

American Dress Reform in the Nineteen Century —A Social Movement Against Gendered Dress and the Dictates of Fashion

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the social context of American dress reform movement, and its interrelations between the cult of womanhood and gendered fashion dress. The dress reform movement, often studied from the feminist or health reformers' point of view, was in fact a continuous social movement for women wearing pants. This study adopts a historical research method to investigate the dress reform movement between 1851 and 1875. Using historical data, the study first examines how the dress reform was promoted by the feminist and other social groups, and how a woman in a pantaloons was evaluated as a betrayer of the cult of womanhood. The study also examines how the fashion power and gender ideology impacts on women wearing or not wearing pants in the nineteenth century American.

Key Words: dress reform, Bloomer dress, women's rights group, hydropath