Social Conventions In The Victorian Period

Tara Sanchez, Mya Bell, Emily Bigelow
Financial Expectations:

- Men in control
- Women “Can’t handle it”
- Women - No Jobs
- Men have ALL Possessions (after marriage)
- Leads to more controlling relationships
- Inability to leave
Financial Expectations Continued:

2 Types:

- Women who need money to survive (Mrs. Linde)
- Women who want to help their husbands (Nora)

Ex.

Nora: felt so desperate to help her husband she forged a signature to get a loan (she doesn’t understand anything about actually getting a loan/ when she paid it off/ the seriousness of her crime)

Mrs Linde: Goes against society's idea that a woman can’t work because she needed the money to survive when her husband died
Gender Conventions

- Queen Victoria’s image of femininity
  - Family, motherhood, respectability
  - Model of marital stability and domestic virtue
  - “Mother of the Nation”
- Separate spheres
  - Men: public, business
  - Women: private, home
- Domesticity and motherhood as emotional fulfillment
- Highest achievement: motherhood (within marriage)
- Not having kids = inadequate, abnormal, a failure
Gender Conventions Continued

- Subordinate and devoted to husband
- Middle class didn’t work
  - Raising children viewed as a full-time job
- Working class worked poor-paying jobs from home (domestic industry)
- Always busy, no leisure time
- Service towards society
- Moral superiority
Marriage Issues

- Women couldn't be too forward
- Marriage was considered highest achievement
- "For a woman marriage meant the acquisition of an ‘establishment’, her own place, financed by her husband, [...] a place where she had at least some freedom of choice and activity, which she might not have had at all in the parental home" (Calder 9).
- Didn't own property
- No custody of children
- Men cheated
Marriage issues Continued

- **1839 custody of infants act**: possible wives estranged from their husbands to gain custody of children less than 7 years old
- **1857 Matrimonial Causes Act**: that deserted women could again dispose of their property and were granted the rights to earning, savings, and legal investments
- **1882 Married Women’s Property Act**: It gave married women separate rights over their inheritance, earnings and property and made husband and wife separate legal entities.
Cult of Domesticity

Women were expected to portray 4 characteristics to be considered the ideal woman:

1. Piety- never speaks of religion
2. Purity- plays with the idea of getting money from admirers using her looks
3. Submissiveness- she talked back/argued with Torvald regarding money.
4. Domesticity- she plays games with the children
Works Cited


