
BEAUTY AND MORALITY AS FEMALE VALUES IN THE VICTORIAN MIDDLE CLASS INTERIOR DECORATION (1837-1901).

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Abstract: The emergence of the devout, solemn, moral but also hypocritical, stiff and narrow-minded middle-class in Great Britain's social tissue during the Industrial Revolution (Murfin, 2003: 496), and women, inferior both socially and economically to men, but, at the same time, very dynamic in their household realm, formed the basis for the new reading of the concepts of beauty, elegance, and morality to the new order set by the Victorian ethics. Home, the sacred place of the Victorians, was treated carefully both in terms of interior design, and the utilitarian / decorative items that were therein. This was directly related not only to the new, fundamental meaning the concept of privacy acquired in general, according to which the house itself should be the 'temple of the Victorian family', but also to the fact that many of the new middle class members aspired to appertain to the ranks of the nobles, copying not only their lifestyle, but also their expensive taste. The following research aims to identify the role of women in shaping the Victorian interiors, but also to find relevant identifications of their personalities with the most 'domestic' and at the same time, private, concepts of the time such as beauty and morality.

Keywords: Victorian Era, beauty, morality, middle-class women, interior decoration.

Introduction

The Victorian era was one of the most important, both from a cultural, political, social and economic point of view, periods for Great Britain. Placing particular emphasis on the industrial and commercial sector, the country, through the deafening noise of the Industrial Revolution machines, seemed to claim and eventually win one of the highest and most respected positions in the hierarchy of other European countries. The era of discoveries, inventions and innovations continued while the new order as established in moral-economic map of the country from the period of the rise of Queen Victoria in 1837 until her death in 1901 was a special period in the history of mankind as It relates to new perceptions about morals, ethics, and art, aesthetics and consumption. More specifically, the

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renowned term 'Victorian' has since then been connected - not only in British history and national consciousness, but throughout the world - with strict and uncompromising social values as such of the unimpaired morality and tradition, the solemnity and seriousness, the resolute commitment to Christian ideals and standards of etiquette and generally of virtuous life (Crowley, 1990: 7).

During the first years of the Victorian era, the social stratification of England seemed to follow a strict hierarchical line according to which the population was divided into three sharply scheduled classes. However, although conventional wisdom today can conceive such a social differentiation based mainly on differences of economic level between classes, at that time there were other important factors that exacerbated this social separation such as education, occupation, origin and ways of behavior, culture, and even the way of clothing. So, although the well-known for centuries power of the English aristocracy vividly left its traces in the Victorian era² as well, the then emerging middle class was highly important, it being nothing but a figment of impact of the Industrial Revolution on the social / cultural puzzle of England (Tsoumas, 2016: 73). The main characteristic of the middle class was mainly its professional, as well as the educational and cultural background, and consisted of mainly people who would perform work that was 'clean' and salaried. Therefore, it was only a versatile class that included anyone who could be considered as belonging between the working class and aristocracy. This meant that successful industrialists and craftsmen, wealthy merchants and bankers, but even poor private or public servants, who although could earn much less than a skilled worker, were considered members of the middle class³, since the income was not as it was said before the only class determining factor (Mitchell, 1996: 28).

The years of the Victorian era, constitute, in our view, the most significant period of time in which all these, worthy of a detailed analysis, changes in social, political and cultural map in the history of England took place and laid the foundations for the culmination of both new ideologies and technological advances that occurred, and the new social and aesthetic concepts that dominated the old order of things, as a more modern conception of life started to be born, while at the same time the Georgian conventions faded away (Beresford Chancellor, 2007 : v).

Within this new framework, the criteria which defined social status and the roles of both genders within the family were redefined as well as the concept of home with reference not only to the social but also the working environment. The concepts of embellishment, beauty and elegance gained paramount importance since they often became synonymous with the values of welfare and orderliness, while the need for the formation of elegant household spaces became more urgent. But why did this happen? What were the reasons for changing the significance of the house itself and hence the aesthetic redefinition of interior spaces during the Victorian Era? What were new aesthetic-functional needs of domestic interiors? Who were those persons responsible for these needs and under what criteria did they attempt it? How were the beauty and elegance of the spaces associated with morality? In the chapters that follow, we will attempt to answer these important questions with factual, historical positions.

² With origins from the Middle Ages rulers and warriors who successfully defended their lands from their respective enemies, the so-called Victorian aristocracy possessed usually huge pieces of land which usually rented to others to work. It was however for many centuries a habit for the eldest son of a family to take the nobility title. The other sons, although they had no title, were still considered members of the aristocracy and true 'gentlemen'. In any case, the members of each aristocratic family did not need to work, since their income should only come from the land rented and their investments.

³ The middle class was divided, according to the educational background and the social status of its members, in two categories: the upper middle and the lower middle class. In the first category there were mainly professions such as the senior clergy, the army officers, the senior officials in the judiciary, the law and the medicine, the industrialists, the merchants, the bankers as well as the university professors, the architects and the civil engineers. Conversely, the second category included the least or no educated shopkeepers, the lower-level government workers, office staff and generally what was considered hierarchically lower of the upper middle class.

The importance of the Victorian home and the position of women in it.

The house⁴ was the most important core for shaping the so-called new Victorian ethos, besides it symbolized the family comfort, safety, peace, serenity and privacy since it reflected the vision of the, mainly, middle-class Victorians, to have their own fair shelter to house their dreams and expectations (Tosh, 2007: 13). This was not oblivious of the political, social and economic developments in the country, given that the importance it acquired during Victorian times was directly related to a number of changes resulting from the sweeping effect of the Industrial Revolution and we can explain how and why. In pre-industrial societies, the importance of production with the then known craft methods was so great that most households had been for centuries, working hubs, since the bulk of the work was performed in the same houses or at least very close to them. Traders, craftsmen and artisans had combined and ultimately integrated their workplace into their domestic place and so the concept of home was found to be closely related to the concept of efficient work. However, the requirements of the Industrial Revolution, dramatically changing the working map with the creation of industrial units, offices, shops and banks, radically redefined the hitherto 'classic' workplace shifting it from the family home to a special place, specifically designed and properly organized, with a purely professional function and perspective. The house, then free from the brutality of toil, labor problems, anxiety, impersonal competition and fatigue was the place which would only provide for relaxation, companionship, entertainment as well as the activities of food, sleep and upbringing of children (Tsoumas, 2016: 74).

Based on all the above it is reasonable to wonder what the position of people in the house was, but also more generally in the reconditioned Victorian social scene and mainly what the role of women in family and society was. The Victorian redefinition of almost all known, until then, social values made clearer the picture of gender differentiation in the performance of specific roles in each one, depending on what was set or was perceived as 'nature'.

The Victorian woman stereotype was but the culmination of a series of developments and processes that began in the sixteenth century and were based on her gradual exclusion from the commercial life and political life of the country.⁵ Woman's main destination in Victorian society was marriage in order to start a family, but also her active participation in her husband's work interests, whenever she was asked. Generally speaking women were considered very inferior and weaker than men in terms of physical or even intellectual vigor, but they were always perceived as superior to them ethically, and this is why they were considered appropriate to dominate the domestic realm (Hughes, 2016). In fact, women, even if they came from high society, did not need to be educated, nor have knowledge and opinion about anything out of the house. According to the author Richard Altick (1974: 54) '*the Victorian woman was inferior to man to almost everything except femininity. Her place was at home and emphatically not in the world of affairs*'. This is why the house, in the sense of family, was almost identified with the female gender as it was directly

⁴ Due to the increased demand for labor in the cities, but also because of the economic boom in general, the need for housing increased constantly, too. One of the architectural trends of the time was the building of thousands, nearly identical, houses, in row in London, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and in many other big cities of the country where industry flourished. It was also at that time that the urban idea of *the suburb* was born. The house was almost immediately known as a quiet place away from the noise and dirt of the city center where usually most people worked. Renting a house was also a common practice: many Victorian dwellers changed homes relatively frequently, depending both on their financial ability and the type of the neighborhood they lived in.

⁵ Her role, especially if she belonged to the bourgeoisie, had by then been limited to minor social jobs and brought the hidden assertion that women were unsuitable for anything heavy or too responsible outside the family context, since their 'delicate' nature and excessive sensitivity did not allow it. Inevitably, therefore, the suitable role for her was that of the housewife, wife and mother.

contracted with high female concepts such as caring, sentimentality and maternal protection, but also the unquestioned ethics.



Fig. 1. Victorian engraving showing the woman's position at home, 1840s.

Soon, however, this identification in combination with a clear division of gender roles and responsibilities was the beginning for significant powers to be taken over by woman at home that were not related only to the important responsibility of educating the children and managing the family finances but also to the special responsibility of the functional, and aesthetic appointment of the house with objects which were not only stylish and elegant, but also practical. Thus, through a host of new consumer goods, the house was then able to be completely 'detached' from anything that might remind of the workplace, as it would be decorated with items that were not just beautiful, but would give the feeling of expensive and unique. The woman, as a wife, mother and housewife, was also responsible for the way in which she and her children were dressed as well as their servants, if available. This significant power which she was assigned, that is the ability to select and purchase, was to have a catalytic effect on the formation of a new decorative style in the rest of the nineteenth century (Forty, 1987: 102).

Beauty in objects just for the sake of it.

Beginning this chapter maybe it would be wise to explain that the systematic effort of women / wives, at least in early and middle Victorian period, to devote valuable time and money on aesthetic overhaul of their house to the extent that it no more reminded anything from the workplace of their spouses was not a single, isolated effort, but another part of a whole strategy process which also concerned the adoption of specific behavioral and clothing codes. So, relying on the concept of absolute contrast, the housewives of that time, particularly those belonging to the upper middle class, would do anything to prove the beauty, elegance and style opposing relationship that was developed between the boring, gray and indifferent office or factory where most probably their husbands worked and the house itself (Forty, 1987: 102). Naturally, their options seemed to revolve mainly around manufactured, but at several times handmade, utilitarian objects of which however the most important virtue was considered the beauty and 'authenticity', the works that they

elaborated and which included multiple types of handicraft sewing, embroidery, knitting⁶ or even in the color pallet of the fabrics with which the decorated the house interiors. The material world of the house has since started to emerge as an important proof of women's social face as it was soon identified with their personalities, and also with the sense of sanctity and piety which ought to characterize every Victorian home. The tangibility of objects became an integral part of gender, and of women's moral identity, constituting a new social nonnegotiable, and cultural value. This could not be captured better than through the saying of Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction of work. A social critique of the judgment of taste* (1984: 77) according to which: '*... social relations are objectified in things. The objects thus become a site where the material and immaterial meet, where the borders between the economic and the domestic world blur ...*'.

Accordingly, domestic environments soon began to reflect the personalities of the occupants, but in particular women. It would be excessive, however, to conclude that the taste and the sense of elegance and good taste in the decoration of the interiors of the average Victorian house was a direct result of their own exclusive view or education on aesthetics. The majority of women were directly influenced by the current trends of the then fashion in the fields of decorative objects, colors, furniture and lighting, while in many cases they would consult special handbooks and magazines on home decoration, many of which professed that their clients were not masters of high taste, nor were they highly skilled in the craft techniques and design while what they bought could only be an image of themselves as such. Characteristic is the excerpt of the famous handbook *Hints on household taste: the classic handbook of Victorian interior decoration* (Eastlake, 1986: 7) which pointed in a very targeted manner the concepts of 'randomness' and ignorance in the purchasing ability of women in the Victorian period indicating: '*... The faculty of distinguishing good from bad design in the familiar objects of the everyday life is a faculty which most educated people - and women especially- conceive that they possess. How it has been acquired few would be able to explain. The general impression seems to be that it is a peculiar inheritance of gentle blood and independent of all training.*'

Having modeled the haute bourgeoisie which usually set the fashion trends not only with regard to personal taste (clothing, footwear, attitudes and venues), but also in the decoration of the houses interiors, the middle-class women were trying to balance between their new social status and their economic potential.⁷ These new consumers had as their standard of aesthetic choices the individuality, a value which completely characterized the taste, but also their coquetry. But was it possible for the entire spectrum of consuming middle class? Could they maintain a sense of uniqueness to satisfy their aesthetic consumer needs?

Under the influence of Paris in the form of the French Rococo, and the famous Le Style Empire, English fashion that dominated mainly during the 1830s and the 1840s, practically bore the characteristics of pre-revolutionary France, and Napoleonic period. However, it was not late that this fashion took its English version, which was none other than the renowned Neo-Rococo style or otherwise Rococo Revival, a particularly decorative movement that was to become the dominant 'aggressive' style of floral decoration in almost any kind of applied arts. The roots of this decorative power were in aristocracy, since King George IV himself, dazzled by the expensive, elaborate furniture and decorative objects of the fallen Versailles⁸ that with the rise of Napoleon were sold in

⁶ Some of the basic women practices of that time were the activities of sewing, embroidery and knitting which constituted to the middle-class woman identity shaping.

⁷ Let's not forget that the economic power of the new middle class was not the same across its range. The upper-middle class was clearly more robust financially than the lower-middle class whose consumption power was quite limited.

⁸ Life in the French court influenced strongly the development of many types of decorative arts of both Louis XV and Louis XVI era. This resulted to astonishing objects from the fields of furniture, metalwork, textiles, pottery and

Parisian markets against a degrading fee, began to acquire them, creating along with his private collection, a new type of fashion that swept the aristocratic circles of London (Coffin, 2008: 181).

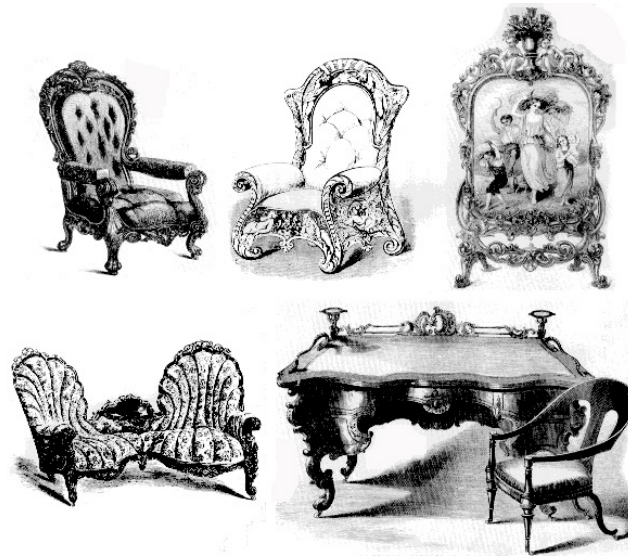


Fig. 2. Several types of Victorian furniture, heavily carved and decorated based on the Eclecticism of the time.

During the 1840s, i.e. when Rococo Revival was at its height, most of the products related to the applied arts, even furniture, were enriched with so strongly decorative elements that made this new decorative trend triumph over the hitherto classical gravity (Perivoliotou, 2004: 159). Symmetry, a characteristic element of classicism, seemed to disappear and the characteristics borrowed from the eighteenth century of the French Rococo such as C and S ornaments, curvilinear forms, shells, musical instruments, flower garlands and dense foliage gave the new products an air of expensive elegance. This highly decorative trend soon found a way to penetrate also the middle class that was looking desperately for ways not merely to establish itself in the new social status through the unbridled consumerism that characterized the haute bourgeoisie, but also through its stylistic choices. In an effort to promote not only their new social and economic status, but also their 'aesthetic and cultural' equation with the bourgeois families, middle-class women would square the circle to obtain the same or at least similar, high aesthetic value objects. From the architecture of their houses to the furniture they used, they would not choose but items which had been used by the aristocracy. In most of the houses of middle-class women placed in mainly public areas such as the living room and dining room as much furniture and as many textiles and decorative items as they could, in order not only to display their new cultural identity and their general well-being, but also to follow the fashion of that time which required crammed domestic interiors, as bare and poorly decorated rooms were signs of poverty and bad taste (Chen, 2004). By this we understand that their priority was initially the aesthetic improvement of their lodges, even with objects which, in many cases, were unnecessary or sometimes so brightly decorated that their functional value was surpassed.⁹

upholstery mainly in Rococo style which represented the luxury, glamour and opulence of the Palace of Versailles itself and the striking personalities who lived there.

⁹ It should be noted that at least in the early years of the Victorian period there was observed a phenomenon that had already been an institution in almost every new home: although the woman was generally responsible for the house and the objects that surrounded it, the man was the one who chose the type and the number of furniture. This traditional tactics gradually changed and the responsibility to choose the furniture became, by the end of the nineteenth century, a purely female issue.



Fig. 3. Victorian middle-class domestic interior with a plethora of framed paintings and engravings as well as many decorative objects all over, 1840s.

The choice of colors for the interiors varied, depending on the location of the house (in the city center, in the suburbs or the countryside). The rationale for this variation was based on how the houses were exposed to environmental contamination, it being the main figment of the Industrial Revolution. For example, the houses in the city centers were not painted in pale tones for smog protection. Apart from painting the walls, the extensive use of wallpaper was a very common solution throughout the Victorian era. Especially in its first half, housewives sought fervently wallpaper whose background was most of the times in the colors of bright red, blue and green with rich floral repeating patterns, in usually large or moderate dimensions, in shades of cream and tan. The windows were usually covered with heavy curtains made of velvet or damask and often in imitation of such expensive fabrics, decorated with golden cords with tassels or fringes, while the walls were dominated, according to the aesthetic requirements of the ladies of the house, by large paintings or even prints depicting, usually, realistic subjects within heavy, gilded frames (Gloag, 1961: 99).

The need to meet such a significantly extended demand of objects with the aesthetic characteristics of the aristocracy fashion became higher and higher and this is why an attempt of a large part of manufacturers to produce cheaper and qualitatively inferior objects in almost every field of decorative arts of that period seemed to have already thrived since the 1820s. The middle-class consumption craze, especially of women belonging to society's lower layers, could not expand to include expensive, almost unique items of the aristocracy because of their high cost. But their cheap imitations soon began to satisfy every taste and vanity. So many types of not only expensive basic, but also smaller and less necessary furniture, mirrors, wooden candlesticks, frames of paintings, even small-sized lighting were reproduced with the replacement of many of their decorative wooden sections with similar items of patented modeled plaster or gilded papier-mâché, giving the impression of expensive, skillfully carved objects which nevertheless were sold at one third of the price of the original ones (Crowley, 1990: 15). In the area of silversmithing, the already very successful implementation of Sheffield plate by the manufacturers of Sheffield and Birmingham, soon led to the mass production of this type of metal wares which looked silver without really being so (Clay & Tungate, 2009: 19). The combination of copper wares and other utensils covered with a thin layer of silver constituted a really revolutionary invention which triggered the consuming interest of the middle-class female shoppers.¹⁰ These mass-produced

¹⁰ Initiator of this very important technique that enabled the consumer to enjoy mass produced objects of hitherto unapproachable cost was the Birmingham-based manufacturer of metalwork Matthew Boulton (1728-1809). The

metal wares which bore the characteristic Neo-Rococo decoration of the real ones, in affordable prices though, implied not only good taste, luxury and prosperity, but also a step closer to the world of aristocracy.



Fig. 4. An elegant Victorian Sheffield plate 5 piece tea and coffee set, 1845.

Focusing on the aesthetic demands of the early and middle Victorian period women, the elegance in connection with the feeling of fullness, but also the diversity of the home environment in relation to the working environment was a moving target that had to be shot down with the purchase of a small or large decorative or functional object, each time. It should however be noted that the effective mass production of usually similar and cheap caricatures of several unique and expensive products finally enhanced the already disorientated view of the average Victorian female consumer about her individuality in consuming. At the end of the day, there were thousands of them who foolishly believed that they were able to possess ‘some unique, latest fashion, Rococo pieces’ in affordable prices.

Beauty synonymous to morality in household goods.

Despite the growing demand for cheaply made with sham materials and techniques industrial products by the rather uneducated female shoppers, who had either too much money and a little time, or a little money and time (Pevsner, 1986: 20, 21), yet after the grand idea of the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, the concepts of beauty, elegance and good taste did not remain equally stable throughout the duration of the Victorian period. Despite the fact that since the beginning of the nineteenth century the interior decoration of the haute bourgeoisie houses was a model of elegance and beauty, from the 1860s and 1870s it started being challenged as new ideas, needs and stereotypes became visible in the middle class evolution. One of the major reasons to change the taste, but also the sense of beauty and elegance was the emergence of a plethora of magazines and books, from the 1860s onwards, related to interior design, which were written by

technique which has its roots in the late eighteenth century, became famous during the Regency Period, and the early years of the Victorian era by the also important silversmith Paul Storr (1770-1844).

women and of course were addressed to the middle-class women of the time. As we have already mentioned the famous magazine *Hints on Household Taste* (1868), and the *The Art of Decoration* (1881), *Suburban Residencies and how to Circumvent Them* (1896), were only some of the many women's magazines and manuals on decoration and ornamentation that flooded England in the second half of the nineteenth century (Forty, 1986: 111). Both their cleverly written articles and the advice columns relating to a direct communication with the readers began to reconfigure the taste and their views about the concept of beauty and harmony in interior design. Soon, the appearance of the first professional decorators solved many till then aesthetic and functional problems related to the purchasing of aesthetic and functional objects and the configuration of the domestic interiors in general, although the final choice belonged to the housewives themselves.

All these were not simply random events, but a number of successful steps towards the harmonization of the concepts of beauty and morality, two pure female terms which fared the same paths, especially during the Late Victorian Period. In this contributed the emergence of some significant Art and Design Movements that literally swept the long-suffering area of decorative arts in the UK, including the famous Aesthetic Movement, The Arts and Crafts Movement, the Art Nouveau and the Liberty Style (Landow, 2016). Through their ideology, deeply affected by the Japanese culture and / or the British Medievalism, new ideals arose for the concept of beauty which was inseparably linked with the deepest sense of morality thus forming a new aesthetic model of the interior, that is what was exactly professed by the most important aesthetic reformers of the time such as John Ruskin and William Morris, but also Oscar Wilde himself.

More specifically, the last and perhaps most essential part - in ideological terms - of the Victorian era, showed the discreet relationship developed between the concept of aesthetics and morality. The famous Aesthetic Movement, directly influenced by the aesthetics of the Japanese art and architecture, was inextricably woven with ideas that promoted both the creation of art 'for its own good' and the need for the *coiling* of the nineteenth century aesthetes who felt aversion for the ugliness of the Industrial Revolution and its subsequent vulgar consumerism. From the late 1860s until the early twentieth century, the concept of beauty and elegance ceased gradually being synonymous with the bad copies reproduction in the areas of fine and decorative arts, and started getting autonomous, in terms of authenticity, not only as regards the concept and design of a project or object, but also its basic materials.

Beauty, under these new conditions, became a definitive end in itself, without being tied to any bourgeois fashion or life style, as was the case in the first decades of the Victorian era. The effect of Japonisme in shaping this new ideology, especially after the 1862 London Exhibition, was particularly strong as it seemed to set new standards in the fine and decorative arts of the late nineteenth century, freeing artists and designers from the sterile European aesthetic conventions, although we could say that the influences were mutual, as with all open cultural systems (Emmanouel, 2002: 40).



Fig. 5. The Great International Exhibition, London 1862: The Japanese Court.

The principles of simplicity, symmetry, geometricity and colors and textures economy were blended meticulously to the English tradition, creating new, innovative forms and values affecting not only the hitherto strong decorative nature of the objects, but also the functionality of the interiors themselves. Especially since the early years of the twentieth century space was simplified more, as it became more austere and functional, while maintaining the beauty and elegance of the Victorian ideal. The objects by which space was flanked were of unique beauty and harmony, while their functional character remained untouched and unchanged, which indicated the inclination of Victorian women in the adoption of a new consumer ethos.

Since, according to the principles of Victorian society human virtues, qualities, properties and activities were subtly or not divided by gender, beauty was inextricably tied to the female sex and to anything associated with the feminine nature. The concept of morality was also directly connected with women and constituted a deep social value which reflected the broader meaning of the word *ethos* and was not related only to the erotic / sexual side of females. So if in the early Aesthetic Movement we discovered the close relationship of women with beauty, elegance and good taste in consuming, the Arts and Crafts Movement was the one which succeeded, more than any other movement of the time, through its deep philosophy to highlight the importance of the truth of materials, which was connected with the importance of female morality in terms of consumption. Women should then leave the tricky aesthetically, but mainly morally consumption habits to buy items not simply ugly and tacky, but also 'dishonest' as regards both the way and the quality of the materials they were manufactured of. Its main representative, William Morris, was the one who, based on John Ruskin's renown moralistic theory about the 'dishonesty' of the Industrial Revolution machines to produce 'with cheap raw materials objects in bad designs' became interested in the concept of *honesty* in handicraft goods production by showcasing an unprecedented pro-handicraft, anti-machine ethic that had its roots in a medieval production mode. According to this the principles of honesty, truth and purity prevailed at each stage of production, both in terms of artisans working conditions, and in terms of the quality of the raw materials employed. More specifically, this philosophy supported that working conditions should be similar to those governed by the Christian medieval spirit, enabling each worker to enjoy creative work, and not to suffer. At the same time, each material had, according to Morris, its own intrinsic quality, as for example, the original color of wood or the natural color and texture of clay, thus any imitation attempt was simply disastrous for the quality of the finished article.

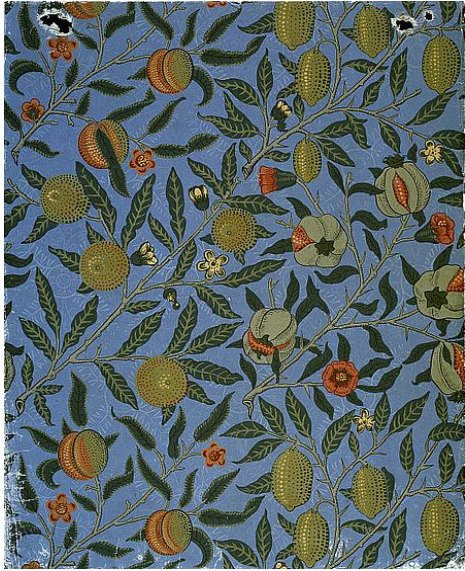


Fig. 6, 7. Two characteristic works by William Morris and Co: on the left (6) a leaf pattern wallpaper, 1865 and on the right & (7) reclining chair with handmade upholstery, 1866.

Correspondingly then, the same principles were perfectly aligned with the concept of female Victorian ethos as women had their own personal and family values which were based on the virtues of Christianity and love as well as on the principles of truth, honesty and chastity which should never be replaced by any other spurious or seemingly valuable morality. Besides honesty in production and the truth of materials advocated by this movement, it should be noted that Victorian female consumers had to face another important truth which however had to do with their national identity. The intention of the great personalities of the Arts and Crafts Movement to overcome their hideous ways and methods of mass industrialization by arguing that *'Life without Industry is guild, but Industry without art is brutality'* (Naylor, 1990: 26) brought some more significant results. Without betraying the British tradition, Morris managed to combine the reviving of medieval patterns and craft techniques with designs taken from the exoticism of other countries and to create a new aesthetic style which, through numerous textiles, carpets, wallpapers, furniture and tiles designs, revealed the universality of the British empire. Victorian consumers had already begun then to perceive the seriousness of buying items for home, as their aesthetic and ideological attitude seemed to have been extremely improved.

Conclusion

'Beautiful is inherent to ethos (as truth is to beauty). The clean, precise expression, the architecture of form and substance, the harmony and rhythm, the balance of the parties, the proportion of relations, the symmetry, the class of shapes and the freedom of searches, the inventiveness of the rare and the prestigious, the revelation of human sensitivity, the aesthetics catharsis and inner delight, the spiritual exuberance and buoyancy, and so many other features of the Beautiful, affect the soul morally and - by creating ethics - purify and redeem it' (Evaggelou, 1997: 99) .

Perhaps the above quote by the renowned Greek writer Jason Evaggelou reflects the real connection that was created in the last decades of the Victorian era between the 'tormented' concepts of beauty and morality, as regards the domestic interiors. As beauty has always been a female stereotype in the social status quo of England, so the concept of morality, adapted tightly to the rigid Victorian social standards, was also identified with the Victorian women stereotype, and especially with their triple social role as housewife, wife and mother. Being beautiful, elegant and

alluring Victorian women themselves, would constitute examples to be avoided if they were not, at the same time, ethical and honest.

Meanwhile, as the house was for the middle class, the resting place of family life, the place of joy and bliss, it was almost certain that it would be the place of the material and moral values identification of its holders. It would be impossible for the concept of beauty, which was identified with the aesthetics not only of the interior, but also of the individual objects that were in it, to remain autonomized and detached from the concept of the objects making quality, which was also identified with the morality concept. This association that we have seen grow in taste but also in women's purchase choices, especially during the late Victorian era, was, in our opinion, a serious and responsible step which set new coordinates in the history of interior design, but also in the consumption history and theory itself. At the same time, it indicated the path to modernity, highlighting two other important concepts for the proper functioning of the house: the concepts of functionality and cleanliness.

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