor, it is fairly ample in its accommodations, comparable to housing for a lower middle class family.

Figure 5.6   Apartment houses, Victoria Street, London, by Henry Ashton, 1852-54

At the front of each apartment is a drawing-room; the dining-room opens into this through a wide door. The drawing-room is the largest room in the apartment, although facing the street it is located as far away as possible from the entrance.   These reception rooms are approached by an interior hall from the entrance lobby which is entered from the stair landing. Just as with the villa and the terrace the family's privacy is maintained. To the rear there are three bedrooms in each apartment, one very small. A fourth bedroom opens off the hall in front, indicative of the poor planning, to have an essentially private space located in a public area. A kitchen is accompanied by a small scullery and a water closet as well as by a servants' bedroom (practically without air or light). Once again social propriety takes precedence over the pragmatic. The kitchen is located as far as possible from the dining-room in the main part of the apartment and a separate servants' stair is provided.   The master's water closet and a storeroom, as well as the servants' stair, open off the passage that leads from the hall to the kitchen; while a large closet is also provided off the main corridor.

5.3.2   Drawings of the interior spaces of a house

5.3.2.1 George Scharf, 29 Great George Street, London (1869)

George Scharf exemplified the Victorian phenomenon of the 'professional' man. Initially secretary and subsequently the first director of the newly-established National Portrait Gallery, Scharf was a man of many talents. Among his abilities he was an accomplished draughtsman and the detailed drawings he made of his home in 1868-9 are an extraordinarily revealing record of his expertise as well as his character. His home was not necessarily formally decorated, as was typical of the time, instead he allowed his many possessions that were an integral part of his life and work to

embellish his home. It is also evident that the maintenance of his household was as much a part of his life as his work. Scharf was a busy, thoughtful and endearing bachelor, who divided his time among his numerous interests. Lasdun (1981: 103) notes:

> He gave as much time to the 'elderlies' (his affectionate name for his mother and aunt with whom he lived)...as he might give to working on an essay, meticulously observing the passage of the sun on his pictures, giving a dinner party, selecting paintings for the gallery or rushing out to record some ancient building before it become lost under the demolishers' axe...

It may be assumed, given the nature of Scharf's 'profession', the number of servants and his mother and aunt's co-residence with him, that he lived in a three-storey terrace or semi-detatched house, with two rooms per floor plus a basement (cf. 4.3.1.2). Figure 5.7 depicts his "most preferred friend", Jack Pattisson, in Scharf's library. This room is especially crowded. One can almost not discern the door and walls for all the clutter: bookshelves brimming with books, framed prints and paintings cover the walls, while two work tables and a desk fill the floor. The visible sections of the walls are bright crimson, the ceiling white and the furniture is mahogany.

Figure 5.7   The library, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by Scharf, 1869

Figure 5.8 is of Scharf's second workspace, his study. The windows have been left bare, with wooden shutters in place of curtains. Once again the room feels pleasantly muddled and personal. This time the walls are a more sombre sage green and the ceiling white.

Figure 5.8   The study, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by Scharf, 1869

Figure 5.9 is of Scharf's bedroom, the window is bare except for a frilled pelmet. His bed is more conventionally Victorian, frilled and draped. His hip-bath stands before the fireplace. Figure 5.10 illustrates his mother's room, interestingly located on the top floor tucked away under the roof. Mrs Scharf sits at a table in front of the fire reading a letter. The walls have not been papered or painted a bright colour like the other rooms. Very little of Mrs Scharf's character is evident in her room. Rather, Scharf's collection of plaster casts, sculptures, prints and paintings pervade each room, even that of his mother. Scharf's choice in colour, dark mahogany furniture, heavy table cloths and rugs demonstrate precisely the sort of popular taste at the time. His prolific interests and enquiring mind give all the rooms a distinctive quality (Lasdun 1981: 99).
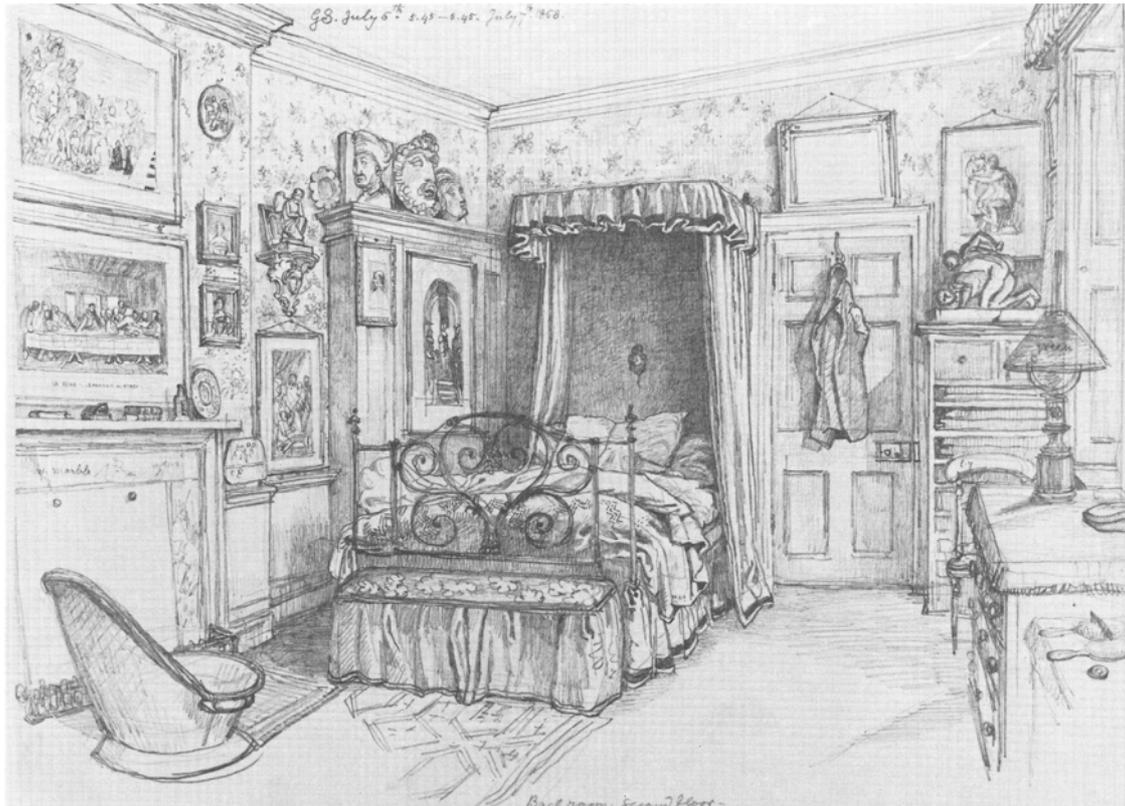
Figure 5.9   Bedroom, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by Scharf, 1869
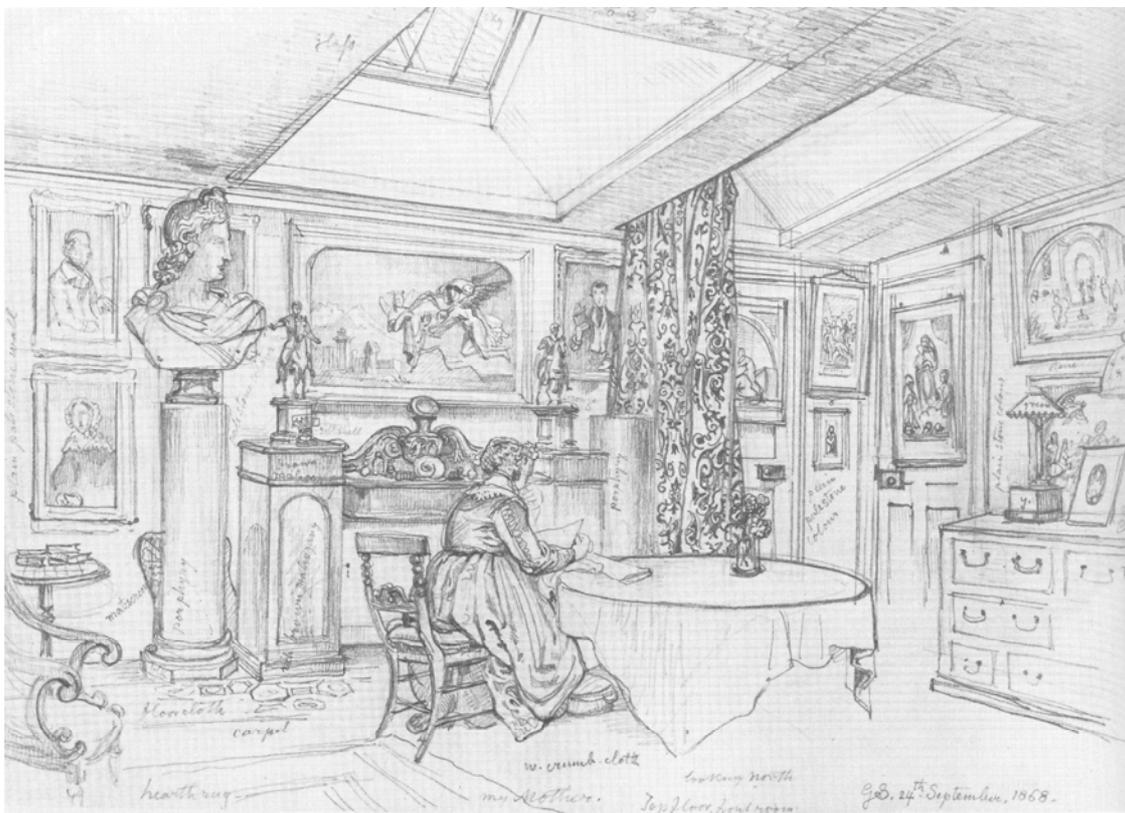

Figure 5.10   Scharf's mother's room, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by Scharf, 1869

Scharf's position as bachelor would have been viewed by Victorian society as in conflict with domesticity. Domesticity projected an ideal of manhood that only marriage could fulfil, thereby yielding the full privileges of masculinity. By contrast bachelorhood provided freedom from the responsibility and burden of a wife and children, and allowed for unfettered homosociality (regular associations with other men). During this period it was not uncommon for respectable men to develop intimate friendships with other men, especially amongst bachelors. Tosh (1999: 110) notes that while the phenomenon of male friendship surely included a fair amount of overt homosexual feeling, it is seldom possible to know whether this was so in particular instances. The language Scharf uses in the description of Jack Pattison as his 'most preferred friend' may allude to a homosexual relationship, however, it should be noted that the use of elaborate language in letters between friends, regardless of their sexuality, was characteristic of the period.

Nonetheless, the life of George Scharf, 'professional' middle class man, demonstrated that domesticity need not be a condition exclusive to marriage. Despite his ageing mother and aunt living with him, there is little evidence of a feminine presence in his home. Even his mother's quarters are overwhelmed by his collection of sculpture and art (Figure 5.10). His was, thus, a peculiar sort of domesticity. He himself ran his household, managed his two servants personally, paid the bills, took pleasure in planning dinner parties (seating and menus) and 'decorated' his home. These activities would have typically been left to the wife, as part of her role as homemaker. The case of George Scharf presents an inversion of the Victorian ideal of domesticity, yet it is in this converse that the power and pervasiveness of Victorian respectability and the gendering of space becomes particularly evident.

5.3.3. Sambourne House

Sambourne House was opened as a museum in 1980 and is located at number 18 Stafford Terrace, in the London borough of Kensington. Sambourne House exists as an example of a genuine Victorian home where the original decorative scheme, devised in the 1870's is almost unaltered (Nicholson 1988: 9).

Edward Linley Sambourne (1844-1910), was a black-and-white artist who worked as a cartoonist for *Punch*, one of the most successful of nineteenth century periodicals. As a result of his energetic and gregarious nature he was on friendly terms with a wide circle of well known artists, sportsmen and literary men, many of whom were

entertained at his home (Nicholson 1988: 9). His influence can be seen throughout the house; however, there was another person responsible too for the arrangement of the rooms at Stafford Terrace. This was his wife, Marion, whose contribution has had little recognition. "Marion could not claim to be an artist, or a writer, or a social reformer, or even a famous beauty. She was just a typical middle class Victorian wife" (Nicholson 1988: 10). The couple had lived at 18 Stafford Terrace, Kensington, since their marriage in October 1874 and by 1881 had two children, Maud and Roy (Nicholson 1988: 13). Both Linley and Marion kept diaries, from which a picture emerges of two interesting people, both busy and preoccupied in their individual spheres but happily united in their appreciation of each other, their family and their home.

At a glance Linley and Marion Sambourne appear to be the archetypal respectable middle class Victorian couple (Figure 5.11). As a cartoonist, Linley, narrowly made it into the professional middle class, outside work, sport and a full social life were given highest priority. He was involved in both public life as well as his private world of his home and family. Marion, his *angel* wife, was content to live her life as wife and mother, "She was just a typical middle class Victorian wife, wrapped up in her husband and children in the security of a happy home, and having no desire to break away from the conventions of her upbringing." (Nicholson 1988: 10). She maintained their home, managed their servants, acted as spiritual guide to and cared for her family and spent the perfunctory amount of time calling on acquaintances and entertaining at home. From their diaries it would appear that Linley and Marion were content with their life and home that they had made together.

> On balance...Marion's criticisms were few and their marriage would have been extremely happy...Nor was she ever bored, but filled the time to her own satisfaction, frequently recording her appreciation of the good things that came her way. Victorian women found the conventions of middle class life restrictive, if not stifling, and used their surplus energies in good works, art or literature. Today more is known about those who rebelled against the system than about the vast majority who were happy and fulfilled in the role of wife and mother. To keep a man contented, bear his children, look after his home and entertain his friends was the main object in life for most young women, and there is nothing to show that Marion ever considered the possibilities of a wider sphere of activity outside her own close-knit domestic circle. (Nicholson 1988: 16-17).

Figure 5.11   Linley and Marion Sambourne photographed in Rome on their wedding tour, 1874

5.3.3.1 18 Stafford Terrace

The Sambournes' house is an example of a typical Victorian terrace (cf. 4.3.1.2). It consists of three storeys and a basement: behind the narrow frontage, the house has two rooms on each floor; the staircase rises from the back of the hall with bathrooms and lavatories off the half-landings. The kitchen and servants' rooms are in the basement, the dining-room and morning-room on the ground floor, and the drawing-room on the first floor. On the second floor are the main bedroom and a spare bedroom, with the day nursery, night nursery and room for the nursemaid above that.

According to Nicholson (1988: 24), Linley rather than Marion decided on the style of decoration for their new house and later again in 1887 when they embarked on some fairly extensive alterations and improvements. At thirty years old he knew what he liked, and his young wife would have been full of admiration for his knowledge as an artist and his taste. It would appear that Linley and Marion adopted many of the precepts of the Aesthetic Movement in the decoration of their home.   The aesthetic movement was associated with the artists: James Whistler, Oscar Wilde, Gilbert and Sullivan, and with the idea of 'Art for Arts' Sake' (Dixon & muthesius 1978: 23). Nicholson (1988: 90) states, "In spite of their possible differences in outlook, Marion was very proud of her artist husband and delighted with the beautiful home which they had created together".

The Sambournes chose to combine the usual two rooms on the first floor into one large L-shaped drawing-room (Nicholson 1988: 25). Due to the nature of his occupation Linley worked from home, in the drawing-room (Figure 5.12), his 'studio', with drawing board, drawing and camera equipment set up on the southern side where the light was good. The house was not large enough nor was he rich enough, to have a separate studio.

Figure 5.12   The drawing-room looking north, 18 Stafford Terrace, London

Nicholson (1988:25) states:

> It was at first papered in a William Morris yellow and white "Larkspur" design, which made a light and pretty, though still typically Aesthetic background for more pictures...and more blue and white china. Some of this paper can still be seen behind the pictures, although exposed areas were later covered with the more sumptuous-looking imitation Spanish leather. There were no comfortable upholstered chairs here or anywhere else in the house in 1877: deep-buttoned upholstery was popular in most homes at the time, but the Sambournes must have considered it incompatible with the Aesthetic mood. The other pieces of furniture – the tables, writing desks and commodes – are mostly

eighteenth-century French (Louis-seize) or good-quality Victorian copies in the same style.

The drawing-room, both a public and private space, functioned as an important means of display of a family's wealth and respectability. As a result it was the most decorative room of the house.

Figure 5.13   The morning-room, 18 Stafford Terrace, London

The morning-room (Figure 5.13) was Marion's. According to Nicholson (1988: 24-25):

> It seems likely that the choice of decoration of the morning-room would have been to Marion's choice rather than her husband's, and it does have a different character from the rest of the house. Though the wallpaper is again the Morris "Fruit" pattern, this time the background colour is blue for the walls and cream for the ceiling. None of the other rooms in the house has a brightly coloured paper on the ceiling, and the morning-room is also unique in that it is not hung with photographs and drawings. We can assume that Marion insisted on something approximating to Old Masters, which we know she admired.

In 1899 after Maud's marriage the Sambournes decided to make some alterations and improvements to Stafford Terrace. These included fitting out the old night-nursery as a studio for Linley (Figure 5.14).

Figure 5.14   Linley's new studio, 1899, 18 Stafford Terrace

The prospect of getting all Linley's work and photographic equipment out of the drawing-room was pleasing to Marion who had complained about a lack of space for years (Nicholson 1988: 173). As with the other improvements it was Linley who organised labour and bought the furniture and curtains, "Lin to Maples...more furniture arrived...Lin v. busy re-arranging his room...helped Lin with books etc in his room all morning..." Marion wrote at intervals in January (Nicholson 1988: 173). Marion continued to keep Linley company while he worked, who felt far from banished, was delighted with what he called his "little room". The room is decoratively an entirely different space from the drawing room in which he had worked. Although full of furniture it is remarkably free of ornament and coverings.

5.4   CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TEXTS

The texts of the model villa, terrace house and apartment are analysed only according to the criteria of public/private, as they do not contain information relevant to 'Angel in the House' and decoration and ornament. The texts of George Scharf and Sambourne house provide content relevant to all three criteria and are therefore analysed as such.

5.4.1   Public/private

The nineteenth century saw the continued separation of the public from the private, work from home. The layout of the Victorian house reflects this change. The home was no longer the site of communal endeavour. Life became formalised and was organised according to social convention (cf 4.4.1). The house was structured according to this respectable separation of activities, gender, age and class, at the expense of practical planning. Victorian architects reproduced spatial and social hierarchies by structuring architectural space according to gendered ideals of the public and the private. For women their relation to the notion of public was complicated in that houses had a shifting division within their walls between more public spaces and absolutely private areas (Davidoff 2003: 18).

The three house types, villa, terrace and apartment, and their plans which have been described (cf. 5.3.1) are evidence of this specialisation and segregation of space, even the apartment which had limited space is divided and subdivided into separate spheres, public and private. Specialisation is evident in the variety of spaces assigned to specific functions and reflects the middle class beliefs about proper social relationships (cf. 4.4.1).   Thus, class privilege and urban life influenced the social practices associated with the gendering of the public and private spheres (Davidoff 2003). Segregation is evident in different zones, structured according to gender, age or class separated by levels or staircases and vestibules. Each room is separate from the next with only one entrance so that visitors need see little more than the room they find themselves in. The kitchen was situated below stairs in the basement as in the terrace house, or behind the entrance hall and principal staircase as in the villa. This illustrates that irrespective of practicalities, it was important that the bustle, commotion and odours from the kitchen did not reach the dining- or drawing-rooms (cf 4.4). The following characteristics are common across the social spectrum: a separate room for dining, a separate drawing-room and a separate kitchen.   Even in the apartment

'house' the kitchen is separated from the rest of the house by the servants' staircase and the entrance hall. It also served to avoid contact with the lower servant class.

It has been established (cf. 4.4.1) that the spaces within the home were divided according to a 'socio-sexual' code. Who has access to which parts of the house and when becomes a marker of gender and age categories as well as permitted intimacies (Davidoff 2003: 18). Accordingly the dining-room, library, study, 'gentlemen's room' and dressing-room were considered masculine; the boudoir, morning-room and the drawing-room feminine. Although the private house was supposed to be the women's sphere, men retained a privileged position within it (Davidoff 2003: 18). As mentioned, the men would remain in the dining-room after dinner to smoke, talk politics or just sober up, later joining the women in the drawing-room.   In addition to social gatherings the drawing room was used for a number of disparate purposes: piano playing, writing letters, embroidery and so forth. Thus, the drawing-room was a complex and layered space, as it served as both public and private space. Although essentially a private area for women, it was still subjected to the privileged position of men, who as 'male head of the household' had legitimate access to both public and private. Furthermore, the drawing-room was located away from the public gaze, either at the furthest end from the entrance, as in the villa and apartment, or on the first floor, as in the terrace. The Victorians valued their privacy and did not want to be looked in upon (cf. 4.3). Thus, the drawing-room, where the women of the house would spend a considerable amount of their time, would be protected from the street and gaze of strangers.

The profusion of rooms, in Ashton's apartments, each with its own function, despite the limited area, shows the length to which Victorians would go in their quest for privacy and control over the environment so as to maintain the appearance of their gentility. Further, Lowndes Terrace and the Albert Houses were designed for upper middle class Victorians. The houses contained a number of additional rooms to Hemming's villa, the library, the 'gentleman's room' and a drawing-room comprised of two rooms. The higher one moved up the social scale, the more compartmentalised and specialised the house became and life became more formal and contrived. Respectability, together with it a life bisected by intricately conceived public and private space, was a luxury that only some could afford, and some more than others (Davidoff in Landes 2003: 33).

Furthermore, Hemming's villa was designed to be built in the context of the suburb. The notion of suburb also invokes the public/private divide. The introverted character

of the suburb reads as a *private* space as opposed to the *public* city. The suburb represented that which was clean, respectable and comfortable, an escape from the city which was dirty, immoral and uncomfortable.

The entrance in each case acts as a threshold between public and private and is either concealed or buffered. In the case of Hemming's villa, the entrance is situated to the side, so that from the street access to the house is not at first evident. This reflects the idea that a dwelling should be a space enclosed from the intrusion of all who were not family and friends (cf. 4.3). In Lowndes terrace the entrance is an added bulwark separating the internal space from the contaminated public realm. The front door is reached after climbing a few steps and going through a short porch. On entry the visitor is confronted with a hall and sees little except the room he/she has been led to and thus does not penetrate at once into the privacy of the house. The visitor was carefully controlled, restricted to strictly defined public spaces and prevented from penetrating the family's personal space (Kleinberg 2003: 149).

Davidoff (2003: 19) links the existence of a private sphere to the hegemony of men within the public realm, yet it extended further than this, men were able to legitimately bridge the public and the private. The home of George Scharf illustrates this argument. The rooms Scharf used as his library and study were most likely originally the morning-room on the ground floor and the drawing-room above. The morning- and drawing-rooms were seen as part of the feminine sphere, but Scharf has annexed them for himself, despite the presence of two women in the house. In so doing his mother and aunt have been displaced, relegated to the top floor under the roof, which was typically the floor used for the children of the home, where rooms for a day and a night nursery and a room for the nursemaid would have been found. Was Scarf's mother in her status as a widowed woman, dependent on her son, so reduced to be equated with that of a child? Victorian children were sequestered at the top of the house, under supervision of a nursemaid and rarely seen or invited into the public rooms of the home (c.f 4.4.1.1). Further, it may be inferred that by locating his ageing mother and aunt in the highest part of the house, Scharf limited their movement through *his* house, as it required her to climb many steep flights of stairs. As Davidoff (2003: 12) points out, the notion of public and private inevitably connotes hierarchy. Within this dualism people are assigned to either category, differential consequences follow in terms of power and access to resources. Just so, Scharf has a position of power and with access to resources, while his mother finds herself in the reduced position of the dependent

widow. He thus colonises the private feminised space of home, rendering it public and masculine.

As there was no extra room available in the house of the Sambournes to serve as a studio, Linley used part of the drawing-room as studio space. In so doing, he requisitioned a space, typically identified with the women of the house, thus inserting public into private.

Despite her husband's appropriation of an essentially feminine space, Marion held onto the morning-room, as her own, separate sphere.

> The morning-room was generally considered to be the sanctum of the lady of the house. At Stafford Terrace it faced south and would certainly have been easier to heat and keep cosy than the vast drawing-room upstairs...Here Marion would have done her sewing, interviewed Cook, and received her callers. (Nicholson 1988: 24).

That Linley Sambourne worked from home and had to occupy a conventionally feminine space is evidence that the ideal of separate spheres cannot be applied rigidly to Victorians. The convergence of Linley and Marion's spheres meant that they probably lived together in greater mutual understanding of one's activities than couples where the husband worked away from home.

Yet, despite this blurring of boundaries Linley and Marion still lived relatively separate lives:

> He and Marion went out to dinner parties and theatres together, as well as entertaining friends at home, but the number of his acquaintances was very large and included people she never met. Gentlemen belonged to clubs where they could gather to talk politics and sport, or smoke and read the papers... . Thus Linley was out in the evenings quite often... (Nicholson 1988: 16).

According to Nicholson (1988: 53), a large part of Marion's diary was taken up with her social engagements, which included 'calling' (calling on friends or acquaintances on their 'at home' day or receiving guests on her own 'at home'). Many of her friends were artists, colleagues and friends of her husband's, however, a number of Marion's close friends were not connected with the art world at all, "...scattered through the diary are the names of unmarried friends and cousins... . Then there was quite a different set of acquaintances, probably made through her father's interests in stock-broking and banking." (Nicholson 1988: 58). Many of these friends she visited or went out with independent of Linley, and travelled across the country on her own to spend holidays

with family. She was not solely reliant on Linley for intellectual company and contact with the outside world.

It is apparent from the texts that the dichotomy of separate spheres, male and female, was coded into the division of domestic space. Nevertheless, gendering of the drawing-room is tenuous in that it functioned as both public and private. As women spent a large part of their time there, it is viewed as essentially feminine (cf. 4.4.1), however, the room was also used for social gatherings, rendered public and subjected to intrusion of men. From the texts associated with George Scharf and Linley Sambourne, it is evident that the notion of public/private is layered and complex, boundaries shift according to context. Both Scharf and Sambourne annexed feminine space, affirming that though ostensibly valued, the home was 'other', a narrow and colonised female space that existed in opposition to and in support of the master space (cf. 4.2). Thus the Victorian house reflects realities about the relationships between men and women, both in the home and society.

5.4.2   'Angel in the house'

The Victorian woman was a 'relative creature' (cf. 3.4.1.1), her role was defined by her relationship to men. Mrs Scharf was both widow and mother. As a widow she was dependent upon her son, a grown man and bachelor, who no longer needed her as nurturer and moral guide. That Mrs Scharf lived with her son, in his house, as a dependent was acceptable, yet that she took no active part in his household was unusual. It would have been expected that she ran his household for him, just as she had done for her husband. However, Scharf took over her role as homemaker and displaced his mother to the top floor, where she was no more than an echo. Stripped of her angelic powers, this loss of identity is evident in her room, where her few personal effects are overshadowed by Scharf's collection of plaster casts of robust masculinity. Thus, it may be argued that the *realisation* of the Victorian feminine ideal, that of 'Angel in the House' (already a male construct) was ultimately shaped by and dependent upon men.

Marion Sambourne was the typical Victorian wife, wrapped up in her husband and children in the security of a happy home, and having no desire to break away from the conventions of her upbringing. To some extent, she exemplified Coventry Patmore's ideal woman and wife; she was the 'Angel in the House'. Marion supported her husband and was the most ardent admirer of his work, "She did everything she could to

help and encourage her husband; sitting beside him for many hours while he drew, chatting or reading aloud, to ease the tedium of endless meticulous shading." (Nicholson 1988: 15). Yet, while Marion was supportive and subordinate to her husband she was certainly not passive, as an 'angel' she was still an active agent in her family and home.

Part of her role as homemaker Marion had to take on the responsibility, as well as endure the trials and frustrations, of an employer. The running and controlling of a household with four servants was no easy task, as good servants were difficult to find and seldom stayed for long leaving Marion with the tedious task of finding replacements. Marion, a shrewd housekeeper, sometimes wrote crossly about the servants, "Vexed drawing-room not properly cleaned", "Found top of house very dirty, spoke to Minnie and Nurse", "Cook does not see dirty plates." (in Nicholson 1988: 67). Moreover, Marion actively took part in household cleaning. She relates that she quite enjoyed dusting the drawing-room, and always washed the delicate ornaments in the cabinets herself. Marion herself tended the "bay of ferns" built out from the window in the dining-room and other indoor plants, which were deemed, at the time, to be a suitable occupation for ladies. She noted in her diary whenever she bought new plants, and often wrote "did fern cases" or "watered plants" (in Nicholson 1988: 24).

Although Marion went to church, Linley did not. He would attend a funeral as a mark of respect, or go to admire the architecture of a famous cathedral. Marion saw to it that the children were taken to church every Sunday morning by Nurse or her mother-in-law. Marion herself did not go as regularly, "...she did seem to be looking for salvation, albeit in a half-hearted way." (Nicholson 1988: 59). In this way she fulfilled her role as her family's spiritual and moral guide, maintaining their respectability.

Household shopping was another of Marion's responsibilities and took up quite a lot of her time. Most of this was done locally, Marion's day often began "To stores morning." and other entries, "Walked to Kensington, bought brushes & dusters" (in Nicholson 1988: 69). With shopping came the responsibility of maintaining a budget and paying off accounts. Except for special occasions she was very careful with housekeeping money and constantly worried about over-spending. "Books very heavy" she wrote quite often or "Books fearfully heavy, so many dinners & company this week and last." It was a relief when she was able to write "Paid books morning, very low thank goodness" (in Nicholson 1988: 69). It would seem that Marion was the financially

aware and responsible one in their relationship, in 1884 she wrote, "Dear Lin worried with bills, wish he could be less extravagant, so difficult to make him understand absolute necessity" (in Nicholson 1988: 78). Linley appeared to be quite content to spend what money there was and leave Marion to sort out any little financial problems. Marion had inherited some of her father's money, who was a successful stockbroker and financial acumen, although she was better at saving than taking risks, "She had a nest egg invested in shares and her diaries are full of notes about buying and selling...and reminders about when money should be paid into her account." (Nicholson 1988: 78). It is inferred that in this way Marion acted outside of convention, through her diligence with the household budget and personal investments she was able to complement Linley's income.

In addition to her responsibilities at home, Marion enjoyed the archetypical activity of needlework. Indeed, Marion had a reputation of being a good needlewoman. Sewing and embroidering was seen as an essential expression of femininity; thus, it was not accorded much artistic or creative value (Parker 1984: 5). According to Nicholson (1988: 85), her early diaries are full of notes like "Worked on pink cotton", "Mended dresses & finished home-made black", "Bought frilling and altered silk shirt". She did not own a sewing machine, "Cut out flounce, Judy took it away to machine", but made clothes for herself and her daughter Maud by hand: "Finished Maud's blue dress, will wear it on Sunday." She would make the occasional trip to the Royal School of Needlework to buy materials but she does not specifically mention embroidery, although it is said that she made the cushions now found in the morning-room. Lamp-shades were quite a speciality of hers and "Worked at new shades" is a frequent entry. Marion also made other things for the house: "Busy all morning cutting out sofa cover", "Hard at work on covers", "Very busy with drawing-room curtains, did three sides." Other entries like "Trimmed bonnet & read to chicks", or "Finished mother's pincushion" show that her hands were seldom idle. Clearly Marion's sewing and embroidery meant more to her than just 'work', the stereotypical notion that patience and perseverance go into embroidery but little else (Parker 1984: 6). It was something she enjoyed in which she was able to express herself creatively.

The ambiguous nature of 'Angel in the House' is illustrated through the life of Marion Sambourne, while supportive, subordinate and content with her lot as the respectable Victorian woman, yet also an active agent in her home and family. She acted independently by taking responsibility for their household, their finances and their

spiritual well-being. Linley and Marion's separate spheres converged with him working at home, yet Marion also enjoyed activities independent of her husband. She had her own friends, went out with them, went shopping alone or ventured into the City accompanied by her mother-in-law or parlour-maid and she was a creative and successful needlewoman. Thus, Marion fulfilled the Victorian feminine ideal (cf. 3.4.1.1) never straining against the confines it imposed on her, while at the same time subverting the very ideal she was operating within by operating as an active agent in her home and family.

5.4.3   Decoration and ornament

Scharf's choice in décor and furniture is in certain respects representative of the conventional Victorian home, reflecting the popular style and taste of the period. He chose rich and sombre colours, crimson and sage green, with dark mahogany furniture. The walls are either painted or covered in wallpaper, barely visible beneath an abundance of framed prints and paintings. The layering continues on the floors, wall to wall carpeted floors are strewn with Persian rugs. Tables are draped, covered with heavy tablecloths. The clutter and layering, a reflection of substance and status, contributes to an atmosphere of cosiness (cf. 4.5). Scharf's lived-in look signified a respectable lack of idleness. However, the draping stops here; unlike the typical Victorian fashion of elaborately draping the windows Scharf's windows are bare of curtains, only a frilled pelmet is present in his bedroom. The chairs are generally upright and unpadded, which must have been disagreeable to Scharf's guests. Despite being overcrowded with furniture and a variety of objects, which creates a certain sense of comfort, the comfort is particularly idiosyncratic to the owner and raises the question whether his co-inhabitants and guests felt as 'at home' as he did. Where surfaces would typically be adorned with various decorative objects and ornaments, Scharf's rooms are "...crammed with plaster casts of ancient and classical figures, engravings of Renaissance paintings, portraits of friends and family, all jostling for space on his walls and cupboards, with books bursting from bookcases..." (Lasdun 1981: 97).

It has been argued that Scharf transformed the morning- and drawing-rooms into his study and library. Scharf colonised these rooms with his books, plaster casts, pictures on the walls as well as his presence, rendering them masculine. Scharf's presence is continued into his mother's room; his ancient and classical figures and engravings have made their way up here too. The only traces of his mother's feminine presence are the

little vase of flowers on the table where she is reading and a comfortable upholstered arm chair (the only armchair recorded in all of Scarf's drawings). A patterned curtain hangs from one of the skylights, managing to slightly diffuse the light coming directly through the roof and softens the space.

Fireplaces throughout the house are left bare, none are draped or fringed. There is no evidence of overmantels or other such popular treatments. Scharf's classical collection continues right over the mantelpieces and it is especially noteworthy that the mantelpiece in Mrs Scharf's room is embellished with what appears to be a classical Roman insignia, signifying a conquering masculine presence. However, a single sea shell and a few small decorative glass bottles, perhaps perfume or smelling salts, on the surface of this mantelpiece, suggest his mother's scant personal touches.

Thus, George Scharf's home incorporates many of the symbols of respectability, rich furnishings and colours, artefacts and books indicative of his profession and his industrious nature, yet it has not been feminised. Despite the presence of two women in the home, it remains an essentially masculine space. He allowed his interests and passions to infiltrate the entire house, even his mother's room. Although he was fond of his mother, she appears stripped of her voice and identity. In this case, while operating within bounds of respectability, the entire private sphere of home has been gendered masculine. Decoration and ornament reinforced this gendering of space; however, at the same time it functioned as an important signifier of respectability.

In the case of the Sambournes, the task of furnishing the home was undertaken by the husband, which concurs with Cohen (2003) and Tosh's (1999) argument (cf. 4.6.1) that both husband and wife might share in the enterprise of furnishing and decorating their home. Linley set the Aesthetic tone of their home in the furnishings, colours and wallpaper that he chose, as well as the stained-glass windows that he designed, while Marion filled it with decoration. Yet, the maintenance and ongoing decoration of the drawing-room in particular, whether with the work of her own hands or with consumer goods (Logan 2001: 35), was considered one of her primary duties as wife.

Linley's presence in the drawing-room/studio is evident, "Beside his chair he had a portable gas lamp and an engraver's globe, which could be used to focus a beam of bright light on to his drawing board." (Nicholson 1988: 15). Moreover, he took over the drawing-room and other parts of the house to accommodate his work: the chests of

drawers in the drawing-room were filled with his photographs, Marion wrote "Bitterly cold in morning-room. Lin busy with photos, in & out, curtains taken down for it." (in Nicholson 1988: 16).

The most striking thing about this room is the accumulation of furniture and decorative details. Every possible type of seat is present: comfortable chairs, upright chairs, stools and footstools, all of which are padded and upholstered in patterned or hand-embroidered fabrics. The other furniture, tables, writing desks and commodes, are mostly eighteenth-century French (Louis-seize) or good-quality Victorian copies in the same style (Nicholson 1988: 25). Loose, intricately patterned carpets, Turkish or Persian, are strewn over the already patterned parquet floors.

Besides the forest of furniture, the wallpapered walls almost disappear behind the closely hung framed prints and paintings, and "…a whole range of ornaments, lamps, and knick knacks, including Neopolitan copies of Etruscan vases, Japanese painted vases, a French boulle clock, a bronzed reduction by Coalbrookdale of John Bull's Eagle Slayer, shown at the 1851 exhibition, and a bronze nymph by Barbedienne." (Nicholson 1988: 25). This demonstrates how the Victorian home could combine the restraint of neo-classicism on plan with a proliferation of decorative detail and interiors full of furnishings.

Above each of the two white marble fireplaces is a large mirror in a heavy and ornate frame, which was a classic mid-Victorian indicator of status. Logan (2001: 114) states a mirrored reflection of domestic space would have enlarged the sense of space and doubled its contents. This enlargement and replication would have contributed to an appreciation of material wealth and comfort. The mantel garniture, a symmetrical arrangement of bronze figurines and classical vases, all individually mounted on a substantial piece of marble, bring 'art' into the home, providing a visual confirmation of the family's gentility.

The various ornaments and knick knacks were all objects signifying the home's respectability. For example, the small statue or bust suited both the financial means of the middle classes and their desire to use such objects to adorn the mantel, tables, occasional tables, overmantels or whatnots. According to Logan (2001: 129), in Victorian sculpture and its reproductions, nudity could legitimately be displayed under the aegis of art and were quite commonly found in respectable homes, provided that

the representation of female nudes carefully followed the conventional prohibitions of colour, body hair and details of genitalia. Besides decorative objects the surfaces are generally covered with textiles, many of them embroidered. Some would have served a purpose, such as lamps mats to catch spills, while others were purely ornamental. In this way objects were 'underlined' by placing pieces of fabric under, over or around them. Many of these would have been made by Marion herself. There was also the fashion of 'draping', which included chairs, tables, fireplaces and windows. In this instance not only are the windows hung with heavy curtains and tassels, but the doorway is also draped with fabric. This suggests sensuality and the pleasure taken in the tactile and visual appeal of fabrics as additions to home décor (Logan 2001: 134). Thus, the rather severe type of furniture which Linley bought was covered and softened with the multitude of ornaments, family portraits, embroidered mats and sentimental keepsakes that were cherished by most Victorian ladies. Despite the unusual presence of Linley and his work in the drawing-room, it is filled with decoration and ornamentation signifying the home's respectable status.

It is more apparent that the morning-room, Marion's domain, is a feminine space (cf. 5.3.3.1). The morning-room has a lighter, cheerful and cosier feel in comparison to the rather heavy and formal atmosphere of the drawing-room. It was a style Marion admired in the homes of friends, according to her diary. Moreover, the room is not as crowded with furniture and ornaments as the drawing-room. The prints and paintings on the walls, unlike the photographs and paintings in the drawing-room, are of the Grand Masters, whom Marion admired. Thus, the morning-room reflects Marion's own her character and style.

In Linley's new studio, the transformed nursery room, the furniture is boxy and severe, typical of his taste. It has managed to remain free of covers, tassels and fringes. The walls are once again papered, however, this time they are largely visible, only sparsely hung with a few swords, prints and a mirror. Forming part of the dado is a single bookshelf that follows the perimeter of the room, filled with Linley's books. The parquet floors have been left bare and there are only a few ornaments. Of the furniture included are a number of chests of drawers, presumably to sort Linley's extensive collection of photo's and drawings. The space, very unlike his 'studio' in the drawing-room, is practical, free of any fuss and clutter.

Even though Linley primarily used a large part of the drawing room for his work as a studio, a sense of respectability was maintained, it was comfortable, filled with ornaments used to signify gentility. However, Linley's penetration of the space caused tension, by inserting public into private masculine and feminine spheres collided. Linley's choice of severe chairs and boxy chest of drawers were covered, smothered and padded. Marion's own room, the morning-room, was more clearly gendered. It was the one room in the house where her taste was honoured, albeit Linley's upright chairs are ever-present. Once Linley acquired a space truly his own, his masculine sensibilities were completely exerted. Therefore, it can be said that the home was indeed ordered according to a 'socio-sexual' code, with certain rooms allocated to each sex. Decoration and ornament reinforced this gendering of space; however, at the same time it functioned as an important signifier of respectability. The masculine furniture, drawing equipment and ornament infiltrated a space considered feminine, yet respectability prevailed and it is still full of symbols of a genteel middle class family.

5.5   CONCLUSION

In Chapter 5, three types of texts documenting Victorian domestic space were identified: architectural drawings; sketches documenting interiors and photographs of a house interior with associated diary. The hypothesis that there are embedded and gendered discourses in Victorian domestic space that reveal the dichotomy in Victorian respectability was supported by the identification of:

- the architectural drawings of the floor plans of Samuel Hemmings £1,550 Model villa (c 1855);
- the architectural drawings of the floor plans of Lewis Cubitt's Terrace, Lowndes Square, London (1841-43);
- the architectural drawings of the floor plans of Henry Ashton's Apartment houses, Victoria Street, London (1852-4);
- drawings documenting interiors by George Scharf of four rooms in his house at 29 Great George Street, London (1869);
- the photographs of three rooms in the Sambourne House, 18 Stafford Terrace, London (1877) and the associated diaries of Mrs Marion Sambourne.

An interpretive research stance, a detailed examination of the text so as to discover embedded meaning, and a feminist critical perspective were applied to read these texts. Further, these texts were analysed according to criteria derived from the

literature review: public/private, 'Angel in the House' and decoration and ornamentation.   It was found that Victorian domestic space was gendered according to the dichotomy of respectability, space was differentiated according to a 'socio-sexual' code; however, male members of the home had legitimate access to both public and private space.

CHAPTER SIX

6.   RECAPITULATION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   RECAPITULATION

The main problem investigated in this study was the influence of the ideology of respectability on the gendering of Victorian domestic space.

In Chapter two the first hypothesis that the political, social, economic and religious context of Victorian England contributed to the ideology of respectability was investigated. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. 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. It was found that the character of the age was marked by transition and doubt, the products of which, positivism and respectability, provided the Victorians with the sense of hope and order they required. Order was maintained not through civil action, but rather the strength of the individual, family discipline and codes of conduct, indicative of the regulatory role that respectability played within Victorian society. However, the factor that most contributed to the Victorian moral imperative was the result of religious revival, in which the home was central and which inspired an obsessive belief in work, sobriety of behaviour, respectability and self-help. Respectability became the most compelling strand binding together the disparate elements of the middle class within the revised domestic world. In this way the initial hypothesis was confirmed.

In Chapter three 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 one based on companionship. Further, 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 four 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.

In Chapter five, three types of texts documenting Victorian domestic space were identified: architectural drawings; sketches documenting interiors and photographs of a house interior with associated diary. The hypothesis that there are embedded and gendered discourses in Victorian domestic space that reveal the dichotomy in Victorian respectability was supported by the identification of:

- the architectural drawings of the floor plans of Samuel Hemmings £1,550 Model villa (c 1855);
- the architectural drawings of the floor plans of Lewis Cubitt's Terrace, Lowndes Square, London (1841-43);
- the architectural drawings of the floor plans of Henry Ashton's Apartment houses, Victoria Street, London (1852-4);
- drawings documenting interiors by George Scharf of four rooms in his house at 29 Great George Street, London (1869);
- the photographs of three rooms in the Sambourne House, 18 Stafford Terrace, London (1877) and the associated diaries of Mrs Marion Sambourne.

An interpretive research stance, a detailed examination of the text so as to discover embedded meaning, and a feminist critical perspective were applied to read these texts. Further, these texts were analysed according to criteria derived from the literature review: public/private, 'Angel in the House' and decoration and ornamentation. It was found that Victorian domestic space was gendered according to the dichotomy of respectability, space was differentiated according to a 'socio-sexual' code; however, men had legitimate access to both public and private space.

6.2   CONCLUSIONS

By investigating the main hypothesis of the influence of respectability on the gendering of Victorian domestic space it becomes evident that house and home embodied a male/female dichotomy where men owned and 'ruled', while women were confined to and maintained it. The study revealed that Victorian ideology was fissured and developed unevenly, yet these ideological constructs still functioned in terms of suggesting an ideal. Architectural space embodies knowledge of social relations, in so doing the home reflected the ideals and realities about distinctions of gender-status. Thus, the middle class ideal of respectability became inseparable from home, both meta-physically and physically.

With the separation of work from home, public from private, the Victorian home was privatised and compartmentalised. It is apparent from the public/private analysis of the texts that this dichotomy of separate spheres, male and female, was coded into the division of domestic space. However, the texts also disclosed that while the ideology of separate spheres provides a descriptive tool, the notion of public/private is layered and complex, boundaries shift according to context. Thus, public/private, with their multiple and shifting gender connotations, remains relevant framework for gender analysis. As Landes (2003: 34) notes by addressing the politics of gender on both sides of the public/private divide, as well as the interrelationship between the public and the private, feminist scholars can help to illuminate the manner in which boundaries have been and continue to be drawn or negotiated.

Furthermore, the nineteenth century home was re-invented as woman's natural place or appropriate place; she became the 'Angel in the House'. Yet the analysis of the texts uncovered the equivocal nature of this ideal. Women subverted the very ideal they chose to emulate, by operating as active agents in their homes and families. The

Victorian woman's ability to realise this ideal was further complicated by her position in relation to men, her husband, father and son. Man's privileged position entitled him to determine whether women would achieve this ideal that he himself had constructed. Therefore, the application of an ideological construct, such as 'Angel in the House', can present a valid tool for critical evaluation of architectural space, as a means to ascertain the extent to which the ideal was attained and evidence of possible subversion.

The analysis of decoration and ornamentation of the texts confirms that decoration and ornamentation reinforced the gendering of space, while at the same time signifying the respectability of the home's occupants.

Therefore, public/private affords an indispensable tool for gender analysis of both historical and contemporary architectural space, provided it transcends mere description and retains analytical clarity and significance. The 'Angel in the House' and decoration and ornamentation present valid tools for the critical analysis of Victorian architectural space in Britain and could be used in future research for analysis of architectural space in the context of British colonies of the same period.

6.3   CONTRIBUTIONS

The study makes the following contributions:
   i.   the identification and critical analysis of the texts chosen;
   ii.   the broadening of the usage of public/private for gender analysis to interior architecture;
   iii. the literature review disclosed that scant research in the field of interior architecture had been produced on the subject matter (most research has been conducted by social, cultural, gender, literary and art historians). This study is, therefore, novel within the discipline of architecture and broadens the theoretical base for analysis and understanding of the extant historical built environment and associated artefacts;
   iv.   conducting this study from a feminist and critical theory point of a view provided an alternative practice of writing architectural history, through the application of concentrated analysis and critical interpretation;
   v.   a useful analytical tool for understanding contemporaneous interiors throughout the British empire;

vi. a model for interpretation of interiors across different styles and periods.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further study:

i. It is recommended that the three criteria for critical analysis, public/private, 'Angel in the House' and decoration and ornamentation, be applied in a study of Victorian public and domestic interior architecture against the context of colonial South Africa.

ii. It is recommended that public/private be applied in the gender analysis of public and domestic interior architecture against the context of contemporary South Africa.

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SUMMARY

Victorian respectability: The gendering of domestic space

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Space is socially constructed, reflecting and reinforcing the nature of gender relations in society. This is evident in nineteenth century architecture, particularly domestic architecture, where space was structured around the ideology of respectability.

Within the discipline of interior architecture, this study investigates the relationship between the Victorian (1837-1901) ideology of respectability and the gendering of domestic space. The problem was investigated by means of a literature review; thereafter, a set of criteria derived from the literature were applied in a critical analysis of selected examples of Victorian domestic architecture, interior space and the decoration thereof. The findings indicated that Victorian domestic architecture embodied a male/female dichotomy in which men owned and 'ruled' the home/house; while women maintained it. Although Victorian ideology was fissured and developed unevenly, it still functioned in terms of the ideal of respectability which was embedded and demonstrated in domestic space.

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