**Introduction**

Issues of gender and sexuality and the ideal of domesticity were at the heart of 19th century Britain. This was rooted in the political and economic upheavals of the first half of the century, religious revival and encouraged by the unprecedented growth in the powers to police and discipline the people.

One issue was the link between sexual and social order : patriarchal conjugal family, man and wife, each acting with their proper sphere, and the containment (= limitation) of sexuality within legal matrimony, became keystones (= clés de voûtes) of social stability and moral progress.

The domestic ideology of the 19th century and its associated sexual discipline first gained thier hold on the public mind as perceptions of the French Revolution and social consequences of industrialisation sharpened and sometimes changed perspectives on the family and sexuality.

**1. THE ORIGINS OF VICTORIAN DOMESTIC IDEOLOGY**

**1) Patriarchal family values**

Some elements of the Victorian domestic ideology were inherited from earlier centuries. Patriarchal family values were embedded in English common law (= droit coutumier), its courts did not recognize married women as legal persons : a wife could not earn property, her debts were the responsibility of her husband and he had right to custody (= garde) of their children.

**2) The influence of the Enlightenment**

 The concern of the Enlightenment thinkers with education and child development, and the Romantic and sentimentalization of motherhood, all encouraged a new sensitivity to women's domestic influence : the moral economy of the family was patriarchal in form but encompassed (= couvrir, comprendre, recouvrir) a sphere in which feminine influence was crucially important.

**3) The influence of the French Revolution**

The French Revolution gave new urgency to the evangelical concerns with morality and women's family roles. First, it politicized vice : Marie-Antoinnette was charged with adultary, lesbianism and incest before being guillotined. The Terror suggested the possible fate of decadent aristocracies and « Everyman felt the necessity for putting his house in order » wrote Lady Shelley. The Revolution also politicized gender. The French Constitution of 1791 did away with (= se débarrasser) aristocratic privileges in the name of the « Rights of Man » but introduced a new principle of order and hierarchy denying women equal citizenship (Mary Wollstonecraft protested to Talleyrand against the exclusion of French women from citizen rights and argued for equality of the sexes). But voices were raised in opposition to this as many women thought they were not equal to men but dependent upon them and complementary in their feminine duties and virtues.

**2. MALTHUSIANISM AND SEXUAL MORALITY**

Thomas Robert Malthus went further than just restating evangelical family values, he offered a political economist's gloss (= éclat / mot péjoratif) on the Christian doctrine of original sin. The natural tendency of the population was to increase at an exponential rate whileproduction of food couls only increase at a speedy, arithmetical rate ; if nothing was done the human race would breed to the point of universal misery, its number kept in check only by famine, disease and war. Malthus revived an idea that was more common in the Middle-Ages than in the 18th century that, unless sexuality was prudently regulated, divinely ordained retribution (= châtiment) was to be expected.

Malthusianism became linked to domestic ideology in the public mind in two ways :

→ anxieties about procreation came to pervade (= envahir) the handbooks and medical literature that dealt with marital sex, encouraging an emphasis on self-restraint.

→ a belief, calculated to promote virtue in husbands, that women took no pleasure in sex.

There was also a new emphasis on the special need for control over the reproductive habits of the poor. Malthus wanted to discourage early marriage and intercourse (= rapports sexuels) outside marriage with implications on socail policy. Population control was about the disciplines of family formation and required the poor to learn the habits of their betters (= les gens mieux qu'eux). The Reform of the Poor Law of 1601 became the means of instruction. Thomas Chalmers (a Scottish evangelical divine/theologian)tried unsuccessfully to persuade Parliament that public poor relief should simply be abolished. But the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 did away with the right to outdoor relief (= aide/assistance extérieure) and underlined the husband's prime responsibility for supporting his family by requiring wives of destitute men to follow them in the workhouse (= hospice/atelier) It introduced a much harsher policy towards unmarried mothers : they were ineligible for outdoor relief and lost the right to sue the father for maintenance of their children. At the same time, the Marriage Act of 1836 made it easier for the poor to legalize their unions : Non-Conformist ministers could now perform the marriage ceremony and the option of civil marriage became available. This promoted a norm of married respectability in lower classes : in the early 19th century, over 50% of first born children were conceived and over 20% were born outside marriage, by the 1890s, illegitimacy rates had fallen as low a 4% of live births in England and Wales, and 7% in Scotland.

This crack down on illegitimacy at the expense of poor unmarried mothers led to a sharp rise in cases of infanticides and to a panic about increased rates of abortion.

## 3. SEPARATE SPHERES AND DOMESTICITY

Separate spheres for the sexes became widely diffused. Women and girls were targeted in the sermons of the Conformist church, in books, magazines, etc. that prescribed womanly, submissive roles while dwelling on the importance of feminine qualities and duties, and the dignity of motherhood.

Magazines of domestic readership suffused (= imprégné de) with the ethos of domesticity flourished. Queen Victoria herself vowed obedience to Albert on the day she married.

Domestic ideology also appealed to the middle-classes. There were separate spheres for members of the household : nurseries, attics (= grenier) or basements (= sous-sol) servants, etc. and gendered spaces : studies for men (and billiard rooms) and drawing-rooms and boudoirs for women.

Fashion in dress exaggeratedsexual differences : seven layers of petticoats (= jupon) for women but sober functional uniform of dark trousers and jacket for men.

Women were supposed to manage servants and the physical environment of the home, the deportment (= maintien/conduite) of children and keeping up appearances (= sauver les apparences) ; this was modelled on the roles of wives and daughters in the landed upper classes. Charitable and philanthropic work was for women too : visiting the poor on Sunday school (= catéchisme) and teaching became a normal feature of the lives of middle-class women.

In 1893, about half a million women were working on a regular professional basis as volunteers in philanthropic institutions.

## 4. THE MALE-BREADWINNER FAMILY AND WOMAN'S EMPLOYMENT