

## VICTORIAN VIRTUES IN TEACHING "LITERATURE OF GREAT BRITAIN"

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**Abstract.** The article is dedicated to the problem of Victorian system of values reflected in the British literature studied at the department of foreign languages. The paper distinguishes the most relevant and typical virtues of the British society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Victorian epoch, teaching, virtues, literature, modesty, system of values, world construal.

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### Introduction

The course "Literature of Great Britain" delivered at the department of foreign languages takes a significant place among the disciplines taught due to its relevance. The students have a chance not only to enjoy reading authentic sources but also to feel the atmosphere and penetrate into the culture of the language studied that furthermore can assist in better capturing and mastering language skills. Literature is "a social mirror": all the changes in political, social and cultural spheres are reflected in it with a help of the language itself. Writers of the Victorian epoch couldn't fail to show the mood and tendencies of the society in their works. The Victorian epoch is unique: it largely contributed to the world's literature heritage and created its own system of values which became widespread all over the world and changed the society from the inside.

### Victorian System of Values

The 19<sup>th</sup> century in the world history is called "the long 19th century" and "it begins in 1776, and ends in 1914" (*Hobsbaum, E. (1989: 15)*). The Victorian era is associated with the cultural and economic development of England, which led to changes in self-esteem of the individual. Significant changes occurred in the Victorian world construal: after the victory over Napoleon, England became a superpower with the world's best fleet, a large number of colonies and a dynamic industry. The social structure of society became more complicated and the position of the middle class of England was strengthened, it all was reflected in culture: the literature reflects the importance of devotion and purity of thoughts for the middle class, the necessity of the "correct" language - an effective means for moving up the social stairs (*Kryukov, 2001:180*).

If everyday culture is understood as a system of life value orientations, then Victorian society developed those that are most consistent with the spirit of self-preservation and human needs. The main features of Victorian everyday life were stability, recurrence, conservatism, the inevitability of the emergence of standard and stereotypes (*Kryukov, 2001:44*).

The problem of investigation the Victorian values of everyday culture is connected with the analysis of the essence and peculiarities of the formation of value orientations and norms of behavior of the middle class of the United Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most important virtue of Victorian, which determines the way of his life and interaction with other members of society, is morality (*Goodman, 2006*).

According to Himmelfarb, "Moral Reformation", begun in the late 18th century, gave

results at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Himmelfarb, 1995:7*). The beginning of moral reformation, which laid the foundations for the emergence of Victorian values, dates back to 1787, when George III issued a royal decree on the promotion of piety and virtue, as well as the prevention and punishment of vice, dishonor and immorality ("Encouragement of Piety and Virtue ...") (*Ditchfield, 2002*).

Morality, according to lexicographic sources, is constituted by such features as "personal / social standards of conduct", "ethics", "honesty", "justice" (*Procter, 1995:917*). The virtue of modesty in the Victorian construal of the world has a double nature: in the secular segment, it is determined by the moral standards of the era, which are rooted in the religious segment of the world construal. In general modesty is defined as "self-knowledge, self-criticism, axiological self-sufficiency - and thus as the true beginning of wisdom <...>, the transformation of awareness of one's invaluableeness in the recognition of others' moral values" (*Gartman, 2002:442*). Consequently, an important sign of modesty is its manifestation only "in relation to other people" (*Gartman, 2002:443*):

*But I am a modest man and I would welcome a second opinion from the Minister: does he agree or does he disagree?* (BNC)

Thus, external manifestations of inner purity and humility are aimed at creating a person's perception of oneself in others: in the case of purity, it is a question of how a presentation to oneself or others can tempt others, in the case of humility, it says about the need to be honest with oneself and others, "to remember one's place and one's real price" (*Goodman, 2006:8*):

<...> "*indecent*" material which merely embarrasses the sexual modesty of ordinary people (BNC)

Thus, the preservation of purity leads to the preservation of one's own purity and purity of others (*Goodman, 2006:9-10*). Since the word modesty in the Christian consciousness is associated mainly with the importance of "restraint in the movements of the body" and "restraint in dressing and decorating" (*Goodman, 2006: 9*), then humility, according to F. Aquinas (*Aquinas*), is expressed in the appropriateness of behavior and clothing, their relevance to the public's position of a person, his social environment, kind of activity, a particular situation, etc.:

*With Rupinder's modesty threatened by hordes of lower-caste villagers, Mrs. Puri eventually realized where her duty lay* (BNC).

The Victorian era is considered "one of the most prominent periods for the invention of traditions" (*Hobsbaum, 1999:61*), many modern traditions were created in the 19th century (*Hobsbaum, 1999*). These traditions reflect the massive, empirically created representations, passions, moral ideals and disadvantages of the Victorian epoch, and at the same time allow to penetrate into its essence.

The Victorian age is characterized by urban lifestyle. "Urban space, created by the will and desire of man, forms in a new way the technology of human communication, life style, value world in comparison with patriarchal, rural culture" (*Zbrozhek, 2005:31*). In particular, social mobility and rapid lifestyle changes are largely due to railways operating in England since 1825. They made London stores more accessible to everyone, which meant a significant expansion of urban fashion, the rules of uniformity and decency

in the appearance of the Victorians who, as a rule, wore dark suits, that was directly related with the urban way of life (*Zbrozhek, 2005:31*):

*He was dressed all in decent black, with a white cravat round his neck* (*W. Collins*)

In the Victorian era, clothing, according to the requirement of modesty, must reflect the social condition of man (*Goodman, 2006: 24*), its cultural affiliation, meet weather conditions, specific employment (*Goodman, 2006: 28-30*) and, of course, the human sex (Deuteronomy 22: 5) (*The Holy Bible*): women's clothing should be female to reflect

her femininity; the garment of a man must be male in order to reflect man in him (*Goodman, 2006: 30*):

*<...> Instructs his female students in ladylike behavior, modesty, charm and attractive appearance (BNC).*

The outfit was considered an extremely important means of achieving the virtue of modesty, since it served to protect both his own moral purity and his preservation in others: when the word modesty is used, they almost always have in mind the way a person, mainly a woman, is dressed (*Goodman, 2006: 23*):

*She had her underclothing beneath, of course, and the expensive silk was such a luxuriously close knit that there was nothing nonsense about the outfit (BNC).*

Similarly, the hairstyle should match the gender: long hair in a woman "*Is a glory to her <...> because her hair has been given her as a covering*" (1 Corinthians 11: 14-15) (*The Holy Bible*). Long hair of a woman, according to religious representations, serves as a natural covering, which shows her obedience to her husband (for the same reason women must always walk with their head covered (1 Corinthians 11: 5) (*The Holy Bible*), short hair of a man symbolizes strength (*Goodman, 2006: 35-36*), entrusted to him by the patriarchal principles of Christianity (*Hampson, 1990*):

*Shy and modest, Pauline Ashley says only: "I just do what a wife has to" (BNC)*

But the positive value of this female-identified modesty is still outweighed by the disadvantages that the egotism entails in psychology (BNC).

In the Victorian era, the direction of morality to prevent both the exhaustion of some parts of the body, the demonstration of their forms, and the simple attraction of excessive attention to them, according to D. Goodman (*Goodman, 2006: 25-28*) acquired a special, even hypertrophic significance, which was borderline with hypocrisy. Consequently, in Victorian culture, the "social body" was specifically understood, when physicality and sensuality were prohibited, up to cruel persecution. Men and women were obliged to forget that they had a body. The only parts of the body surface, allowed to open, were brushes of hands and face. Going out into the street, a man without a high collar, and ties, a woman without gloves was considered actually naked. Such prohibitions fulfilled the necessary social function: they separated the upper and middle classes from social minorities (*Zbrozhek, 2005:38*):

*But most of the gowns would have a neck that was quite high; Modesty was getting it to be a really important factor, so we're covered from head to toe (BNC).*

According to Dodd, the Victorian Age formed the basis of ethics, which became the code of conduct of the "true" Englishman, a true gentleman. He was a "basic type of personality", who had an imprint of the basic values of culture in the forms of its worldview, behavior and thinking, and the "Lady" was an addition, a kind of his female counterpart in his social status, a system of values and norms of conduct" (*Dodd, 1999*).

According to E. Gobsbaum, "Protestantism, harshness, self-satisfaction, ignorance on conditions of puritanical morality, which was always accompanied by hypocrisy, is what this unfortunate era was" (*Hobsbaum, 1988: 261*). Victorian morality places modesty in the forefront among other virtues and relates it mainly with the assessment of women. In the ethical consciousness of the English the means to achieve the virtue of modesty is a virtuous outfit and behavior (*Goodman, 2006*), with the codified religious requirements, remaining extremely strict for monks and clergy, however, they are relatively moderate for the laity (*Apresyan, Guseynov, 2001:409*):

*The obligation of modesty is on both men and women; Men are also required to dress and behave in a modest way (BNC);*

*Although a pleasant and modest man, he was also a compulsive competitor in pints, in sex, in stories, in sports, on the stage (BNC).*

According to historians, "Victorian virtues were neither classical nor Christian; they were more "domesticated" than the first and more secular than the latter. But they were "virtues", as they were understood by Victorians - not values in our understanding" (*Himmelfarb, 1995:12*). Therefore, the most suitable place for a woman from the bourgeois family was a hearth *Hobsbaum, 1989:249*.

The traditional concept of femininity, developed in the second half of the 19th century, made a woman a kind of property of a man, the ornament of his house, modest "angel in the house". She herself could not change her social position; she still had to accept with gratitude everything offered by men. There is always a grateful poor relative in every Victorian novel. As C. Hewitt notes, the only alternative for a woman was the governess's role, but it excluded her from the social life: she was not equal with the members of the family where she worked, and at the same time she could not communicate on a par with servants, which led to social isolation. Loneliness and fear of such a fate were so strong that the girls preferred to leave abroad (hence, according to C. Hewitt, many English governesses abroad) (*Hewitt, 1997*).

Despite the unequal situation, the main value orientations in the everyday morals of women of middle classes - were sincerity, naturality, modesty (*Zbrozhek, 2005*). The woman embodied innocence and kindness, which disarmed hostility and gave her general respect and love. Women's manners of representatives of all social groups assumed that a woman creates a favorable atmosphere that attracts everyone and makes communication with her indifferent:

*I was pleasantly surprised to find that Littimer was not there and that we were attended by a modest little parlour maid, with blue ribbons in her cap, whose eyes was much more pleasant and much less discourager, to catch by accident, than the eye of that respectable man (Ch. Dickens).*

One of the important components of the gentleman's morals was his attitude toward the woman. The main values in a woman for him were virtue, innocence, modesty, obedience, softness, tenderness, nobility. The beauty of a woman in this list took the last place. For him, a woman was only a solid rear, which could provide him with a rest in a calm, cozy atmosphere. Thus, the wife and wife for the gentleman were synonymous. The wife accompanied the gentleman at the outposts, took in his friends' house, supporting his reputation, giving birth to his children, etc., that was her fate to live his life and for his sake. At the same time, the concept of mesalliance in this day was brought to the absurdity, and open manifestations of sympathy between man and woman were strictly prohibited (*Handler, Segal, 1990*). The Victorian culture of everyday life strictly regulated the rules of etiquette, which fixed the limits, including in relations between sexes, even in married couples. Thus, the spouses with outsiders recommended to contact each other officially (Mr.N., Mrs. N.), so that the morals of the others did not suffer from intimate playfulness. Modesty in the world construal did not appear in isolation, but as a set of features: a person, even dressed in a hemp bag, was considered immodest because of unjust behavior (*Goodman, 2006: 47*), which emphasized the behavioral nature of the concept modesty:

*... modesty in behaviour is such a rare priority ... (O. Wilde).*

Indecency in behavior is, on the one hand, inconsistency with a particular situation and social environment, and, on the other hand, a violation of the internal purity of a person by unauthorized touching, showing lucid intentions and attracting excessive attention; superfluous compliments or humorous jokes; lucid looks that lead a person to commit a sin mentally, because the eyes are closely related to the soul (*Goodman, 2006: 47-56*):

*'Indecent' means any affront to modesty, usually touching a female's private parts, but the less obvious acts include a kiss followed by a suggestion on intercourse (G.Himmelfarb);*

*<...> as though someone had paid her a compliment which, in modesty, she must have been influenced not to have heard (Ch. Bronte);*

*Do I walk away with dignity - and then stop, and steal a timid glance at my lover, over my shoulder? (W. Collins)*

The Victorian world construal is characterized by general secularization. As E. Gobsbaum notes, "aristocratic indifference, mixed with the pedantic execution of the ceremonies, was characteristic of the emancipated nobility, although the lady, like all the women, remained much more devout" (Hobsbaum, 1988:300).

### Conclusions

Modesty as one of the virtues in the Victorian world construal had a dual nature: in the secular segment, it is determined by the moral norms of the era, rooted in the religious segment of the world construal. The Victorian era established the basis of ethics, which formed the gentleman's code of conduct, where the woman was secondary in her social position.

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