



Victorian Respectability and Gendered Domestic Space

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The ideology of respectability, the essential objective of Victorian existence, was a complex combination of moral, religious, economic and cultural systems. Respectability dictated specific gender definitions and was organised around an involved set of practices and representations that covered every aspect of an individual's life. In the Victorian commitment to an imperative moral code, respectability spun a persuasive web that wove the disparate elements of the middle class together. The core of this refined behavioural code was common to both men and women; yet in every nuance, close attention to gender definitions was essential to gentility. Moreover, respectability became inseparable from the home, the site of complementary masculinity and femininity.

Consequently, nineteenth-century architecture, particularly domestic architecture, was structured around the ideology of respectability, and domestic space has seldom so power-

fully, explicitly and strictly defined society as it did in Victorian England.¹ In the light of this, this article explores, by means of a literature review, the relationship between the obsession of the Victorian middle-class with respectability and the Victorian home, illustrating how domestic space was gendered and gender made spatial (Rendell 1998). Three criteria derived from the literature review are used according to a feminist critical approach to analyse selected drawings from the Victorian period (1837-1901). The drawings, executed by the bachelor George Scharf, depict rooms in his London terrace house. George Scharf, an antiquarian, scholar and artist, lived with his elderly mother and aunt. His drawings are highly detailed and reveal both his culture and scholarship. 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 VICTORIAN ERA

The term, 'Victorian,' is not precise and Victorianism² long antedates the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837. It owed many of its outstanding characteristics to developments that took place between 1780 and 1837, while the late Victorian era can be considered a part of the twentieth century (Seaman 1973:5; Webb 1980:130). Thus, the Victorian age cannot be encapsulated in the sixty-four years of the Queen's reign. The Victorian era is not merely part of a continuity greater than itself, but contains within itself many discontinuities and incongruities (Seaman 1973:5).

The Victorian age was characterised by both *transition*, societal and political, and doubt concerning 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. Order was maintained not through civil action, but rather through the strength of the individual, family discipline and codes of conduct, indicative of the regulatory role that respectability played within Victorian society. People, therefore, were not impelled to be respectable by external factors, rather by the hidden structures of morality, gentility and fear of disorder (Seaman 1973:48; Ford 1992: 20).

Various components can be identified that constituted the character of the age; the most relevant of these are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Evangelical revival

According to several scholars (Seaman 1973:6; Thompson 1988:250-252; Houghton 1957:220), the factor that most contributed to the Victorian moral imperative was the outcome of religious revival, in which the home was central and which inspired an obsessive belief in work, sobriety of behaviour, respectability and self-help. Both Evangelicalism and Methodism provided crucial influences on the nineteenth-century definition of home and family (Hall 1998:181). Between 1780 and 1820, in the Evangelical struggle over the prohibition of the slave trade and the reform of manners and morals, a new view of the nation, of political power and of family life was forged. Moreover, the beginning of the nineteenth century had seen the continued separation of work from home. This development, linked to the effects of religious sentiment, created a view of the home as a refuge from the world and the site of religious observance. The Evangelical emphasis on the creation of a new lifestyle and a new ethic provided the framework for the emergence of the Victorian middle class. The latter was not homogeneous; it was made up of a diverse

range of occupational groups and levels of income bound together in a common endeavour for respectability (Nead 1988:5; Thompson 1988:64; Tosh 1999:11). According to Davidoff and Hall (2002:xviii), '... middle-class men and women ... placed themselves in opposition to an indolent and dissolute aristocracy, and a potentially subversive working class.' The emerging idea of a *democratic society*, which referred more to economics than politics, appealed especially to the middle classes. With their new political and financial power, their social influence became decisive.

Respectability

Respectability, at the centre of Victorian life, was structured around a heavily polarised understanding of gender, which became inseparable from the home. The core of this refined behavioural code applied to both men and women (Davidoff & Hall 2002:397), yet respectability meant different things for men and women. Victorian man's social position emanated from his ownership of property, professional and business activities and service to charitable activities (Davidoff & Hall 2002:398). For women, social position was defined in terms of their location within the domestic sphere and their consequent sexual respectability (Nead 1988:28). Respectability was organised around a complex set of practices and

representations that covered every aspect of an individual's life; these social rules and moral codes worked to regulate both gender and class identities (Davidoff & Hall 2002:398; Nead 1988:28). Davidoff and Hall (2002) stress the key role played by the Evangelical movement in the cult of respectable domesticity. Houghton (1957:184) adds that the middle class drive for respectability was energised by a struggle for social advancement and wealth. As mentioned previously, the Victorian middle class was not a single entity; therefore, a coherent and distinct class identity had to be created which would distinguish the middle class from the social and economic classes above and below it. To this end, Lynda Nead (1988:5) argues that class coherence was in many ways established through the development of the shared notions of morality and respectability.

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, 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 was immense. 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 practice the domestic ideal.

Furthermore, Hall (1998:188-189) argues the Evangelical movement and the separation of home and work established the Victorian ideal of domesticity, which 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. Tosh (1999:47 & 124) argues, however, that despite the unmistakable feminine quality of the rituals of home, the labelling of home as the woman's sphere obscured the true relationship between home and gender. Much of the domestic culture was determined by the needs of men. Cultural power was concentrated in the hands of men and the domestic ideal reflected masculine as well as female sensibilities (Tosh 1999:48-50).

Gender

Socially constructed and historically specific, gender designates the mutually dependent nature of femininity and masculinity; therefore manliness is what is not feminine, and femininity is the opposite of manliness (Shoemaker & Vincent 1998:1; Spain 1992:xiv; Wolff 1990:1; Hall 1992:13). 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 was concretised was the home: the site of complementary masculinity and femininity, while public space was encountered with less clarity and was seen as masculine. Moreover, Nead (1988:32-33) asserts the separation of work and home had a profound effect on the construction of gender identities; women were defined as domestic beings operative within the private sphere and men were best suited to the public sphere. Masculinity and femininity were therefore defined in relation to the different fields of activity occupied by each.

Roszika Parker (1984:2-4) distinguishes between the constructions of femininity, lived femininity, the feminine ideal and the feminine stereotype; accordingly, '[t]he 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. Of the range of stereotypes of the Victorian woman, the most striking is that of the ideal woman, the 'angel in the house,' a phrase made current by Coventry Patmore (1864) in his poem about the ideal woman and wife. The 'angel in the house' became one of the most powerful and notable registers of woman's sphere during the Victorian age and was an accepted and aspired ideal at that time. Moreover, a deleted 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 1995:80). As domestic 'angel', the Victorian housewife was to be her family's moral and spiritual guide. However, as Parker (1984:3) comments, '[f]emininity is a lived identity for women either embraced or resisted.' In this respect portrayals of actual Victorian women gleaned from their diaries and letters, reveal some who fit the stereotype and the ideal, and some who deviate from it.

Moreover, respectability was defined for a woman in terms of dependency, delicacy and fragility. She was to be a wife worthy of the husband whose happiness she created; independence was unnatural as it signified boldness and sexual deviancy (Hall 1998:191; Nead 1988:28). Nead (1988:29) notes, however, 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.' Tosh (1999:103) explains this supposed 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. Furthermore, Hall (1998:191), Nead (1988:13) and Fasick (1995:75) postulate that the Victorian woman was a 'relative creature,' whose feminine role of woman was defined through her relationship to men: husband, son and father. In these three different relationships to men, shifting patterns of power and dependency occurred.

Within the home, woman's scope for self-assertion was also limited. Fasick (1995:78) posits that even though respectability 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 harsh, competitive outside world, he sought refuge in his home, which became his sanctuary. As her husband's 'helpmeet,' the Victorian wife had to be righteous, gentle, sympathetic and primarily submissive and provide the proper environment of respectability. 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. She became an important decision-maker in her realm of home and family: she gave directions; she was responsible for the household budget and control of her servants. Thus, the middle-class housewife was an active agent in the family (Branca 1975:22).

Masculinity was based on the idea that masculine 'self-respect' was defined as differently from, and was materially superior to 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 companionable marriage. Men's commitment to time at home was more than a matter of personal preference. Yet, masculinity coexisted somewhat awkwardly within this ideal of respectability. Davidoff and Hall (2002:401) argue Victorian gentlemen had special problems in proving full-bodied manliness within refinement. 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 only for 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 so.

Separate spheres

The paradigm of separate spheres denotes the separation of male from female, work from the home, and public from private. According to Davidoff (2003:11), following nineteenth century nomenclature, the 'separate sphere' of women became a dominant theme, particularly in relation to the Victorian middle-class. Janet Wolff (1988:118) states that the continuing process of the separation of spheres was reinforced and maintained by cultural ideologies, practices and institutions. However, the notion of separate spheres has 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, '[t]hese 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. Vickery (1998:197) 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, Vickery (1998:199) doubts the conceptual usefulness of the separate spheres framework and argues that it has greater descriptive than analytical power. Hall and Davidoff (2002: xv-xvi) assert the significance of separate spheres as essential to Victorian class formation. Separate spheres became the common-sense of the middle class, albeit a common-sense that was always fractured. Wolff (1988:118-119) argues that 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. However, physically, the separation of spheres was marked, as well as constructed, by both geography and architecture.

Public/private division

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. Furthermore, 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) stresses that in both conceptual and empirical terms, the separate spheres paradigm has been criticised with particular regard to its chronology, location and actual practice. Davidoff (2003:22) concludes,

[p]ublic 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, just as Davidoff (2003:22) does not altogether concede the separate spheres framework, it should be viewed as a special case of the Western cultural division between private and public or home and the world. Within 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 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. Davidoff concludes her argument by confirming the 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 during the nineteenth century. Similarly, Landes (2003:34) and Ryan (2003:14) concur with Davidoff that the category of public and private remains an indispensable framework for gender analysis.

DOMESTIC SPACE

The encoding of socio-cultural values is manifest in architectural space, which maintains gender distinctions (Weisman 1994:86; Spain 1992:7). This is evident in Victorian architecture where space was structured around respectability and man's dominance of both the public and private. Although architecture is not the direct determinant of human behaviour or identity, the associations Victorian respectability established between a 'model' house and the notion of the model family encouraged certain roles and assumptions. The home embodied a male/female territorial dichotomy. Men owned and 'ruled' domestic space, while women were confined to and maintained it (Weisman 1994:86). As a result, the home was re-invented as woman's natural place. Her identity, status and being were powerfully determined by the concept of house and home. The privatised and compartmentalised Victorian house, no longer a multi-purpose space, was increasingly a space defined by an interiority shared with the female (Dickerson 1995:xxviii). Yet despite the Victorian home being feminised as 'women's place', ultimate authority still lay primarily in the hands of the husband (Walker 2002:826; Tosh 1999:62; Davidoff & Hall 2002:391).

The separation of work from home resulted in new domestic layouts, and activities were segregated and space compartmentalised according to a specific 'socio-sexual' code (Walker

2002). The structure of the Victorian home emphasised the compartmentalisation of activities. There was a relentless process of differentiation and segregation and the home became more specialised and self-contained (Calder 1977: 135; Davidoff & Hall 2002:375; Muthesius 1982:39; Dixon & Muthesius 1978:32). Thus, nineteenth century house design and planning reflected prevalent middle class beliefs about proper social relationships, which were coded and built into the home. Accordingly, architects who were instructed to install architectural and social propriety 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. The man was the head of the household and the largest proportion of overall space and prime public rooms were allocated to him, thus his manliness was enforced through spatial boundaries. Dickerson (1995:xvii) concurs that architecturally the house reflected a particular concern for the needs of the male for space within the domestic arena.

Decoration and ornamentation

Moreover, within domestic space, sexual and social differences were formed and structured through furnishings, decoration and ornament that were 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 and curves and ornamentation, but in its warmth and its neatness, suggesting as they did, love, security and efficiency (Calder 1977:132; Lichten 1950:170; Halttunen 1989:161). Comfort, the essential feature of the Victorian home, was experienced directly and the sparse domesticity of the Georgian era burgeoned with carpets, curtains, mahogany furniture, wallpaper, chintz covers and bedsteads. The bulk was partly the result of padding, but was also a reflection of substance, contributing to an atmosphere of well-being. Comfort was accompanied by a proliferation of ornament, indicating good taste, financial status and moral awareness (Davidoff & Hall 2002:375; Calder 1977:92-93).

Therefore, all goods served as operative parts of an extensive system of communication (Logan 1995:211). Decoration was linked to morality, in that a woman's duty toward the home was to secure its order, comfort and beauty, as well as the spiritual well-being of her family. Furthermore, Logan (1995:210) states that Victorian social rituals required material objects for their successful performance, constituting the paraphernalia of gentility and respectability. Another dimension of meaning that decoration carried was aesthetic experience. Logan (1995:212) asserts, 'Victorian women almost certainly did find aesthetic pleasure for themselves and generate such pleasure for others in the decoration of their homes.' Tastefulness became wrapped up in the need

for security and comfort. It was generally felt that through decoration a family expressed its proper understanding of life and beauty and the understanding of beauty was deemed a moral quality (Halttunen 1989:161). The home was both public and private: its decoration articulated meaning both in the personal as well as in the larger social system, which enveloped and enabled private experience.

ANALYTICAL CRITERIA

The following criteria derived from the foregoing literature study are used uniformly for the critical analysis of the drawings by George Scharf of rooms in his London terrace house:

Public/private

It has been argued that while the public/private division is not synonymous with the Victorian model of separate spheres, the two are intrinsically related. The separation of public from private, work from home, and 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 interiors.

'Angel in the House'

The feminine stereotype, 'angel in the house', is situated within the ideology of respectability and positions woman as naturally domestic. The metaphor 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. 'Angel in the house' presents a valid tool for evaluation of domestic architecture as a means by which to ascertain the extent to which the ideal was attained, as well as evidence of its possible subversion.

Decoration and ornament

In addition to domestic spatial zones, sexual and social differences were formed and structured through furnishings, decoration and ornament that were gendered in terms of colour, style and detailing. Victorian decoration refers to both the development of a consumer economy and to the notion of separate spheres. Through decoration a family expressed its proper understanding of life and aesthetics; the latter was deemed a moral quality. In particular, the decoration of their homes was seen as the outflow of Victorian gentility.

GEORGE SCHARF

George Scharf exemplified the Victorian phenomenon of the 'professional' man. Initially secretary and subsequently the first director of the newly-established National Portrait Gallery in London, Scharf was a man of many talents. Among his abilities he was an accomplished draughtsman, and the detailed drawings he made of his home between 1868 and 1869 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. Scharf was a busy, thoughtful and endearing bachelor, who divided his time among his numerous interests. Lasdun (1981:103) notes, '[h]e 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 is evident that the maintenance of his household was as much a part of his life as his work.

Scharf's drawings are of the interior spaces of his house, located at 29 Great George Street, London (1869). It may be assumed, given the nature of Scharf's 'profession,' the number



of servants and his mother and aunt's co-residence, that he lived in a three-storey terrace or semi-detached house, with two rooms per floor plus a basement (Dixon & Muthesius 1978:56; Muthesius 1982:56). Figure 1 depicts his 'most preferred friend' Jack Pattison in Scharf's library. This room is

Figure 1: The library, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by George Scharf, 1869 (Lasdun 1981:98).



Figure 2: The study, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by George Scharf, 1869 (Lasdun 1981:99).

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 2 is of Scharf's second workspace, his study. The windows have been left bare, with wooden shutters instead of curtains. Once again the room feels pleasantly muddled and personal. This time the walls are a more sombre sage green, the ceiling white. Figure 3 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 4 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. 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).

Scharf's position as bachelor would have been viewed by Victorian society as being 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, does demonstrate 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. Thus, his was 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 conventionally been left to the wife, as part of her role as home-



maker. 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 become particularly evident.

Figure 3: Bedroom, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by George Scharf, 1869 (Lasdun 1981:101).

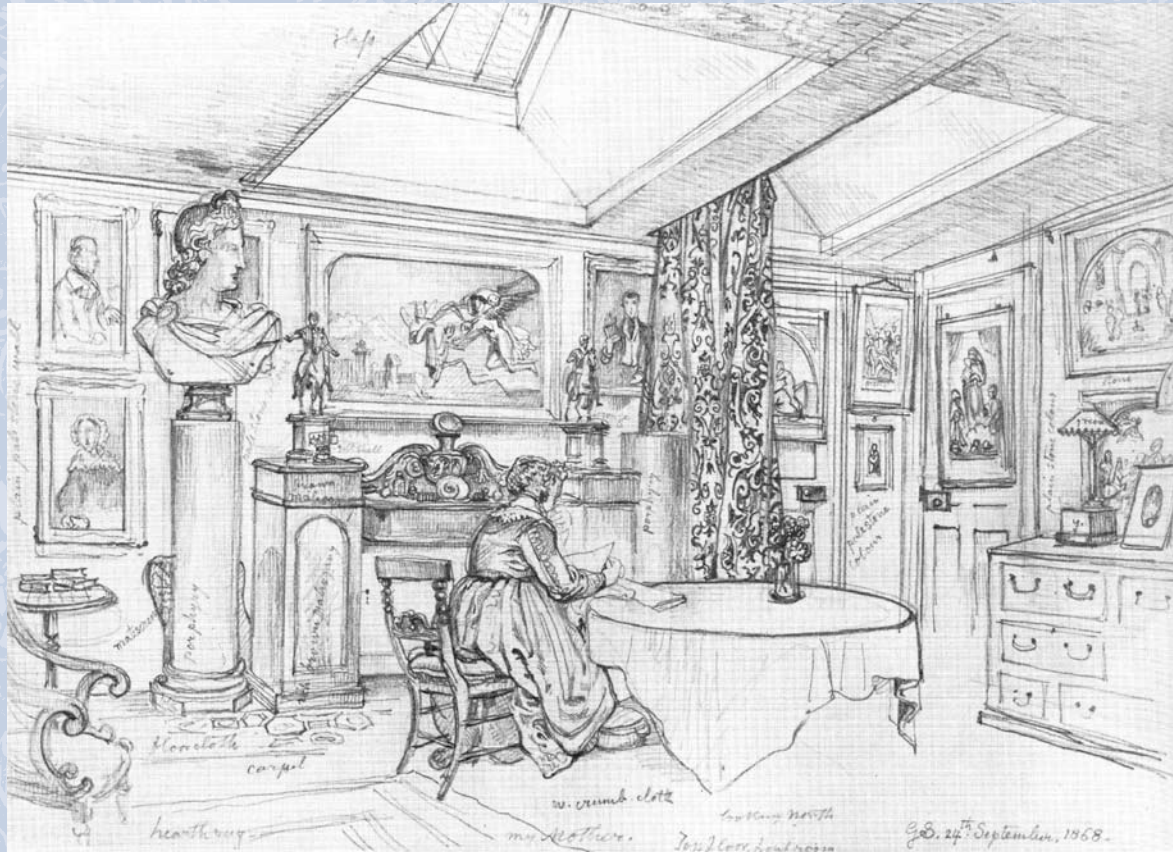


Figure 4: Scharf's mother's room, 29 Great George Street, London, drawing by George Scharf, 1869 (Lasdun 1981:102).

Analysis according the criterion of public/private

The separation of the public from the private and work from home is reflected by the layout of the Victorian house. The

home was no longer the site of communal endeavour; life became formalised and organised according to social convention. 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).

Davidoff (2003:19) links the existence of a private sphere to the hegemony of men within the public realm. Yet, more so, 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 designated morning-room, on the ground floor, and the drawing-room above. According to the 'socio-sexual' code that structured domestic space (Weisman 1994: 91), the morning- and drawing-rooms were seen as part of the feminine sphere, but Scharf annexed them for himself, despite the presence of two women in the house. In so doing, his mother and aunt were displaced, relegated to the top floor under the roof, which was typically the floor used for the children of the home. Was the status of Scharf's mother in her position 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 (Lasdun 1981:44). Furthermore, 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 them 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 had a position of power and with access to resources, while his mother found herself in the reduced position of the dependent widow. He thus colonised the private feminised space of home, rendering it public and masculine.

While it is apparent from the literature that the dichotomy of separate spheres, male and female, was coded into the division of domestic space, George Scharf's drawings reveal that this notion of public/private is layered and complex and boundaries shift according to context. Notwithstanding, space was still gendered and gender made spatial. Scharf annexed conventionally feminine space, affirming that although ostensibly valued, the home was 'other,' a narrow and colonised female space that existed in opposition to and

in support of the master space (Dickerson 1995:xiv). Thus, Scharf's Victorian house reflects realities about the relationships between men and women, both in the home and in society.

Analysis according to the criterion of 'Angel in the house'

The Victorian woman was a 'relative creature', 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, the 'angel in the house' (already a male construct), was ultimately shaped by and remained dependent upon men.

Analysis according to the criterion of 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 or covered with heavy tablecloths. The clutter and layering, a reflection of substance and status, contributes to an atmosphere of cosiness. 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. Whereas 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 choice of colour for the walls is a 'plain pale stone' and was left unpapered. 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 armchair (the only armchair recorded in all of Scharf's drawings). A patterned curtain hangs from one of the skylights, managing to slightly diffuse the light coming directly through the roof and softening the space.

Fireplaces throughout the house are left bare, none are draped or fringed. There is no evidence of overmantles 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, possibly 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, his industrious nature and two servants, 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 the 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.

CONCLUSION

Three criteria derived from the literature study, namely public/private, 'angel in the house' and decoration and ornament, were applied uniformly in the critical analysis of the drawings by George Scharf. It is apparent from the literature that the dichotomy of separate spheres, male and female, was coded into the division of domestic space. However, the drawings by George Scharf reveal that the notion of public/private is layered and complex and boundaries shift according to context. Moreover, the case of Mrs Scharf alludes to the dependency of a woman, in fulfilling this ideal, on her position in relation to men. The analysis affirms that decoration and ornamentation reinforced the gendering of space, as is evident in the drawings of George Scharf, while at the same time it signified the respectability of the home.

By investigating 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 drawings by George Scharf reveal 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.

It is concluded that public/private, with their multiple and shifting gender connotations, remains a 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.' 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, as well as evidence regarding its possible subversion.

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

NOTES

- 1 This study is limited to the context of England (1837-1901). It worth mentioning that the influence of Victorian Britain was far-reaching, and is especially evident in her many colonies. South Africa during that time provides a rich historical context for further study within the theme of Victorian respectability and the gendering of domestic space.
- 2 Victorianism refers to the prevalent social attitudes, art and culture in the British Empire during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Victorianism was shaped by events, values and beliefs in the years preceding the coronation of the Queen. These years are associated with developments in governance, economic and social life, science and learning, as well as religious revival. Furthermore, Victorianism is inextricably intertwined with inventions and the rise of the machine. Finally, Victorianism came to be strongly associated with ideologies of respectability and domesticity.

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