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**Women and Trousers.
Being a Work on Dual Garnitures
and a Case Study of the
Bifurcated Movement in
Nineteenth-Century Clothing
for Women in North America**

Karen De Lutis

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada**

September 2000

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❖ ABSTRACT ❖

Women and Trousers. Being a Work on Dual Garnitures and a Case Study of the Bifurcated Movement in Nineteenth-Century Clothing for Women in North America

Karen De Lutis

This thesis analyzes the trousered dress reform movement for women in North America and Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by studying the environment in which trousers were promoted, and by using two art phenomenons of the mid-nineteenth century – the American sculptor Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave* (1843), and Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace, a glass structure designed for the Great Exhibition of the Industries of All Nations of 1851 in London, England.

Many twentieth-century writings and histories on fashion dismiss reform movements as insignificant in the overall (linear) evolution of fashion for women. Contrary to many modern accounts, archival evidence shows that once the concept of a trousered costume for women was introduced in North America, “. . . women all over the country [were] making inquiries about the dress and asking for patterns – showing how ready and anxious women were to throw off the burden of long, heavy skirts.” Even Canadian newspapers, such as the *Toronto Globe* of 1851, reacted positively, declaring that the trousered costume “[o]n a well formed body it looks really well.”

Enthused by this not altogether negative reaction to reform in clothing, several American women took their costume to Britain, where they planned to promote it at the Great Exhibition of 1851, which requested “suggestions for improvement from every civilised nation of the world.” The women ultimately hoped that if the fashion caught on in London, it would be more readily accepted in North America. Analyzing the architectural environment and art surroundings in which it was promoted (and not necessarily the official literature of fashion such as plates and journals which dictated what women *should* wear as opposed to what they *were* wearing), leads to what I believe to be a more accurate assessment of why dual garnitures for women were not ultimately part of women’s everyday wardrobe for another half century at least.

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Dowager Queen rigged with the spoils of
 slavery, would be worthy of one another.

**How to Write the Biography of a
 Woman.**

**AN impudent fellow says: "Show me all
 the dresses a woman has worn in the course
 of her life, and I will write her Biography
 from them."**

Punch XXV (1853): 118.

☛ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ☛

To-morrow— the day upon which we overtake happiness, find the true friend,
meet a truthful human, the day when the indolent labor and the fools reflect.

“The Wisdom of a Woman.” *Toronto Saturday Night* , 24 April 1909, p. 6.

I am so thankful to all the super professors in the Department of Art History, whose guidance, patience, and support helped me tremendously. An especially sincere thank you to Janice Helland, my advisor, to my two readers, Joan Acland and Loren Lerner and to Catherine MacKenzie for their unending assistance which made it possible for me to continue studying. I could not have lasted without the support of my friends and family, especially Kim, Elaine, Sandra, Myr and Peter, Serge and Barbara, and all my other dear friends, and most of all Daniel.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my mother and father.

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FOREWORD

Theories on the way in which clothing constructs gender have been explored in many contemporary texts, but it is not my intention to provide in this thesis, a complete overview of these important theories on fashion. The challenge I chose for myself was to integrate costume history into art history – to look at a particular instance where fashion combined with art and the adoption of trousers as an everyday fashion for women in the Western Hemisphere is one such a case.

As the trousered movement originated in the nineteenth century, archival material such as contemporaneous newspaper articles and other non-fashion sources, proved to reflect more accurately the way in which non-conformity in clothing affected the way its wearers were viewed or treated, as opposed to fashion plates and magazines, which reported on what women *should* wear (much as they do now), and not on what they *were* wearing, as they went about their day. For example, as early as 1848, women wore trousers as a daily costume, despite what many histories of costume have recorded.¹ For the longest time this type of conflicting evidence hindered my completion of this study, as I searched for an explanation on why women did not adopt the trouser. In fact however, archival evidence shows a number of women *did* wear trousers – it was the subsequent written histories which excluded this documented evidence, making it very difficult to study this particular topic.

¹ The Oneida Community (just west of Seneca Falls, New York) adopted a bifurcated costume for women consisting of a shortened skirt over trousers — adapted from children’s pantalettes, not a true trouser, but a half trouser attached to undergarments at the knee, albeit indistinguishable from real trousers once the skirt was lowered. See Gayle V. Fischer, “Pantalets’ and ‘Turkish Trowsers’: Designing Freedom in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States,” *Feminist Studies* 23, no.1 (Spring 1997): 110 - 140.

Curiously this subject is still relevant today. In January 2000, a woman in England won her case against the Professional Golfers' Association, after she sued them for banning her from wearing trousers to work. Her suit claimed she was subjected to jokes about “dykes and lesbians” in professional women's golf, and was referred to as “one of the girls” simply because she wore a trouser suit to work.² The (Montreal) *Gazette* in May 1996 reported a high school honour student in Virginia was threatened with being barred from attending her own graduation if she refused to wear a dress instead of slacks under her ceremonial gown (the girl's grandfather promised to also show up in a dress for moral support if she was forced to wear one).³

In the 1980s, Alison Lurie noted in her study of clothing that women were not admitted to the Frick Collection Library in New York unless they were wearing skirts, they even kept a skirt at the desk for those who were ignorant of the rule.⁴ The Royal Enclosure at Ascot banned trousers altogether until 1970, with “untidy” trousers disallowed up to 1978, while women in trousers were banned from certain public eating places in New York and London up to the mid-70s.⁵

Men too have not been exempt from discrimination. In the Fall of 1998, *Glamour* magazine reported on a male postal worker in New Jersey who was reprimanded in the spring

² Richard Holliday and Colin Freeman, “Woman wins right to wear trousers,” *The Evening Standard*, 20 January 2000.

³ “Dress code: Girl wants to wear pants to graduation,” *The (Montreal) Gazette*, 11 May 1996.

⁴ Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 225.

⁵ Prudence Glynn, *In Fashion: Dress in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 88-89.

for donning his shorts uniform too early in the season. He responded by showing up for his rounds in the (knee-length) skirt women are allowed to wear year-round.⁶

Reform dress has often been interpreted as “a travesty of male attire,” that reformers wanted to reform male costumes to suit women.⁷ In actual fact, dress reformers wanted to reform *female* dress — not blur the distinctions between the sexes.⁸ It is under this premise that I wish to study this particular topic within costume history, i.e. as a heterosexual reform movement, and not as a study of a lesbian subculture or a cross-dressing frisson, which, as Jeffrey Weeks notes, “knowledge of [which] remains shadowy, almost non-existent. . . . A lesbian sub-culture of sorts did exist, but was a pale version of the male, and even more overwhelmingly upper-class.”⁹

This thesis concentrates on the first attempt women made to have trousers universally adopted by European and North American women and analyses the way in which the clothes they promoted constructed their identity. I have chosen two particular cases to study : a first attempt in 1851 by American women to promote the costume in England, and another in 1884 by English women to promote the same type of costume in Canada.

⁶ “Women’s Wear Daily,” *Glamour*, August 1998, 173.

⁷ Gayle V. Fischer, “‘Pantalets’ and ‘Turkish Trowsers’: Designing Freedom in the Mid-nineteenth-century United States,” *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 113.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the 19th century to the present* (London; New York: Quartet Books, 1977), 20. See also Gen Doy, “Gender and Class in Early Modernist Painting: a Reassessment” in *Seeing and Consciousness: Women, Class and Representation* (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 1995), 73. The latter half of this chapter deals with representations of lesbians, many of whom adopted trousers, according to an 1880 report on the “categories” of lesbians.

INTRODUCTION



hat an exhilarating thought,” agreed the British Rational Dress Association’s Mrs. E. M. King and the correspondent who interviewed her for the Toronto *Globe* newspaper in the Fall of 1884. “By next year, a good many Canadian women will probably be wearing no petticoats, no corsets, and literal trousers.”¹

Mrs. King had come to North America to lecture on reform clothing in Toronto, Philadelphia, and Montreal, and brought with her from England, a relatively large exhibition of rational costumes, which included a trousered ‘dress of the future,’ as well as several other bifurcated garments for everyday wear. A number of Montreal ladies expressed keen interest and had “seriously taken up the rational dress,” claimed Mrs. King at the time of her visit and women openly displayed their interest by wearing the trousered dress during a soiree organized by the Citizen’s Committee of Montreal at the Victoria Skating Rink during Mrs. King’s 1884 tour. She was so enthused by the positive reception she received during her tour in Montreal, she ended her *Globe* newspaper interview with her exciting prediction above.

Of course, Mrs. King’s expectations for Canadian women’s fashion were *not* fulfilled. Considering fashion at that time dictated tight-lacing and bustles (which caused internal organ

¹ “Rational Dress — Remarkable Feminine Interest in Trousers — Inquiring Widows, Spinsters and Matrons — Petticoats Not a Requisite of a Perfect Dress,” *The Globe* (Toronto), 13 September 1884, p. 7.

damage and back problems) and generally required that women dress in a fashion that changed the body's natural form completely, it is curious why women would seemingly collude with the tyrant known to the world as FASHION to deny themselves such simple pleasures as freedom of movement². More importantly, why does Mrs. King's positive reception and the keen interest in her trousered and rational costumes exhibited by women conflict with modern accounts on the subject of costume, which often label reform movements as insignificant. For example, the well-known costume historian James Laver stated the role of clothing in the past was exclusively to imbue a superior sense of belonging for the wearer, with most women deriving pleasure from attracting the opposite sex. He dismissed any attempts, such as reform movements, which did not comply with his fashion ideology:

No doubt there are high-minded women who despise such pleasures, but they are a small majority and, by what can be gathered from their writings and speeches, they are not conspicuously happy. The majority of women [are] undeterred by the reformers.³

Fashion's evolution attests to Laver's conclusions, as reform costumes did not appear in the official contemporaneous literature of the nineteenth century, such as fashion plates and Parisian journals, which dictated vogues in women's clothing. However archival research

² [British] Rational Dress Society. "Report for 1887." UDC 613.48. Fawcett Library Archives, London, England. The Society reported no visible improvement in women's dress as worn by the mass of people in 1887, but the Society's principles (which included wearing nonrestrictive clothing) were continually "endorsed and approved by all students of anatomy in every civilized country."

³ James Laver, *Clothes* (New York: Horizon Press, 1953), xi-xv.

reveals that such movements advocating more healthy reforms in fashion were *not* so simplistically dismissed, but were often welcome and widely debated in newspapers and non-fashion papers of the nineteenth century. Many studies in the area of costume history rely on existing official literature, i.e. texts that tell women what they *should* wear, and not what women were *really* wearing; whole sections of women's histories which challenged the dominant ideologies of the time have been overlooked, reflecting Michel Foucault's notion that "there is no history but a multiple overlapping and interactive series of legitimate vs. excluded histories."⁴

Therefore this study is not about why women did not wear trousers in the nineteenth century as a daily costume, because it is difficult to know due to the lack of documentation on what women really wore at that time for performing duties around the house or while working in factories, and involves research beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, this is more a study into why official fashion literature did not proscribe trousers as a viable garment for women, despite the keen interest on women's behalf, exhibited during Mrs. King's lecture tour in the 1880s, and – as shall be shown in this thesis – despite interest in previous decades as well. In fact, trousers were not officially accepted for women for several decades at least after the Rational Dress Association's efforts in the early 1880s. As late as 1911, Canadians were not even ready to see women wearing Paul Poiret's Harem Skirt, which the reporter noted was "not a skirt at all, [but] trousers, unashamed and unconcealed trousers." *Toronto*

⁴ See Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtic, *Foucault for Beginners* (London: Icon Books, 1997).

Saturday Night readers were warned against succumbing to the recent trend in dual garnitures:

. . . there are legislators eager to pass laws against femininity that transgresses certain not always intelligible barriers. Why there are judges who will divorce a woman who smokes a cigarette in public, and what they would do to a woman who wore trousers in public hardly bears thinking of. . . . M. Poiret had better walk warily. There are societies for suppressing this sort of thing.⁵

But there were societies for *promoting* this sort of thing as well, and the British Rational Dress Association was by no means the first of its kind. A trousered dress was introduced by the Seneca Falls (New York) suffragists in the early 1850s, starting a reform movement referred to as Bloomerism. This attempt at reform appears to be the first occasion in the Western hemisphere in which trousers were advocated as serious clothing for middle- and working-class women (not as part of a lesbian sub-culture or cross-dressing vogue).⁶ It spurred an interest in trousers as a daily outfit for women in North America, Canada, and Britain, pre-dating Mrs. King's visit by more than thirty years. Again, positive reactions to its adoption by women were noted in a Toronto *Globe* newspaper article from 1851 which

⁵ "The 'Harem' Skirt." *Toronto Saturday Night*, 8 April 1911, p. 31.

⁶ Queen Elizabeth I, for example, cross-dressed upon at least one occasion to inspire her troops against the Spanish Armada, which associated her with the Amazons and other warrior queens. She declared, "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too," and the late 1500s-early 1600s then saw a vogue in cross-dressing, thanks to the Virgin Queen; in Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), 28. For more on Queen Elizabeth's appearances in male attire, Garber notes; Louis Adrian Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," *Representations* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 61-84, and Paul Johnson, *Elizabeth I: A Study in Power and Intellect* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 320. See also Footnote 1 in the Foreword for this thesis.

remarked that “[o]n a well formed body it looks really well,” suggesting that women were wearing the trousered dress in Canada, and it was reported in Canadian newspapers as a viable fashion in England.⁷ The Toronto *Globe* described trousered women as circulating amongst the crowd of people visiting the international *Great Exhibition of Industries of All Nations of 1851* in London:

Bloomerism seems to advance in England more rapidly than in this, the land of its birth. *The Daily News* in one day’s report of the doings at the Great Exhibition says that this costume is rapidly gaining ground in public opinion. Ladies rigged out in it are *daily* seen among the visitors to the Crystal Place. [emphasis mine].⁸

Studying the trousered movement within the context of the Crystal Palace and the concurrent art on display during the Great Exhibition allows for a more thorough analysis, I believe, than relying on the literature promoted as official documentation of clothing for women such as fashion journals and plates. Analyzing clothing and its relationship to architecture has been discussed in Laver’s *Style in Costume* (1949), wherein the historian compares the costume’s physical attributes to that of architecture, citing for example, Katherine of Aragon’s Tudor arch headpieces, and the cut of women’s dresses of 1925 echoing the lines of contemporary buildings.⁹ In the case of Bloomers, however, the comparison of fashion (trousers) to architecture (The Crystal Palace) reveals similarities between them, not in a physical sense as

⁷ “Bloomerism—Woman’s Rights—,” *The Globe* (Toronto), 2 September 1851, p. 3.

⁸ “Bloomerism in England.” *The Globe* (Toronto), 30 October 1851, p. 1.

⁹ Richard Martin, reviewer. “Exhibition Review: Yeohlee: Energetics: Clothes and Enclosures.” *Fashion Theory* 2, no.3 (1998): 287.

described above, but rather in the way in which they both affected their respective occupants—when women put on the trousered outfit, they became highly visible, evidenced by the amount of press – both positive and negative— they received. Set inside the all-glass structure of the Crystal Palace, not only were the trousered women able to be seen by all, they too could indulge in the act of *looking*, a privilege so often reserved for men.

CHAPTER 1: Influences and Reactions

Financial independence is the basis of woman's . . . liberty. *That* she cannot gain while weakening and obstructing her body by a dress 'a la mode.' Opening avocations . . . asking rights and equality is simply absurd. Of all the reforms aiming at woman's enfranchisement, none is more pertinent than dress reform.¹

- "An American Opinion on Dress Reform," 1888



oward the end of the nineteenth century, Victorian society witnessed the increasing presence of the emancipated female, who strove for more social, political, educational and economic opportunities.² This emancipated female, whose "existence challenged middle-class feminine ideals of the dependent wife and mother"³ were very often labeled deviant, if not directly, then certainly indirectly through negative images distributed in the popular press.⁴ Women involved in the trousered dress reform movement did not escape this common ruse played by the establishment to deny the validity of a movement. As Bridget Elliott notes, by flooding the press with negative images and articles, degrading stereotypes were created,

¹ "An American Opinion on Dress Reform," *The Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, no. 2 (July 1888): 8.

² Bridget Elliott, "New and Not so 'New Women' on the London Stage: Aubrey Beardsley's *Yellow Book* Images of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Réjane," *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 34.

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴ Diane Crane, "Clothing Behaviour as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth Century," *Fashion Theory* 3, no. 2 (1999): 242.

which was believed would deter people from joining, and cartoonish caricatures were invented to deny the existence of any adherents leading the public into believing members were too grotesque to be true.⁵ Although Elliott wrote on images of the “New Woman” of the 1890s, this practice is no better reflected than in the attempt at introducing the trousered dress for women almost a half century earlier.

Bloomerism – as the trousered movement was christened by the press – was a reform in clothing first introduced in 1851 in Seneca Falls, New York. Reports differ as to the origin of the costume, but it was certain that Elizabeth Smith Miller (b.1822), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), and Amelia Bloomer (1818-94) played crucial roles in introducing trousers as a serious alternative for women. Miller, encouraged by her father the social reformer Gerrit Smith to not wear the “clothes-prison” of petticoats and stays, wore the costume in public, prompting Stanton to write:

To see my cousin, with a lamp in one hand and a baby in the other, walk upstairs with ease and grace, while, with flowing robes, I pulled myself up with difficulty, lamp and baby out of the question, readily convinced me that there was sore need of reform in woman’s dress, and I promptly donned a similar attire.⁶

Amelia Bloomer, also inspired by the costume, was editor at the time of a temperance journal, *The Lily*, and showed the trousered outfit in an article on dress reform; circulation rose and

⁵ Elliott, “New and Not so ‘New Women’ on the London Stage,” *Victorian Studies*, 39.

⁶ Margaret Farrand Thorp, *Female Persuasion: Six Strong-Minded Women* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), 122.

the costume took on her name.⁷ Bloomer documented the interest in the costume, stating that “ letters came pouring in from women all over the country making inquiries about the dress and asking for patterns – showing how ready and anxious women were to throw off the burden of long, heavy skirts.⁸ Curiously Mrs. King was met with the same reaction when she visited Canada almost thirty years later, prompting the Toronto *Globe* reporter to note:

that a great many women find serious interest in the subject of dress reform . . . , sixteen widows, nine spinsters, . . . eleven “mothers of families,” and not less than a score of ladies whom I suppose to be unmarried, but very marriageable, have implored [the reporter] for detailed information concerning the rational dress. They generally want . . . descriptions and patterns of the garments brought to the fore by Mrs. King and her associates.⁹

Canadian women, more notably Montreal women, have been found to be traditionally fashion-conscious, due to their close proximity to New York throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The idea that conventionally fashion-conscious women would adopt the costume attests to its acceptance in the 1880s, and reports in Canadian newspapers from 1851 affirm the public’s curiosity with the costume promoted by Bloomer, and it could be argued, affirm that the costume was not outrageously out-of-style or anti-fashion.

⁷ Robert E. Reigel, *American Feminists* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1963), 52.

⁸ Dexter C. Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amelis Bloomer* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975; reprint of Arena Publishing, Boston, 1895), 68.

⁹ “Rational Dress,” *The Globe* (Toronto), 13 September 1884, p. 7.

¹⁰ Jacqueline Ross, “Costume at the McCord,” *Apparel Studies Association of Canada Newsletter* (Spring 1983): 3.

The “Bloomer,” consisted of a shortened skirt of various lengths over trousers, often gathered around the ankle, and quite innocuous as “trousers” for modern eyes (Figure 1), nevertheless it was introduced at a time when the dictates of fashion proscribed a costume of several layers of petticoats to be worn under a dress, to create a very voluminous skirted look (Figure 22), thereby making the shortened skirt radical in comparison. The Seneca Falls women demanded reform clothing that would allow for ease of movement for their duties and chores within the home and city. They complained of the unhygienic fashionable dress which picked up mud and dirt in the city streets, of the dropped-shoulder styles of the mid-1800s which restricted women from raising their arms, and of the multiple layers of heavy petticoats which often tangled between their legs, restricting their free and natural movement.¹¹ Similarly, when trousers for men were first introduced in the early 1800s it was due to complaints of comfort as well, as high living did not bode well with the tight-fitting breeches in use at the time. Hence the invention of the wider form of garment which soon became popular, however some segments of the population regarded the new style with contempt, and

when Almack's was at its height as a fashionable resort the great Duke of Wellington himself was once refused admission because he presented himself in trousers instead of the (for that time) orthodox nether garments.¹²

¹¹ Riegel, *American Feminists*, 51.

¹² “The Centenary of Trousers,” *Toronto Saturday Night*, 12 July 1902, p. 6.

Comfort was not the only factor however. Later Stanton would state (in 1857) that:

because of the clothing a woman wears, men must help her upstairs and down, in the carriage and out, on the horse, up the hills, over the ditch and fence, and thus teach her the poetry of dependence.¹³

This belief that independence could be realized through clothing revealed the underlying emancipatory agenda of the New York women. It was hoped that women's liberation would be accelerated by the physical freedom delivered by the trousered costume.¹⁴ This foreshadowed the later link made with emancipation and clothing by the Boston dress reformers in the 1880s, who believed social progress was not possible until clothing was pared down.¹⁵ However, because the issue of emancipation, a male prerogative, was associated with women who were promoting trousers, it was assumed that the design of their particular reform costume must have been influenced by men's garments.

As Gayle Fischer notes however, a persistent misconception about many reform dress movements deriving their influences from male clothing continues into the twentieth century; reform dress was considered "a travesty of male attire."¹⁶ But in fact many influences have

¹³ Cited by Lisa Tickner, 1976, in Marsha Rowe ed., *Spare Rib Reader* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), 39; quoted in Cheri Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, *Amazons Bluestockings and Crones* (London: Pandora Press, 1992), 153.

¹⁴ Riegel, *American Feminists*, 50.

¹⁵ Marianne Carlano, "Anti-Fashion in Boston: Rational, Hygienic, and Artistic Dress During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Textile & Text* 13/3 (1991): 35.

¹⁶ Fischer, "Designing Freedom in the Mid-nineteenth-century United States," *Feminist Studies*, 113.

been associated with trousers for women which predated the Bloomer, including the free-love community in Oneida, New York,¹⁷ the costume for “water cure” institutions (equivalent to modern-day spas) may have also influenced its design¹⁸, as well as French women’s military costumes (Figure 2).¹⁹

But possibly the most obvious influence can be found in Turkish costumes. Fischer notes the 1830s and 1840s saw the expanding import market bringing in Eastern goods such as shawls and draped gowns, home furnishings, and decorations. Significantly, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* for July 1851 included “Turkish” costumes amongst its fashion pages; this familiarity with Middle Eastern clothing and goods is one possible explanation for the women’s rights reformers to choose the short dress and “Turkish trowsers” as alternative clothing.²⁰

Regardless of its true inspiration, these two *perceived* influences – male costume and Turkish costume – are essential to the study of this movement. The male costume influence inspired a specific backlash as trousers were generally associated with men in the Western

¹⁷ Kate Luck, “Trousers: feminism in nineteenth-century America,” in *The Gendered Object*, ed. Pat Kirkham (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press; New York: 1996), 141-152. In 1848, the women of the Oneida Community adopted the Turkish dress as a working costume at first, and continued to wear it on a daily basis: see Thorp, *Female Persuasion: Six Strong-Minded Women*, 122 and Footnote 1 in the Foreword of this thesis.

¹⁸ Thorp, *Female Persuasion: Six Strong-Minded Women*, 121.

¹⁹ Charles Neilson Gattey. *Amelia Bloomer* (London: Femina Books, 1967), 31. I would like to thank Peter Cormack for advising me on the similarity with the French cantinière costume.

²⁰ Fischer, “Designing Freedom in the Mid-nineteenth-century United States,” *Feminist Studies*, 114, 128.

Hemisphere,²¹ and the Turkish influence is discussed in Chapter 3, where its relationship to art and its environment are studied.

First, reacting to the perceived appropriation of male attire, the widely circulated British satirical journal *Punch*, arguably one of the best measures of attitudes on political and social issues, subjected its readers to a barrage of negative images of “women wearing the pants” as in *Bloomerism — An American Custom* (Figure 3), which showed mannish trousered women smoking in public. By choosing to depict women smoking, a habit usually reserved for men, the implication that women who wore trousers sought to arrogate the privileges of men was strengthened. *Punch* often paired the trousered dress with women smoking, as in *A Bill for the Bloomer Costume* (Figure 4), wherein items deemed necessary for purchase to complete the outfit included a cigar case and cigars. In *Something More Apropos of Bloomerism* (Figure 5), trousered women frequent what appears to be a local shop, but they seemingly loiter at the counter, smoking, instead of going about their shopping duties.

As earlier stated, discourse around this subject often referred to its emancipatory agenda throughout the nineteenth century: “Dress Reform is fundamental, and must advance before other movements prosper,” wrote one reader in 1888 to the *Rational Dress Society's Gazette*.²² It was remarked that reform in dress would result in many new occupations and

²¹ Documentation exists of working-class women performing manual labour in Britain while wearing trousers (out of necessity no doubt). Although few such jobs were open to women, in the 1800s some women did work in the mines. They received sympathetic media coverage, possibly because of their financial and social status. See for example Michael Hiley, *Victorian Working Women: Portraits from Life* (Boston, Massachusetts: David R. Godine, 1979); Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985); and Friedreich Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* (London: Penguin Books, 1987. First published in Germany, 1845).

²² “An American Opinion on Dress Reform,” *The Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, no. 2 (July 1888): 8.

trades open to women.²³ Amelia Bloomer herself admitted the trousered dress and woman's rights were inseparable images, due to the New York suffragists push for votes for women.²⁴

Stanton later stated,

Had I counted on the cost of the short dress, I would never had have put it on; on, however, I'll never take it off, for now it involves a principle of freedom.²⁵

Punch did not miss the opportunity to parody the connection with emancipation to dress in *Woman's Emancipation* (Figure 6) which depicts a gathering of bloomed women, again smoking and lingering in the streets. A stocky dog surveys the area, while an androgynous couple in the background stroll arm-in-arm, and a trousered woman pointlessly lifts her "dual garnitures" as she steps onto the muddy road. The accompanying text is by an "American female — for I do not like the term Lady" who asserts a woman's right to the male garb.²⁶ Issues of role-reversals are present in this and the dozens of other images produced in *Punch*, reinforcing Bridget Elliot's point that the press created degrading stereotypes to give the illusion the movement had no adherents, thus many of the illustrations include elements of scornfulness on the part of conventionally-dressed women and men to further clarify the general population's disapproval. *One of the Delightful Results of Bloomerism—the Ladies will Pop the Question* (Figure 7) in which an effeminate man meekly sits by while a Bloomer proposes to him — and tells his suitor to ask his mother for permission to have his hand, a

²³ "Dangers of Women's Dress," *The Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, no. 1 (April 1888): 2.

²⁴ Bloomer, *Life and Writings*, 70.

²⁵ Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York, 1922), 30; quoted in Reigel, *American Feminists*, 54.

²⁶ "Woman's Emancipation," *Punch* XXI (1851): 3.

ritual usually handled by the father. *A Poser for a Bloomer* (Figure 8) addresses the same issue of role-reversals, but the illustrator has chosen to handle it in quite a different manner: the Bloomer depicted is feminine and is shown in a bashful, almost submissive pose, as if forced by the costume to perform something she would not normally do under normal conditions. This could be read as another tactic used by the press to invalidate the movement, by showing non-caricaturized women forced into performing duties they could not endure. Having to fulfill tasks that made the trouser-wearer uncomfortable was just the beginning – *Punch* soon outlined more serious obligations for which the Bloomer would soon find herself responsible:

It is said that three females - wife and daughters of an innocent sea-captain now on blue water - have appeared in the public promenade of Belfast in full bloomer costume. *Punch* has received various intimations of an attempt in certain quarters of England at full blooming [and] has to propound an instant remedy. *If women assume the dress of men, let them undertake men's duties: hence, every bloomer shall be liable to be drawn for the militia, without benefit of substitute.* [emphasis mine]²⁷

The article emphasizes an underlying ideology, in which the woman is seen as “privileged” and should show her gratitude by not straying or questioning fundamental tenets concerning men and women; doing so could result in serious consequences such having to die for their country, or suffering hardships in the militia, a metaphor for power and dominance. The

²⁷ “A Check to Blooming,” *Punch* XXI (1851): 103.

underlying message for the readers, was women in the trousered costume would be *expected* to be more assertive and masculine.

Effeminate men are depicted in *Mary Protecting the Weaker Sex* (Figure 9) in front of a conventionally-dressed woman smoking, implying that an environment saturated with emancipated women would eventually change all women, not just those seeking sartorial freedom. In *Naturally the Female Thinks Shopping Very Foolish and Tiresome* (Figure 10), women's preoccupation with fashion is cleverly criticized through the use of role-reversals. Not only images, but written texts abound delineating the fashion controversy during this period. *Punch's* first piece of writing on the new trend from America picked up on the issue of women wanting to be men by simply wearing their clothing:

A Mrs. Bloomer, editress of the *Lily*, as an advance from the weakness of her sex, has--according to the *New York Post*--adopted "the short dress and trousers." So far so good. *When does the lady begin to shave?* [emphasis mine] ²⁸

The last line implies trousers determined the sexuality of the wearer, and would so influence her mental constitution as to change her physiology to that of the opposite sex, evidenced in the ability to grow facial hair. So confused by the double standard displayed by a country who allowed men to wear kilts, Amelia Bloomer wrote to the London *Daily News* in October of 1851:

²⁸ "A Bloomer," *Punch* XX (1851): 20.

Sir – may I be allowed to ask, in your columns, why the British public is so horrified at the idea of women dressing in trowsers, seeing that they have for many years tolerated a number of men (from the north of the Tweed) in wearing petticoats – and shockingly short petticoats too? – Amelia Bloomer²⁹

Feminine interest in clothing associated exclusively with men challenged gender ideology. As Judith Walkowitz points out, trouser-wearing meant a trespassing into male prerogatives.³⁰ When *Punch* ran a satirical review of the Rational Dress Association's show in Piccadilly in 1883 (the same show which travelled to Canada a year later), readers were reminded: "Each artful costumer / revives Mrs. Bloomer, / And often produces an army of guys."³¹

Punch was reinforcing the ongoing taboo against the sameness of men and women, a taboo, explains Gayle Rubin that

separates the sexes into two mutually exclusive categories, a taboo which exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby creates gender.³²

²⁹ "Audi Alterem Partem," *The (London) Daily News*, 8 October 1851, p. 4.

³⁰ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 62.

³¹ "The Rational Dress Show," *Punch* 84 (1883): 254.

³² Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the *Political Economy* of Sex," in *Toward and Anthology of Women*, ed. by Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 178.

Through its association with articles belonging exclusively to one sex or the other, costume was an unmistakable way in which gender could be fashioned: dresses constructed women, trousers constructed men. The Bible's "Divine Dress Code" clearly states this fundamental principle:

A woman shall not wear an article proper to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's dress; for anyone who does such things is an abomination to the LORD, your God.³³

The appeal for the acceptance of trousered costumes for women occurred at a time when polite society did not recognize that women even *had* legs; they were limbs "still forbidden to expose absolutely," as well, the word trousers itself was usually avoided and replaced by *unmentionables, continuations, and un-talk-aboutables!*³⁴ Thus cartoons such as *Latest from America – The Free and Enlightened Continuations* (Figure 11), were easily understood to mean trousers by the general public.³⁵ Women appeared to conspire with fashion to deny this existence of legs, hiding them under voluminous petticoats and crinolines which appeared on the fashion scene concurrently with bloomers.³⁶ Curiously, the crinoline promised to deliver

³³ Deuteronomy, 22:5. taken from *The New American Bible* (Kansas: Catholic Bible Publishers, 1970). In response to this common argument by the clergy, Amelia Bloomer responded that an even older authority, Genesis, did not indicate that Adam's figleaf contained a bifurcation while Eve's did not; Margaret F. Thorp, *Female Persuasion* (New Haven, CT: 1949); quoted in Dexter C. Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amel'a Bloomer* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975; reprint of Arena Publishing, Boston, 1895), xii. See also Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), 28.

³⁴"Costume and its Morals," 1867, in Hiley, *Victorian Working Women*, 39.

³⁵ A column "Latest From America" appeared regularly in the *London Times*, discussing imports from overseas.

³⁶ Hiley, *Victorian Working Women*, 39.

the physical liberation similar to the trousered dress by eliminating the need for multiple layers of petticoats underneath skirts, making walking easier by keeping the skirts away from the legs.³⁷ But in actuality, women's movement were further limited by the crinoline as it prevented access into certain areas due to the enormous silhouette that could now be achieved. For example, several instances of women working in crinolines confirm its limiting nature: in a notice posted in a thread factory in 1860, the management not wishing to interfere with the fashion of its comely young women,

dressed neat and tidy whatever it may be, so long as their dress does not interfere with their work, or with the work of those near them in our employ. The present ugly fashion of HOOPS, or CRINOLINE, as it is called, is however, quite unfitted for the work of our Factories . . . as it greatly impedes . . . free passage . . . and is inconvenient to all.³⁸

Similarly, in 1884 around the time Mrs. King was promoting her exhibition of reform clothing, the plight of Canadian women who worked in factories where fast-moving machinery was a constant menace to lives and limbs due to the flowing draperies of the present style of dress, was addressed. It was thought that "although the general adoption of blouse and trousers by women would be a questionable improvement upon the present style of petticoats," factory girls would benefit from adopting the costume as a work uniform.³⁹

³⁷ See Alison Settle, *English Fashion* (London: Collins, 1948); and Marion Lochlead, *Young Victorians* (London: John Murray, c1959).

³⁸ Notice posted in Courtauld's Mills in 1860. In Jane Tozer, and Sarah Levitt, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes 1770-1870* (Carno, Powys, Wales: Laura Ashley, 1983), 134.

³⁹ "For and About Women," *The Globe* (Toronto), 30 August 1884, p. 5.

Reform, it seemed, was advocated when it improved production lines or for wearing in non-public situations.

Novelist R. S. Surtees (1803-64) addressed the hazards of ‘the cage’ by writing one of his characters was nearly burned to death by the “odious, hideous, dangerous” crinoline, after standing too close to the hearth.⁴⁰ More evidence that Surtees’ writings reflected the current sartorial situation in society can be found in one of his works titled, *Handley Cross*, an eight-hundred page tale. Originally written in 1843, it was re-issued in 1854, with a new character – a Bloomer – captured in a colour lithograph by John Leech (Figure 12), attesting to the visibility of the trousered dress.⁴¹

The restriction against sameness was rectified by clothing it seems, as clothing could easily suppress similarities through its manipulation of silhouettes. The extreme exaggeration in difference was visually captured in Charles Vernier’s *Une tournure à faire tourner toutes les têtes!* (Figure 13). Vernier also published a series of caricatures called *Crinolinomanie* in France in 1856, along with several other artists (such as Felix Nadar and Honoré Daumier) ridiculing the crinoline, comparing it to hot-air balloons and laying the blame for traffic jams on it. Others stated that the overinflated crinoline was a metaphor for the overinflated glory

⁴⁰ Norma Gash, *Robert Surtees and Early Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 329; The *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* of 1867 reported 3000 women per year burned to death and another 20 000 were injured from the inflammable ‘cages’; quoted in Helene E. Roberts, “The Equisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman,” *Signs* 2/3 (Spring, 1977): 557.

⁴¹ The “highly respectable” Constantia Mendlove ends up marrying her Assistant Drainage Commissioner in full wedding Bloomer, with six Bloomer bridesmaids. See Chapter LXII “William the Conqueror; or, The A.D.C.,” in Robert Surtees, *Handley Cross* (London: Methuen & Co., 1903; reprint of Bradbury and Evans, 1854), 618-634.

of the French Second Empire (1852-70) and the crinoline's promoter, Empress Eugénie, wife of France's Napoleon III.⁴²

Ultimately, and of importance to this study, what the crinoline did was to make quite obvious the difference (in silhouettes) between men and women. And as the next chapter outlines, this was essential to understanding the controversy over trousers for women.

⁴² Therese Dolan, "The Empress's New Clothes: Fashion and Politics in Second Empire France," *Woman's Art Journal* (Spring/Summer 1994): 23.

CHAPTER 2: Spectacle and Sexual Difference

It is clothing that allows communication to occur between subjects, that allows one to speak to the other as a discrete being (signified as 'different' through dress). Without clothing both bodies would appear 'the same'; clothing marks difference in the body image.¹

-Hegel, 1944



From the late eighteenth century onwards, there has been a shift or “revisualization” of sexual difference, explicitly realized through clothing.² In the mid-nineteenth century around the time of the trousered movement, this shift resulted with equating woman as spectacle and man with vision and was illustrated in many discourses, such as painting, photography, and psychoanalysis. In *The Psychology of Clothes*, J. C. Flugel aptly illustrates this transformation of woman into spectacle and man into viewer, starting with late eighteenth-century fashion, which inaugurated a major change in clothing customs³. Flugel describes this change as the “Great Masculine Renunciation” which emphasized the despecularization of the male subject, and consequently, notes Kaja Silverman, upon the hyperspecularization of the female subject. Using psychoanalytic theory to study sexual difference is helpful in understanding spectatorship (looking and being looked

¹ Hegel, *Esthetique*, Vol. III, 1st part (Paris: Aubin, 1944), 147; cited in Barthes, *The Fashion System*, 258.

² Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. (Bloomington / Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 24.

³ John Carl Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971. Reprint from 1930).

at),⁴ and explains the relationship between the unconscious and outer appearances.⁵ Reading sexual difference using psychoanalysis places it in the unconscious and language, and avoids any analysis with nature and the simplistic binary oppositions so often used to analyze male and female attire.⁶

Male clothing, after evolving for centuries in the direction of richness and elegance underwent a kind of visual “purification” from which its wearers emerged “chastened and subdued.” From the late eighteenth-century onwards, Flugel reveals how men discarded their claim to all the elaborate and vibrant forms of ornamentation in dress, “leaving these entirely to the use of woman, and thereby making their own tailoring the most austere and ascetic of arts.”⁷

With the gradual abandonment of ornamentation, Flugel claims, came the abandonment of men’s right to be considered beautiful. Subsequently men’s aim gravitated towards being only “useful” and as far as clothes were concerned, he should only aim to be “correctly” attired.⁸ But Flugel’s Great Masculine Renunciation involved more than a renunciation of male finery: it also meant the collapse of a whole system of social and class distinctions which differentiated and separated men. In other words, male clothing underwent a sort of democratization: it became simple and more uniform, it no longer was a sign of rank and

⁴ Gen Doy, *Seeing and Consouiseness. Women, Class and Representation* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 7.

⁵ Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, “Semiotics and Art History,” *Art Bulletin* (June 1991): 196.

⁶ Lisa Tickner, “Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference,” *Genders* 3 (Fall 1988): 111.

⁷ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*

privilege, but instead came to signify a unity amongst men. This was especially true during the highly ostentatious Second Empire period (1852-70), where the exaggerated silhouette created by the crinoline represented the exaggeration of the period (Figure 13), and the simple (almost unchanged) male black coat represented equality.⁹ Male clothing also began to increasingly signify allegiance to the larger social order, and man's privileged position within that order.¹⁰ Later in the century, as reported in the *Toronto Saturday Night*, London tailors attempted to solve the problem which dogged their fashionable clients for years — how to distinguish between a guest and a waiter. Their answer was to revive an earlier circa 1800 fashion of frilly shirts and decorative waistcoats. However sartorial authorities retorted:

The modern English gentlemen fights shy, and properly so, of anything approaching display in his evening clothes The ornamental waistcoat has more chance in America than England.¹¹

The issue of class underlying this attempt to change fashion was still not strong enough to defy the Great Male Renunciation, and inspiring a powerful “boys club” mentality. Also of note in this article, is the attitude toward fashion and American tastes, which is discussed later in the next chapter.

⁹ Therese Dolan, “The Empress’s New Clothes: Fashion and Politics in Second Empire France.” *Woman’s Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1994): 22.

¹⁰ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 25.

¹¹ “Will ‘Pinking’ and the Frilled Shirt Return?” *Toronto Saturday Night*, 5 January 1900, p. 6.

Women were not allowed in this “club” of uniformity and practicality — if they attempted to enter into the male social order (and what better sign than to adopt their uniform — their trousers), they were ostracized. In *Bloomerism- An American Custom* (Figure 3), the conventionally dressed women look disdainfully at the trousered women. There is no social unity between these two groups of women, although they could be from the same social and economic class. Children along the way mock, stare, hurl insults, or look in astonishment at the strange passersby. Curiously, there is but one male figure off in the distance, composed yet looking with controlled concern. Self-control on the part of Modern Man is symbolized in his adherence to the strict guidelines concerning his clothing.

The comparatively “fixed” system of his clothing is actually a signifier, or an outward sign, of the strict adherence to the social code.¹² If we apply this same theory to women’s clothing, trousers become an outward sign of *rejection* of the social code, or rejection of a fixed role of femininity. The images that reinforce this notion include caricatures of women smoking as seen previously, and also includes those that depict the trousered women taking on men’s social and political roles. For example in *Bloomersim in a Ball-Room* (Figure 15), the women ask the men to dance; in *Bloomerism!* (Figure 16), the “strong-minded female” chastises her husband for burying his nose in a novel and relinquishing his piano playing; and in *The Parliamentary Female* (Figure 17), the man of the house is left to care for the household while his wife occupies herself with useless yet (to her) meaningful paperwork. So as to convince the viewer of her trouser tendencies, the children all wear the Bloomer costume.

¹² Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 25.

Although over the past two hundred years male clothing has aspired increasingly to ideological rectitude, and although it has consequently detached itself more and more from the male body, by de-emphasizing male traits (eliminating accessories such as codpieces and large puffy shoulders), it nonetheless continues to construct male sexuality, by way of a seeming contradiction: modern male sexuality seems to be defined less by the body than by the *negation* of the body. Hence, over the past two centuries, the male subject has gradually separated himself from the visible which thereby aligns him to the symbolic within which power, knowledge, and privilege have become increasingly “dispersed and dematerial.”¹³ Access to symbolic power, knowledge, and privilege is only achieved however by ideal male representation.¹⁴ Note the similarity in silhouettes between male and female costumes of the seventeenth century in Figure 14, and the change in silhouette by the nineteenth century in Figure 13.

The male subject’s dissociation from the visible must therefore be contrasted with the female subject’s dissociation with the *invisible*; each exist by contrasting one another. In other words, the male’s visible signification (manifested through power, knowledge and privilege) would contradict himself, visually, through his newly austere clothing. This meant woman had to maintain the same contrast, by keeping her “lack” (of power, knowledge and privilege) by taking on specularity. She was soon then associated with narcissism and exhibitionism.¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁵ Tickner, “Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference,” 111.

Male subjectivity, notes Silverman, is most fully realized and idealized when it is least visible, whereas female subjectivity is most fully achieved, “or more appropriately deidealized,” when it is most visible.¹⁶ The paradox here is that:

man, with his “strikingly visible” organ, is defined primarily in terms of abstract and immaterial qualities such as potency, knowledge, and power; whereas woman, whose genitals do not appeal to the gaze, becomes synonymous with corporeality and specularity.¹⁷

When trousers were worn by working-class women (i.e. those performing manual labour) in Britain, the same issues of sex differentiation arose. One of the few manual labour jobs open to women in the 1800s was mining and several sources have documented these women as wearing trousers.¹⁸ Engels wrote at length in the 1840s on the appalling conditions under which these women worked: “[They] have to transport coal crawl(ing) upon their hands and knees, fastened to the tub by a harness and chain (which frequently passes between the legs).”¹⁹ Under such conditions, it was obvious that women could not wear skirts: the fact that these women were working alongside men, and dressed as men, however, was at issue. Engels questioned their morality, feeling it was “destroyed by their work itself.” He imagined

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See for example Michael Hiley, *Victorian Working Women: Portraits from Life* (Boston, Massachusetts: David R. Godine, 1979); and Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985).

¹⁹ Engels, *Working Class*, 253.

women in all sorts of compromising positions in those “dark, lonely mines,” noting the “disproportionately large . . . number of illegitimate children.”²⁰

Consistently, the suitability of this labour came under scrutiny some time later, when a government inquiry of the 1870s stated that

these females employed with the men, *hardly distinguishable from them in their dress . . .* are exposed to the deterioration of character arising from the loss of self-respect which can hardly fail to follow from their unfeminine occupation. [emphasis mine]²¹

The peculiarity of dress was one of the leading features of the degrading character of the work. Gender differentiation had been erased; as one contemporary (male) miner in 1866 noted, “it drowns all sense of decency betwixt men and women, they resemble one another so much.”²² These working-class women had their characters scrutinized by their male co-workers, and society in general through a public inquiry.²³ The common link between working-class and middle-class trousered women is the notion of the lack of sexual difference caused by clothing, and whereas the former were pitied, the latter were ridiculed in the press. Still, the fact that “it gained some devotees among middle-class women bent on freeing

²⁰ Engels, *Working Class*, 255.

²¹ *Children's Employment Commission (1862), Third Report* (published 1864), xxvi; quoted in Hiley, *Working Women*, 52.

²² Evidence given to the Select Committee on Mines in 1866 by Peter Dickinson, a miner from Aspull near Wigan; quoted in Hiley, *Working Women*, 48.

²³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 62.

themselves from the constraints of their own sex,”²⁴ signified a movement away from the traditional limitations imposed upon women by *fashion*; women in trousers threatened society for they contradicted the equations of sexual difference, and woman as site of visual pleasure.

Along with visual differences achieved through clothing, it has long been touted that men and women were created with essential differences to occupy different spheres. “Any woman who was brave enough to wear trousers in mid nineteenth-century America posed a threat to this symbolic order and was seen to be acting ‘out of her sphere’.”²⁵ Using the division of the public and private spheres concept (as a way of structuring women’s lives and a key to understanding women’s oppression) can be very misleading however, when studying this particular reform movement.²⁶ Elizabeth Wilson argues that the

assumption of a universal division between domestic and public spheres simply reproduced the functionalism and evolutionism of the Victorians and their own ideology of woman’s place.²⁷

Already the women wearing the trousered reform costume show that they were very much in the public sphere, travelling, working, consuming, etc. They were reported in the Canadian

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁵ Kate Luck, “Trousers: Feminism in Nineteenth-century America,” in *The Gendered Object*, 141-152.

²⁶ Elizabeth Wilson, with Angel Weir. *Hidden Agendas: Theory, Politics, and Experience in the Women’s Movement* (London and New York: Tavistock, 1986), 8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

and American newspapers as well, further proving their public persona. Immuring middle-class women into the domestic life alone, simplifies the hostile reaction toward women in public. After all, many of the images resulting from the reaction to the reform movement, such as *Bloomersim - An American Custom*, show trousered *as well as* fashionable women on the streets together (yet only the Bloomers are being ridiculed). If the notion of women ‘outside her proper sphere’ was truly an anathema, all the women in the image would be lampooned. What is therefore puzzling in the study of this period, is that if the underlying premise of the costume was so that women could better perform their *household* duties, presumably it should have been well-received. In fact, many journals and monographs reported on the “vicious, fashion-sanctioned, artificially-caused deformit[ies]” from the steel, whalebone, stiffening, wadding, and tight-lacing commonly practiced to achieve the correct silhouette of fashion.²⁸ Therefore it is very curious why this particular movement was countered with the emergence of caricatures depicting “manly, strong-minded” women “wearing the pants,” yet at the same time newspapers reported the benefits of the costume to its readers. Commenting on the sighting of “a young lady clad in full Bloomer costume” during the Great Exhibition, the reporter noted:

We miss the cigar with which the *Punch* artist has completed the costume . . . [but] it must be admitted the costume . . . on a svelte and youthful figure . . . is not unbecoming, and has the recommendation of obvious convenience

²⁸ *Eliza Cook's Journal* (October 1850): 146.

and comfort to the wearer, . . . enabling her to get rid of the whalebone abomination so destructive to health and comeliness.²⁹

Another article reporting on the fashions in New York some months before the Bloomers reached England, commented on the issue of the “short dress and trousers,” in Seneca Falls, noting that although there was some objection on women’s part, “many have adopted the dress.”³⁰

Psychoanalytical theories examine the conventions of female subjectivity and can explain why, by flouting those conventions, women in trousers were considered aberrant. It can also be used to analyze the reaction by the (male-dominated) press and their use of caricatures and satirical articles claiming women wished to be men when they wore trousers. A conclusion seems definitive that women could not wear the same clothing as men because trousers denied sexual difference, so important to the male/female dichotomy. The emergence of caricatures in *Punch*, conformed in the three ways mentioned earlier by the creation of degrading stereotypes to deter women from joining the movement and stigmatize those involved; the movement was denied validity by declaring it had no adherents (this was manifested through the denial by official literature such as fashion plates); and cartoonish characters established doubts about the existence of bloomed women. Because of this incessant ridiculing many costume history books conclude, when discussing trousers, that *Punch* was immensely influential in the demise of the Bloomer.

²⁹ “The Great Exhibition,” *The Daily News* (London), 27 September 1851, p. 5.

³⁰ “A Lady ‘Resolved to be Free’ and Easy,” *The Times* (London), 13 May 1851, p. 8.

However, an important point so often overlooked, is that *Punch* lampooned everyone – from trousered women, to fashionable men, to politicians – for that was the nature of the magazine; even women who wore approved fashionable dresses were not exempt from ridicule.³¹ For example in “An Express Train for Ladies,” *Punch* mocked the fashion for long dresses sweeping up everything in their path and keeping the pavements tidy. Women were jokingly accused of stealing jobs away from the London street-cleaners.³² *Punch*’s gibes at women in fashionable long skirts did not stop the skirts from reaching even more exaggerated outlines either when France’s Empress Eugénie popularized the crinoline, and opened up a whole new avenue for *Punch* to satirize (Figure 18).

Punch’s derision had no effect on the silhouettes of dresses ballooning to exaggerated proportions, it should therefore follow that it would have no effect on trousered women from continuing to push their costume, especially if there was a good amount of positive reactions, as has been shown. The point here is that *Punch* ridiculed things that happened; they would not be ridiculing women in trousers if women were not actually wearing trousers as it would follow that the subjects chosen to be satirized were those with which its readers could identify and understand.

Therefore any study based solely on *Punch*’s reaction to the movement would result in a simplistic and false history. Studying the environment in which the American women promoted their costume, and where Canadian newspapers picked up on its acceptance in Britain, where “ladies rigged out in it are daily seen among the visitors to the Crystal

³¹ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, 209; see also Alison Adburgham, *A Punch History of Manners and Modes* (London: Hutchison, 1961).

³² “An Express Train for Ladies,” *Punch* XXI (1851): 145.

Place,” results in a more complete history of the costume’s “lifespan.”³³ Also of note, is that in the culture at large, according to Judith Walkowitz, trouser-wearing was a metaphor for female disorder,³⁴ so what better way to promote them and diffuse its revolutionary connotations than at the most ordered Exhibition of the century — The Great Exhibition of Industries of All Nations of 1851 in London, England.

³³ “Bloomerism in England.” *The Globe* (Toronto), 30 October 1851, p. 1.

³⁴ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 62.

CHAPTER 3: Bloomers Seen Daily at the Crystal Palace

Personal attire, or dress, has always been held in high estimation in all countries, and among all class of people. From the rude savage to the polished denizen of the modern drawing-room, all own its influence, and all pay obedience to its laws.¹

— *Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace*. 1853.



R epresenting human reality and history “by the ordered display of selected artefacts” was a common practice in nineteenth-century museums, whose collections implicitly expressed this belief that society could be easily and completely portrayed within a museum setting.² *The Great Exhibition of the Industries of All Nations of*

1851, housed in an exhibition complex dubbed the “Crystal Palace” in Hyde Park, London, substantiates modern historians’ dissatisfaction with this type of ordering of objects, for indeed the Exhibition purported to not only present an ordered account of the industries “gathered from every civilized corner of the earth,” but the official literature of the Exhibition claimed that visitors and exhibitors had complete “confidence and reliance on the law and order of Great Britain,” with the result that no unusual events took place: “Thousands of people . . . passed daily through the noble edifice, not only without accident or mischief, but

¹ “Chapter IV: Furs and Feathers,” in *Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace* Volume II, ed. J. G. Strutt (London: The London Printing and Publishing Company, 1853), 20.

² Tony Bennett, “Museums and ‘The People’,” in *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), 126.

positively without inconvenience to themselves.”³ Often, contentious or inexplicable events have a tendency to be severed from actual narratives, resulting in disjointed and incomplete histories being documented “for the nostalgic remembrances of sentimentalized pasts.”⁴ The Great Exhibition of 1851 can be seen as one of these sites displaying patterns of exclusions, wherein further investigation reveals a more accurate understanding of the society it professed to represent. The official literature of the Exhibition and its subsequent historiography – essentially “nostalgic remembrances” – can in fact be contradicted by contemporaneous newspaper reports and journal articles, such as the Toronto *Globe* article of 1851 mentioned earlier, which described trousered women circulating *daily* amongst the crowd of the people visiting the Great Exhibition – indeed a contentious event.⁵

A woman wearing trousers at this time in the nineteenth century was truly revolutionary, yet official literature on the Great Exhibition does not deal with this event in any capacity and it has therefore passed largely unnoticed in many histories on costume and women’s movements, while reports of bloomed women appearing at the Crystal Palace exhibition are substantiated by several London newspaper reports. One article in particular details a lecture by an (unnamed) American woman dressed in the trousered costume, who laid out the reasons which “prompted the women of America to take a step which threatened to turn the world

³ “Chapter XIV: Gleanings and Reminiscences,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace* Volume II, 94.

⁴ Tony Bennett, “Museums and ‘The People’,” in *The Birth of the Museum*, 110, 112.

⁵ “Bloomerism in England.” *The Globe* (Toronto), 30 October 1851, p. 1.

upside down.”⁶ In her address to the “densely filled” public meeting at the Royal Soho Theatre on 6 October 1851, the tyrant known to the world as FASHION was brought up on three charges:

1st— That nature had been violated by its rules, and life endangered; 2nd— That in consequence of its requirements a vast amount of money had been expended which might have been devoted to higher and holier purposes; and 3rd— That by encumbering women it incapacitated them from rendering services to society worthy of their high destiny.⁷

The lecturer noted that bloomers were introduced “not at an inappropriate time, [as the British organizers of the Great Exhibition] publicly asked at this time, for suggestions for improvement from every civilised nation of the world.”⁸ Surprisingly, the Americans’ strategy to introduce this costume at the time of the Great Exhibition appeared to work. As the original report in the (London) *Daily News* announced, the reasons for the increase in the positive response by the public for the Bloomer costume were due to the “wet days and dirty crossings [which favoured] any curtailment of those flowing draperies which latterly have been so popular with the ladies.”⁹ Commenting on the bad weather surrounding the closing days of the popular Exhibition, another report noted that had Mrs. Dexter [Amelia Bloomer] stood in the middle of the road and delivered “a lecture on the convenience of the Bloomer

⁶ “The Bloomer Demonstration,” *The Daily News* (London), 7 October 1851, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ “The Great Exhibition,” *The Daily News* (London), 4 October 1851, p. 5.

costume, she would have been sure to obtain numerous disciples.”¹⁰ Even Joseph Paxton himself, the designer of the Crystal Palace, commented on the unhygienic aspects of current female fashions in a speech to the foreign Commissioners at Richmond, in which he remarked on the unexpected cleanliness of the Crystal Palace floor, due to the hems of women’s “rich silk dresses” sweeping up the dirt.¹¹

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, it was shown that clothes construct gender and emphasize sexual difference and ultimately clothing itself had come to unmistakably signify this difference. In the cartoons and articles published at this time, women wearing trousers were shown to assume masculine qualities intimating they wished also to assume masculine prerogatives. The most significant concept for comparison within the context of the Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition is the notion of spectacle – of women assuming the role of the male voyeur by the despecularization of their clothing and thus taking on the male privilege of *looking*.

In view of the images and writings produced, it is clear that for the mid-nineteenth-century viewer, woman’s role did *not* include her taking on male roles which led to her becoming the site of displeasure and controversy, and clothing was a highly visible (and readable) sign of a woman’s degree of conformity to that prescribed role. Whereas trousers for men signified a process of despecularization, in that male attire increasingly became more

¹⁰ “The Great Exhibition,” *The Daily News* (London), 2 October 1851, p. 5. Amelia married Dexter Bloomer, and she is often referred to as Mrs. Dexter. Further evidence of the connection to the name Dexter can be found in *Punch* Vol. XXI (1851): p. 158: “The names of Mr. and Mrs. Dexter are associated with the Bloomer costume. Thus we have DEXTER and DEXTRA, masculine and feminine; but as the dress [is] indifferent to either gender . . . the wearer ought surely to be DEXTRUM.”

¹¹ “The British Broom Girls,” *Punch* XX (1851): 222- 23.

austere and uniform, women's clothing (particularly in the 1850s and 60s) steadily increased in size and silhouette emphasizing specularization.¹² Logically, trousers for women should perform the same despecularizing function as for men, yet curiously the bloomed women ultimately increasingly attracted attention. For example, in *Bloomerism - An American Custom* (Figure 3), although the women depicted defy conventions by adopting the trousered costume, they by extension should be defying the equation of specularity. On the contrary, as can be seen in the print, these "bloomered" women are very much the center of attention. Every figure in the drawing has turned their gaze (albeit disapprovingly) towards the women depicted in trousers. They may have openly rejected the notion of woman as site of visual pleasure, but neither do they attempt to avoid the gaze. The highly visible nature of the trousered woman evidenced by numerous reports in the popular press (see also Appendix A) can itself be compared with the highly visible qualities inherent in the Crystal Palace. Its vast glass structure allowed the visitors — society — to see and be seen. In this way, much like the Crystal Palace, trousered women became both the site of spectacle yet at the same time allowed for the male prerogative of *looking*.

Designed by Joseph Paxton, the Crystal Palace was a monumental glass and iron structure enclosing the Great Exhibition of 1851. The idea to produce an industrial exhibition on a such a grand scale had been conceptualized as early as 1844, when *The Art Journal* (London) noted that a National Exposition was to be "the only means by which taste can be

¹² Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 24-26. See also Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes*.

brought to act upon the various branches of Industry, (and) an essential part of a judicious system of National Education.”¹³

In 1849 Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria and president of the Royal Society of Arts, agreed to the idea of inviting exhibitors from all “civilised” nations to participate in an exposition that would open to the public on May 1st, 1851. In January 1850, the architects of the world were invited to submit plans within a space of three weeks. Two hundred and forty-five entries were submitted, including one from a “Lady [who] with great diffidence submits this plan.”¹⁴ Eighteen design proposals were selected of which twelve were submitted by French architects, yet in the end, none were chosen: the Building Committee designed their own plan (Figure 19), which ultimately did not fulfill the mandated “temporary” characteristics of a World Exhibition, and could not guarantee that “the amenities of Hyde Park [would] only . . . be subjected to the most trifling disturbance possible.”¹⁵ The number of bricks required for the original design, for example, would have been at least fifteen million, with the possibility of very little recovery value. It was also highly doubtful that the structure could be erected in the nine months remaining before the opening of the Exhibition.¹⁶

In addition to problems with the building plan, according to one source, grievances about the exhibitors themselves were raised. Protectionists and some members of government

¹³ *The Art Journal* Vol. 12 (London: Virtue & Co., 1850), 97.

¹⁴ Christopher Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace* (London: John Murray, 1937), 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

thought it foolish to provide accommodation to foreign traders of all nations to enter Britain and undersell them in their own market; it was assumed that the country would be flooded with cheap foreign goods, that hordes of foreigners would be selling their wares, and as well, that thieves and anarchists would flock to London.¹⁷ More pertinent however, is that English industry was nervous about the competition – as *The Art Journal* warned its (English) readers, “a lesson of severe, but wholesome and deserved humiliation” awaits all those who do not struggle to the challenge of the up-coming Exhibition.¹⁸

It was under this controversial atmosphere over both the building design and the Exhibition itself, that Joseph Paxton (1801- 1865) submitted his plans. Paxton, subsequently knighted in 1851 for his work on the Crystal Palace, had working-class roots and was completely self-educated. Early in his career, he became a landscape gardener and hothouse designer for royalty, the director of many railways, the founder of *The Daily News* in 1846 (originally edited by Charles Dickens), and the author of numerous gardening publications. Paxton’s auspicious plan was ultimately chosen over the original design but there were very timely reasons which guaranteed the success of his project: namely the proposed structure comprised prefabricated elements of sheet glass and iron, (both fairly new materials in the construction world), and as the heavy excise duty on glass had been rescinded five years earlier, making glass products more affordable.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ *The Art Journal*, 99.

¹⁹ Paxton had previously built numerous glass-houses for his royal clients’ gardens — clients who could afford the enormous cost of glass before 1845, therefore he had an extensive and quite exclusive knowledge of glass as a building material. See “Joseph Paxton,” and “The Glass Palace,” in *Hobhouse, 1851 and the Crystal Palace*, 24 - 40.

Public support played a role early on in the success of the Great Exhibition – which was touted as an experiment at the outset of its planning – in fact, its success rested entirely upon public sympathy.²⁰ It was precisely this type of support that from the start won Paxton the commission for the Great Exhibition; in a bold move to have his plan accepted, he had the *Illustrated London News* with a circulation of over 200 000, reproduce his design in the 6 July 1850 edition (Figure 19). Along with those merits indicated above, the structure would be cheap to erect and the materials would fetch high prices when demolished, and, true to Paxton’s background in landscape-gardening, the building would be constructed around existing trees, in fact it was determined that any that were removed would be replaced. Ultimately, public sentiment sided with Paxton’s well-planned design, although opinions may have been swayed by *Punch*, who, along with *The Times*, were ridiculing the original brick design. It would not be long before *Punch* would begin to ridicule bloomers as well.

From its completion to mid-October, 1851, more than six million visitors attended the Exhibition, to see the more than 17,000 exhibitors on display.²¹ As one contemporary source noted: “It attracted an incalculable number of foreign visitors, and cheap excursions from all over the British Isles enabled the whole of the more deserving poor to enrich their minds with its varied treasures.”²² The original didactic mission, stated above as early as 1844, was implemented: “The proposition to make the Exhibition a means of popular education, by explanation and descriptive lectures, &c., was most favourably received, and the University

²⁰ “Chapter XIII: Opinions of the Press,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace* Volume II, ed. J. G. Strutt (London: The London Printing and Publishing Company, 1853), 70.

²¹ “The Great Exhibition,” *The Daily News* (London), 30 October 1851, p. 5.

²² Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace*, 139.

of Oxford not only countenanced the scheme, but gave a series of lectures.”²³ Yet despite the practical nature of the Exhibition, some exhibits were completely lacking in educational qualities, such as the ‘silent alarm-clock,’ (Figure 20) that upturned a bed on its side at any given hour, or a floating church for seamen (Figure 21) exhibited by the United States. Indeed, another commentator noted that “everything was sacrificed to show and sound: the most gaudy inutilities and common-places were thrust into the foreground, and plain usefulness was ordered to the rear.”²⁴ This did not apply to the practical bloomer costume, however, for numerous reports by the press reveal that this was one “exhibit” which was not so readily dismissed. There are over fifty articles and drawings of bloomed women in the 1851 volume of *Punch* alone, with several dozen more peppered throughout the volumes for 1852 and 1853.

As earlier stated, fear of competition may have dissuaded the exhibitors at first, but fear of crowd control and the mingling of several classes within the Exhibition were also at issue. *Punch* reported that there was no privileged order for visitors, except for the order of arrival, especially on lower-priced days (known as the Shilling Days), which were offered so that the less privileged might have an equal chance at attending the Exhibition. In an article by a reporter sent to the Exhibition to survey the scene specifically on one of the Shilling Days, the frequent assertion that the mixing of the classes was potentially a riotous affair is evident in the following account:

²³ “Chapter XIV: Gleanings and Reminiscences,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace*, Volume II, 97.

²⁴ “Chapter XIII; Opinions of the Press,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace* Vol. III, 75.

On reaching the doors of the Exhibition, we found massive barriers intended to contain the multitude; but the multitude consisted of so few that they could scarcely contain themselves, for they kept bursting with laughter at the ponderous preparations for resisting their expected violence.²⁵

This is not to say that the multitude did not exist – on the contrary, the visitors’ tally was reported quite frequently in the London’s dailies. As the closing of the Exhibition neared, attendance in one day alone swelled from 35,409 at eleven o’clock to over 107,000 by five o’clock, and despite “this mighty crowd” there was still “ample room for promenading and inspection.”²⁶ Curiously, *Punch* resorted to parodying unruly women in order to entertain its readers with satires illustrating the “expected violence.” In Figure 22, “The Ladies and the Police—the Battle at the Crystal Palace,” the police were sympathetically relieved of their duty, as they hesitated “to stand against a battery from the fire of the flashing eyes of angry ladies” who did not want to leave the Exhibition at closing time.²⁷ Another report noted that large numbers of top-hatted police-constables patrolled the courts by day, “but their only difficult task was to get the ladies out at six o’clock.”²⁸ The mocking tone of these nineteenth-century writers perhaps hides an underlying fear that the presence of women as part of a large crowd posed a problem of order, partly because the women’s presence

²⁵ “The Shilling Days at the Crystal Palace,” *Punch* XX (1851): 240.

²⁶ “The Great Exhibition,” *The Daily News* (London), 7 October 1851, p. 5.

²⁷ “The Ladies and the Police. — The Battle of the Crystal Palace,” *Punch* XX (1851): 202.

²⁸ Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace*, 145. The 1851 census for Great Britain revealed that there were 405 000 more women than men in the population, meaning there could easily have been a larger number of women than men attending the Fair. They were described in the press as ‘excess’ or ‘surplus’ women and in the 1860s to 1880s the ‘problem’ of surplus women caused great alarm amongst male commentators. Those men who saw women as being superfluous if they were not servicing men, suggested emigration to America as a solution. Sheila Jeffries, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (London: Pandora Press, 1985), 86-87.

symbolized the promise of sexual adventure, as many nineteenth-century accounts indicate.²⁹ Indeed, the *Punch* article suggested that a special task force of women constables be assigned to control other women, instead of pitting the sexes against each other; resisting a woman was a “duty which no man . . . can possibly perform.”³⁰

Admirably behaved, the lower-paying visitors were rewarded with Queen Victoria visiting the Exhibition on Shilling Days, and “throwing overboard the vulgar prejudice of exclusiveness,” she entrusted her safety to the masses. Several sources saw this somewhat radical behaviour which integrated the different classes as a source of civic pride, and, the ultimate achievement of the Exhibition.

There is no doubt whatever . . . that the free mixing of the several classes . . . in the Great Exhibition has produced a feeling of higher appreciation of each other . . . ; the great have a higher respect for the humble, the humble look with much less of envy on the great.”³¹

Figure 23, “The Pound and the Shilling” published in *Punch*, depicts the different classes meeting at the Exhibition, evidently on the lower-priced days, for the young shilling visitor in his patched clothing acts surprised at seeing the fashionably-dressed visitors at such close range. The mingling of all classes of society was also proudly touted as proof of the “civilised” nature of England’s citizens, and used as a lesson for foreigners on how to

²⁹ Elizabeth. Wilson, *Sphinx in the City: Urban life, the control of disorder, and women* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 6.

³⁰ “The Ladies and the Police,” *Punch*, 202.

³¹ “Chapter XXX: On Colour in Decorative Art,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace* Volume II, 235.

combine “real freedom” and “perfect security” at once.³² Citizens who visited the Crystal Palace were seen by the press as self-enforcing of Great Britain’s law and order, tolerant of differences amongst themselves, and the fact that the foreign exhibitors “entrusted the most valuable evidences of their wealth, their skill, their industry, and their enterprise, to the guardianship” of relatively few British policemen prompted one commentator to note: “One can scarcely comprehend the strength of so much confidence and reliance on the law and order of Great Britain.”³³

Yet the potentially destructive characteristics of the crowd were equally addressed by critics and even compared to the underlying destructive qualities of Frankenstein. One report highlighted the terrifying aspect of a “vast army of observation of various races and habits, (concentrated) around the wealthiest and least defended capital in the world.”³⁴ However, just as in the example above, the destructive mob did not materialize and *Punch* once again exemplified the worst of disorderly conduct in “Design for a Fountain” and “Dinner-Time at the Crystal Palace” (Figures 24 and 25) in which the unruly habits of the working-classes were parodied, displaying a stereotyped penchant for food and drink at the cost of decorum. Again, these parodies likely illustrated the extent of any unruliness displayed at the Crystal Palace, for the gathering of the multitudes and the organized manner in which they conducted

³² “The Shilling Days at the Crystal Palace,” *Punch* XX (1851): 240.

³³ “Chapter XIV: Gleanings and Reminiscences,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace*, Volume II, 94.

³⁴ “Chapter XIII: Opinions of the Press,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace*, Volume III, 70.

themselves far exceeded the expectations of the organizers of this enormous event.³⁵ As Bennett notes: “The exhibition transformed the many-headed mob into an ordered crowd.”³⁶

Perhaps the crowd behaved so admirably as a result of the Crystal Palace itself; its plan and the nature of the materials with which it was constructed rendered the crowd – society – into spectacle. The evident nature of the Exhibition itself aimed to make society known and understood through its accessible and highly visible display of the nations³⁷. The fact that many nations were on display together under the glass roof of the Crystal Palace, may have compelled the visitors to act as if they too were on display. Bennett remarks that the Crystal Palace can be seen as analogous in its didactic role to a school, or even a prison, for example, due to its continuing concern with the display of objects for a great multitude:

The Crystal Palace reversed the panoptical principle by fixing the eyes of the multitude upon an assemblage of glamorous commodities. The Panopticon was designed so that everyone could be seen; the Crystal Palace was designed so that everyone could see.³⁸

Essentially, the nature of the transparent material within which the Exhibition was housed made it possible for all to be seen.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in *The Birth of the Museum*, 72.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁸ *Ibid.* See also Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et punir. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979, c1977) for further reading on modern society and the way in which it functions most effectively by regulation.

Other architectural structures in which the crowd itself became a spectacle, notes Bennett, was the department store,³⁹ a site neither public nor private which first appeared in the 1830s to 1840s in Eastern North America⁴⁰ (home of the Bloomer costume). Goods were offered at marked prices, making haggling and bargaining unnecessary. Customers were invited to look around freely, and it is this importance of *looking* and of consuming⁴¹ in capitalist society that is critical to the notion of the spectacle. The power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display evident in the phenomenon of the department store, can also be seen within the ideology and the practices of the exhibition complex.⁴² It is equally the specificity of *looking* and of *being looked at* wherein clothing can be studied and analyzed. As noted earlier, the tendency of the Crystal Palace to render society as a spectacle – and its ability to assure that all could see – were necessary elements to the introduction and adoption of bloomers as a kind of counter-fashion, and an effective reform dress.

Contrary to the despecularized role that trousers had given to men, they conversely brought attention to female wearers, and the growing popularity of the costume (with the implications of high visibility in the city) is evident in the subtle use of the costume in a caricature by *Punch* titled *Closing of the Exhibition: The Amazon Putting on her Bonnet and Shawl* (Figure 26). Two prominent nude sculptures, the *Greek Slave* and the *Amazon*, are

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19, 69.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, 144.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴² Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," in *The Birth of the Museum*, 63.

shown dressing as they prepare to leave the Crystal Palace, declaring how difficult it was to stay in their naked roles for five months straight . Of critical importance is the clothing of the *Greek Slave*, who is depicted in the latest fashion from America – the Bloomer. It is significant that she is shown wearing the most recognizable American costume at the time of the Exhibition. In fact, the *Greek Slave* (Figure 27) was sculpted by the American artist, Hiram Powers and selected to represent the United States. It was “the most popular of the American exhibits . . . almost the most popular exhibit in the building,”⁴³ and the dailies reported society’s curiosity with the statue, noting it had “crowds of observers.”⁴⁴ The naked statue was accompanied by the following description:

The figure here represented is intended for that of a young and beautiful Greek girl, deprived of her clothing and exposed for sale to some wealthy eastern barbarian, before whom she is supposed to stand, with an expression of scornful dejection mingled with shame and disgust. Her dress, which is the modern Greek costume, appears on the column, and the cross implies her religion and country. The chains on her wrist are not historical, but have been added as necessary accessories.⁴⁵

The subtle use of the costume in the caricature – for it was not pointed out to the readers of *Punch* directly that the statue was dressed as a Bloomer – implies that the trousered outfit must have been an easily identifiable attire for the mid-nineteenth-century visitor of the Crystal Palace, and indeed of mid-nineteenth-century society in general.

⁴³ Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace*, 134.

⁴⁴ “The Great Exhibition.” *The Daily News* (London), 4 July 1851, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace*, 134.

The drawing emphasizes the transformative power of clothing, for until a woman is dressed, her true proclivity will not be revealed. The image also implies that there is a subversive quality to a woman – in this case, she was originally a Classic Woman, not only explicit in the formal style of the statue, but also in the submissive pose – yet she is shown in the *Punch* caricature to have successfully masked her desire for freedom. The implication here is one of a revolutionary nature, and indeed the trousered woman was seen as revolutionary and generally associated with woman's rights and emancipation.

The connection between women, disorder, and the latter's reliance on clothing is analyzed in Elizabeth Wilson's *Sphinx in the City: Urban life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (1991), in which she notes that the function of dress was extremely important for women, especially amongst the uncertainty and anonymity of urban life:

The city was a spectacle, and in the right costume a women—or a man—could escape into a new identity. Such , at any rate, was a widely-held belief about the great nineteenth-century city. To what extent individuals were really able to escape their origins is less certain, . . . but undoubtedly many reformers believed that anonymity not only made it possible, but also presented an insidious challenge to law and order.⁴⁶

Women in trousers signified a kind of freedom from restrictions, whether from restrictive clothing or restrictive roles in general, and the *Greek Slave* in Bloomers represented this new freedom of movement, which could be manifested and forwarded amongst the diverse and

⁴⁶ Wilson, *Sphinx in the City*, 50-51.

anonymous crowds visiting the Exhibition, thus representing an additional challenge to order, along with the concerns mentioned above.

But the *Greek Slave* was controversial on several counts, and was considered by many to have really gone “beyond the limits of taste, represent[ing] perhaps the worst example of artistic story-telling. Poor Christian girl, wicked wealthy barbarian, scornful dejection: all the ingredients of a lovely little tale were there.”⁴⁷ Once again, it was *Punch* who directly addressed issues of coloniality in an article titled “America in Crystal”:

America [is] represented by the eagle, “it is, however unfortunate that the gigantic bird soars over next to nothing Why not have sent some choice specimen’s of slaves? We have the Greek captive in dead stone — why not the Virginian slave in living ebony? . . . Let America hire a black or two to stand in manacles, as American manufacture, protected by the American Eagle.”⁴⁸

The image of the *Virginian Slave* (Figure 28) did not accompany the article, but was published in a later issue, and unmistakably mirrors Powers’s *Greek Slave* — the tassels on the pedestal are substituted with a decorative motif of whips, chains, and rope, and an American flag is draped over a whipping post. Even the more neutral literature — such as official catalogues and contemporaneous histories of the Exhibition — showed a decided bias against the Americans. For example, *Tallis*’s catalogue, a compendium of letters and essays from numerous sources, found the low number of displays sent from the United States to the

⁴⁷ Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace*, 134-137.

⁴⁸ “America in Crystal.” *Punch* XX (1851): 209. Britain outlawed the slave trade in 1807 and abolished slavery in the British Empire by 1833. Whereas in America from 1793 on, it was a criminal offense to help a runaway slave, and in 1850, the Second Fugitive Slave Law denied freedom to runaways even in the free States. In 1857, the Dred Scott Decision officially declared the U.S. Constitution did not apply to blacks.

Exhibition unexpected, nor did they feel it was representative of America in any way.⁴⁹ Another of the official catalogues published an engraving depicting the United States' section (Figure 29) in which the *Greek Slave* is prominently featured *in situ*.⁵⁰ A curious and possibly deliberate element, appears in one of the visitors admiring the *Slave*. He is shown in Turkish-style clothing, hands on hips, standing directly in front of the statue, while other visitors dressed in the current Western fashions stand off to the side. The decision to depict a "foreigner" admiring the statue recalls the earlier quote in which the "wicked wealthy barbarian" would be the only admirer of such a despicable work. Recall too one of the perceived influences of the Bloomer costume can be traced to Turkish trowsers. At such a level, this type of Oriental discourse conjures up sexual imagery.

Interestingly, even in the twentieth century, when Poiret introduced his version of the trousers, the Canadian press prudishly noted his Harem Skirt's name was "so suggestive of plural marriages," (an obvious reason to have it dismissed).⁵¹ Curiously as well, the very article of clothing meant to free up Western women was already being worn by enslaved Turkish women.⁵² The issue of slavery was often raised when Bloomer advocates spoke publicly on the issues of dress reform as invariably there was a "strange transition to the slave trade."⁵³ References to the daughters of the Republic enslaved by foreign fashions highlighted

⁴⁹ "Chapter XI: Foreign and Colonial Departments," in *Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace*, Volume I, 67.

⁵⁰ "The United States' Department," in *Art Journal: Illustrated Catalogue of the Exhibition of 1851* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1851), xxi.

⁵¹ "The 'Harem' Skirt." *Toronto Saturday Night*, 8 April 1911, p. 31.

⁵² Fischer, "Designing Freedom in the Mid-nineteenth-century United States," *Feminist Studies*, 123.

⁵³ "Lecture on Bloomerism," *The Times* (London), 8 October 1851, p. 7.

the irony of the emancipatory agenda of the reformers, whose own country was polarized by this issue.⁵⁴

American practices clashed with the ambitions of the Exhibition – the divisive nature of American society based on slavery conflicted with the Exhibition’s view of itself as transcending class barriers with its “persistent claims of class unity.”⁵⁵ The feeling towards the States is succinctly summed up in the following:

The anticipations of the Americans were more ‘grandiose’ than their display. They complained that they had not had sufficient space assigned to them; a concession was made of as much as they desired, and it was comparatively empty. To conceal the nakedness of their walls, they sent quantities of india-rubber.⁵⁶

The writer continued, revealing underlying attitudes towards the Americans and their fashion-sense as well:

They were seized with a mania, too, for exhibiting ladies’ bonnets! ‘Tis true, gentle reader; yes, actually, fashions from America! Now, what the ‘fashions’ of England are to ‘the modes’ of France, the ‘just the thing’ of America is to the fashions of England.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ “Reform in the Female costume,” *The Times* (London), 24 June 1851, p. 7.

⁵⁵ Annie E. Coombes, “Museums and the Formation of national and Cultural Identities,” *The Oxford Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (1988): 64.

⁵⁶ “Chapter XXV,” in *Tallis’s History and Description of the Crystal Palace*, Volume I, 160-61.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

England's attitudes towards American fashions reveal one of the more influential factors in Bloomerism as a clothing reform movement failing to catch on as a serious alternative for women. Recall in the previous chapter, how one reporter felt "the ornamental waistcoat has more chance in America than England," when tailors were trying to find ways to distinguish waiters from patrons,⁵⁸ showing the same prejudices against non-Parisian designs fifty years later.

The fact that it was illegal for women to wear men's clothes at this time in France (mentioned above as the only serious source of English fashions in the mid-nineteenth century) may have also influenced Britain's rejection of the Bloomer.⁵⁹

But more importantly, the British press revealed an abhorrence of slavery which fostered a distaste for American creations at the Crystal Palace. I would conclude that the trousered costume – another American creation – may have represented a move towards freedom for women, but was seen by the British as offensive and somewhat ironic coming from a country involved in slavery. It is uncertain if Amelia Bloomer's conservative views in this area were known publicly, but certainly within her circle it was known that she would not speak out against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 which denied freedom to runaway slaves even in the free states.⁶⁰ With slavery having been abolished in the British Empire for over fifteen years

⁵⁸ "Will 'Pinking' and the Frilled Shirt Return?" *Toronto Saturday Night*, 5 January 1900, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Trouser-wearing for women was prohibited in France as of 7 November 1800, except for reasons of health. In 1857, Rosa Bonheur had to apply for a "permission de travestissement" — the surviving document notes she was allowed to wear trousers that year "pour raison de santé." In Karen Peterson and J. J. Wilson, *Women Artists* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 77. See also Gen Doy, "Gender and Class in Early Modernist Painting: a Reassessment" in *Seeing and Consciousness: Women, Class and Representation* (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 1995), 54-81.

⁶⁰ Confidential letter from Elizabeth Stanton to Susan B. Anthony (ca. 1851?). Thorp, *Female Persuasion: Six Strong-Minded Women*, 120.

by the time the Americans came to the Great Exhibition, the way in which America treated its population “especially the coloured portion,” (Figure 30) was a contentious issue for the British, and challenged the encompassing ideology of the Great Exhibition.

This might suggest that the Bloomer movement was doomed from the outset, at least in part because it was conceived in America, and unwittingly underscored a singular moral ambiguity; this combined with the other revolutionary aspects signified by the spectacle of a woman in trousers, ensured the Bloomer’s demise.

CONCLUSION



Despite its underlying health benefits, *Punch* announced the “End of Bloomerism” in 1852 (Figure 31). Inspired by a London pub owner who dressed his barmaids as Bloomers, the cartoon shows a trousered woman being quashed by a large stein. The Crystal Palace’s show having ended, and the ideologies of the Exhibition having conflicted with those of the anti-equality Americans, the Bloomer had no chance of surviving. The added association with barmaids towards the end of its run meant it took on contradictory characteristics: the sexual, through its adoption by women in professions wherein they attracted male custom, and the asexual through its association with women in the emancipation movements, (who were seen as de-sexed and manly), and certainly aided in its demise.¹

However, Fischer concludes that trouser wearing in the nineteenth century by women, no matter how feminine the garment (for they were consistently to be worn with a skirt), was inevitably associated with the male garment, and thus symbolized women’s desires for equal economic and political power.² Presumably then, trousers would have a better chance at being adopted if the economic climate improved for women.

¹ Norma Gash, *Robert Surtees and the Early Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 325-6.

² Fischer, “Designing Freedom in the Mid-nineteenth-century United States,” *Feminist Studies*, 134-135.

The year that Mrs. King came to North America with her rational dress exhibition, a Canadian newspaper reported a tremendous 45-fold increase in employment opportunities for women from 1840 to 1884.³

Mrs. King may have unconsciously addressed some of the conditions which resulted in the Bloomer's demise thirty years earlier by promoting the Rational Dress Association's designs for trousers to Canadians firstly at a time when economically women's positions were improving, and secondly by promoting them as designs by the Parisian designer "the famous Worth." An entry for the "Dress of the Future" touted in the *Globe* article is indeed signed by *Worth et cie.* in the exhibition catalogue (see Figures 32 and 33). However, it was not a male Parisian-designed garment at all but created instead by a London dressmaking firm known in full as Mme Worth et cie, and thus capitalized on the popularity of the Worth name.⁴ It is uncertain whether Mrs. King intentionally let the reporter give the illusion that the trousers were designed in France, hoping that Canadian women would follow the trend presumably set by Paris.⁵

Bloomers emerged again at the beginning of the twentieth century with the advent of the bicycle for woman as means of mobility. This time, they were baggy knee-length breeches and were specifically worn for this sporting pastime. The *Toronto Saturday Night* reported on lady wheelists entering Rouen Cathedral wearing the Bloomer only to be "deprecatingly

³ "As late as 1840 there were but seven vocations into which New England women had entered; in 1884 the number was 317." Quoted in "For and About Women," *The Globe* (Toronto), 30 August 1884, p. 5.

⁴ Elizabeth Ann Coleman, *The Opulent Era: Fashions of Worth, Doucet, and Pingat* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 99; and "Rational Dress Exhibition," *The Times* (London), 19 May 1883, p. 8.

⁵ Canadians were aware of Charles Worth: "Worth . . . was the first to achieve fame in his specialty the world over." Quoted in "The Famous Costumers of Paris." *Toronto Saturday Night*, 21 December 1907, p. 21.

stopped by the custodian, who points to the district below the Equator, and remarks, ‘You cannot go in; His Lordship would not allow it.’” However, seeing as the women would then be led to a chamber to change into orthodox long skirts hired out at a franc apiece, the motives for an intolerance toward rational garments is questionable.⁶ But as Sally Sims notes, women realized their appearance while riding the bicycle had to remain visually discretionary if they hoped to completely adopt it as a mode of transport, so voluminous divided skirts were preferred over more obvious bifurcations.⁷

A third condition addressed by the Association can be seen in the image of Venus promoted as a healthful figure appearing at the front of the exhibition catalogue. It was commonly used by dress reformers as the perfect female figure. “It has stood the test of criticism for ages: and there is no compression of the waist; but in all its lines there is a flowing which is the admiration of all beholders, standing as a monument of Grecian art.”⁸ The sculpture of Venus (Figure 34), mirrors the pose of the *Greek Slave* in every manner, but her chains have been removed. The lifting of economic and political restrictions from many aspects of women’s lives toward the end of the nineteenth century is aptly symbolized by the absence of the restrictive chains in this promotional image of Venus, compared to the image of the *Greek Slave* from 1851. Indeed, Mrs. King felt “her success as a missionary in Canada has been very gratifying [for] many ladies of Montreal have seriously taken up the rational

⁶ “Where Bloomers Don’t Go,” *Toronto Saturday Night*, 7 July 1900, p. 9.

⁷ Sally, Sims, “The Bicycle, the Bloomer and Dress Reform in the 1890s,” in Patricia A. Cunningham and Susan Voso Lab, *Dress and Popular Culture* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991), 126.

⁸ J. W. G., “Colour as Applied to Ladies’ Dress,” *Stewart’s Literary Quarterly Magazine* 3, no. 1(1869): 109.

dress.”⁹ But her prediction that by the next year, “women will probably be wearing no petticoats, no corsets, and literal trousers” did not come true for several decades and reinforced the notion that “the prospect of women freeing themselves from traditional restraints threatened mainstream patriarchal values,”¹⁰ and therefore women in trousers threatened society.

⁹ “Rational Dress — Remarkable Feminine Interest in Trousers — Inquiring Widows, Spinsters and Matrons — Petticoats Not a Requisite of a Perfect Dress,” *The Globe* (Toronto), 13 September 1884, p.7.

¹⁰ Elliott, “New and Not so ‘New Women’ on the London Stage,” *Victorian Studies*, 34.

Figure 1
Bloomer costume illustrations reproduced in *The Lily*, January 1852.



Figure 2
French women's military costume.

Figure 3



BLOOMERISM—AN AMERICAN CUSTOM.

BLOOMERISM—AN AMERICAN CUSTOM.

Punch (1851).

Figure 4

A BILL FOR THE BLOOMER COSTUME.

MRS. STRAPPER

To Mrs. DEXTER SMITH.

One Pair of Petticoats, with military braid down the sides, &c., &c.	£2	2	0
A Pair of Braces to ditto	0	5	0
A Pair of Straps to ditto	0	1	6
A Valencia Silk Waistcoat, cut in the Gent's last fashion	1	1	0
A new Velvet Greek Polka Coat, braided, and lined throughout with Silk	4	1	0
Cigar Case for inside pocket of ditto	0	10	0
Cigars for the same	0	2	6
Joinville Tie, birds'-eye pattern	0	8	6
Pair of Buckskin Gloves	0	5	0
Walking-stick with Silver top	1	1	0
Beautiful Corazza Shirt, with Studs, &c.	1	5	0
		<hr style="width: 100%;"/>	
		£11	5 6

A BILL FOR THE BLOOMER COSTUME.

Punch (1851).

Figure 5



SOMETHING MORE APROPOS OF BLOOMERISM.

(BEHIND THE COUNTER THERE IS ONE OF THE "INFERIOR ANIMALS.")

SOMETHING MORE APROPOS OF BLOOMERISM.

(BEHIND THE COUNTER THERE IS ONE OF THE "INFERIOR ANIMALS.")

Punch (1851).

WOMAN'S EMANCIPATION.

(Being a Letter addressed to Mr. Punch, with a Drawing, by a strong-minded American Woman.)



It is quite easy to realize the considerable difficulty that the natives of this old country are like to have in estimating the rapid progress of ideas on all subjects among us, the Anglo-Saxons of the Western World. Mind travels with us on a rail-car, or a high-pressure river-boat. The wings and engines of prejudice, which render so dangerous the navigation of Time's mighty river, whose water-power has toppled over these giant-giants of the world, without being able to detach them from the original mud from which they draw their nutriment, are dashed aside or run down in the headlong career of the United States mind.

We laugh to scorn the dangers of popular effervescence. Our almighty-browed and cavernous-eyed statesmen sit, dependant, on the safety-valve, and the mighty ark of our vast Empire of the West moves on at a pressure on the square inch which would rend into shivers the rotten boiler-plates of your outworn states of the Old World.

To you a phrase, which the refined manners of our ladies have banished from the drawing-room, and the saloon of the boarding-house, we go ahead. And our progress in the progress of all—not of high and low, for we have abolished the odious distinction—but of man, woman, and child, each in his or her several sphere.

Our babies are preternaturally sharp, and highly independent from the cradle. The high-souled American boy will not submit to be whipped at school. That punishment is confined to negroes and the lower animals.

But it is among our sex—among women—for I am a woman, and my name is THEODORE E. BAZZ, of Boston, U.S., Principal of the Homeopathic and Collegiate Thomomus Institute for developing the female mind in that intellectual city—that the stranger may realize in the most convincing manner the progressive influences of the democratic institutions it is our privilege to live under.

An American female—for I do not like the term Lady, which suggests the vulgar distinctions of feudalism—can travel alone from one end of the States to the other—from the majestic waters of Niagara to the mystic banks of the Yellow-stone, or the rolling prairies of Texas. The American female delivers lectures—edits newspapers, and smokes cigars of opium, which exert an mighty leverage on the national mind of our great people—is privileged to become a martyr to her principles,

and to offer her soul from the platform, by the side of the gifted Fox or the immortal Peanony. All this in these old countries is the peculiar privilege of man, as opposed to woman. The female is confined to the narrow duties of the home. In America the degrading cares of the household are comparatively unknown to our sex. The American wife resides in a boarding-house, and, consigning the petty cares of daily life to the help of the establishment, enjoys leisure for higher pursuits, and can follow her vast aspirations upward, or in any other direction.

We are emancipating ourselves, among other judges of the slavery of feudalism, from the inconvenient dress of the European female. With man's functions, we have asserted our right to his gait, and especially to that part of it which favors the lower extremities. With this great symbol, we have adopted others—the hat, the cigar, the palette or round jacket. And it is generally calculated that the dress of the emancipated American female is quite pretty—as becoming in all points as it is manly and independent. I enclose a drawing made by my gifted fellow-citizen, THEODORE E. BAZZ, of Boston, U.S., for the *Free Women's Bazaar*, a periodical under my conduct, aided by several gifted women of acknowledged progressive opinions.

I appeal to my sisters of the Old World, with confidence, for their sympathy and their countenance in the struggle in which we are engaged, and which will soon be fought among them also. For I feel that I have a mission across the broad Atlantic, and the steamers are now running at reduced fares. I hope to rear the standard of Female Emancipation on the roof of the Crystal Palace in London Hyde Park. Empty will may sneer at its form, which is feminine. And why not? MANKIND warred under the Palladium of his wife KATHA. The American female Emancipator warrants on her holy war under the flourishing garment of her husband. In the continent devoted to the United States in your Exposition, my sisters of the old country may see this banner by the side of a uniform of female freedom,—such as my drawing represents,—the path of martyrdom for a month; the trappings of triumph for all ages of the future!

THEODORE E. BAZZ, M.A.,
M.C.P., A.M., K.I.M., &c., &c., of Boston, U.S.A.

WOMAN'S EMANCIPATION.

(Being a Letter addressed to Mr. Punch, with a Drawing, by a strong-minded American Woman)

Punch (1851).

Figure 7



**ONE OF THE DELIGHTFUL RESULTS OF BLOOMERISM.—THE LADIES WILL
POP THE QUESTION.**

Superior Creature. "SAY! OH, SAY, DEAREST! WILL YOU BE MINE?" &c. &c.

**ONE OF THE DELIGHTFUL RESULTS OF BLOOMERISM.—THE LADIES WILL
POP THE QUESTION.**

Superior Creature. "SAY! OH, SAY, DEAREST! WILL YOU BE MINE?" &c. &c.
Punch (1851).

Figure 8



A POSER FOR A BLOOMER.

Old Gentleman. "BEFORE I CAN ENTERTAIN YOUR PROPOSAL, AND GIVE MY CONSENT TO YOUR MARRYING MY SON, I MUST ASK YOU, WHETHER YOU ARE IN A POSITION—A—TO—A—KEEP HIM IN THE STYLE TO WHICH—A—I MAY SAY—HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ACCUSTOMED? AHEM!"

A POSER FOR A BLOOMER.

Old Gentleman. "BEFORE I CAN ENTERTAIN YOUR PROPOSAL, AND GIVE MY CONSENT TO YOUR MARRYING MY SON, I MUST ASK YOU, WHETHER YOU ARE IN A POSITION—A—TO—A—KEEP HIM IN THE STYLE TO WHICH—A—I MAY SAY—HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ACCUSTOMED? AHEM!"

Punch (1851).

Figure 9



MARY PROTECTING THE WEAKER SEX.

MARY PROTECTING THE WEAKER SEX.

Punch (1853)

Figure 10



NATURALLY THE FEMALE THINKS SHOPPING VERY FOOLISH
AND TIRESOME.

Superior Creature. "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE, EDWARD, DO COME AWAY! WHEN YOU ONCE
GET INTO A SHOP, THERE'S NO GETTING YOU OUT AGAIN!"

NATURALLY THE FEMALE THINKS SHOPPING VERY FOOLISH
AND TIRESOME.

Superior Creature. "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE, EDWARD, DO COME AWAY! WHEN YOU ONCE
GET INTO A SHOP, THERE'S NO GETTING YOU OUT AGAIN!"

Punch (1853).

Figure 11



LATEST FROM AMERICA.—QUITE NEW, AND VERY CHASTE.
THE FREE AND ENLIGHTENED CONTINUATIONS.

LATEST FROM AMERICA.— QUITE NEW, AND VERY CHASTE.
THE FREE AND ENLIGHTENED CONTINUATIONS.
Punch (1851).

Figure 12



Sir Thomas Trout & The Bloomer

SIR THOMAS TROUT AND THE BLOOMER

Colour plate by John Leech from *Handley Cross* by Robert Surtees (1854).

Originally published a few years earlier, it was later reprinted with an added chapter starring a Bloomer.

Figure 13



“Une tournure à faire tourner toutes les têtes.” Charles Vernier, 1860.

Figure 14



French Court Dress, c. 1670.

Figure 15



BLOOMERISM IN A BALL-ROOM.

Bloomer. "MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF DANCING THE NEXT POLKA WITH YOU?"

BLOOMERISM IN A BALL-ROOM.

Bloomer. "MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF DANCING THE NEXT POLKA WITH YOU?"
Punch (1852).

Figure 16



BLOOMERISM!

Strong-Minded Female. "NOW, DO, PRAY, ALFRED, PUT DOWN THAT FOOLISH NOVEL, AND DO SOMETHING RATIONAL. GO AND PLAY SOMETHING ON THE PIANO; YOU NEVER PRACTISE, NOW YOU'RE MARRIED."

BLOOMERISM!

Strong-minded Female. "NOW, DO, PRAY, ALFRED, PUT DOWN THAT FOOLISH NOVEL, AND DO SOMETHING RATIONAL. GO AND PLAY SOMETHING ON THE PIANO; YOU NEVER PRACTICE, NOW YOU'RE MARRIED."

Punch (1851).

Figure 17



THE PARLIAMENTARY FEMALE.

Father of the Family. "COME, DEAR; WE SO SELDOM GO OUT TOGETHER NOW—CAN'T YOU TAKE US ALL TO THE PLAY TO-NIGHT?"
Mistress of the House, and M.P. "HOW YOU TALK, CHARLES! DON'T YOU SEE THAT I AM TOO BUSY. I HAVE A COMMITTEE TO-MORROW MORNING, AND I HAVE MY SPEECH ON THE GREAT CROCHET QUESTION TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENING."

THE PARLIAMENTARY FEMALE.

Father of the Family. "COME, DEAR; WE SO SELDOM GO OUT TOGETHER NOW—CAN'T YOU TAKE US ALL TO THE PLAY TO-NIGHT!"
Mistress of the House, and M.P. "HOW YOU TALK, CHARLES! DON'T YOU SEE THAT I AM TOO BUSY. I HAVE A COMMITTEE TO-MORROW MORNING, AND I HAVE MY SPEECH ON THE GREAT CROCHET QUESTION TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENING."

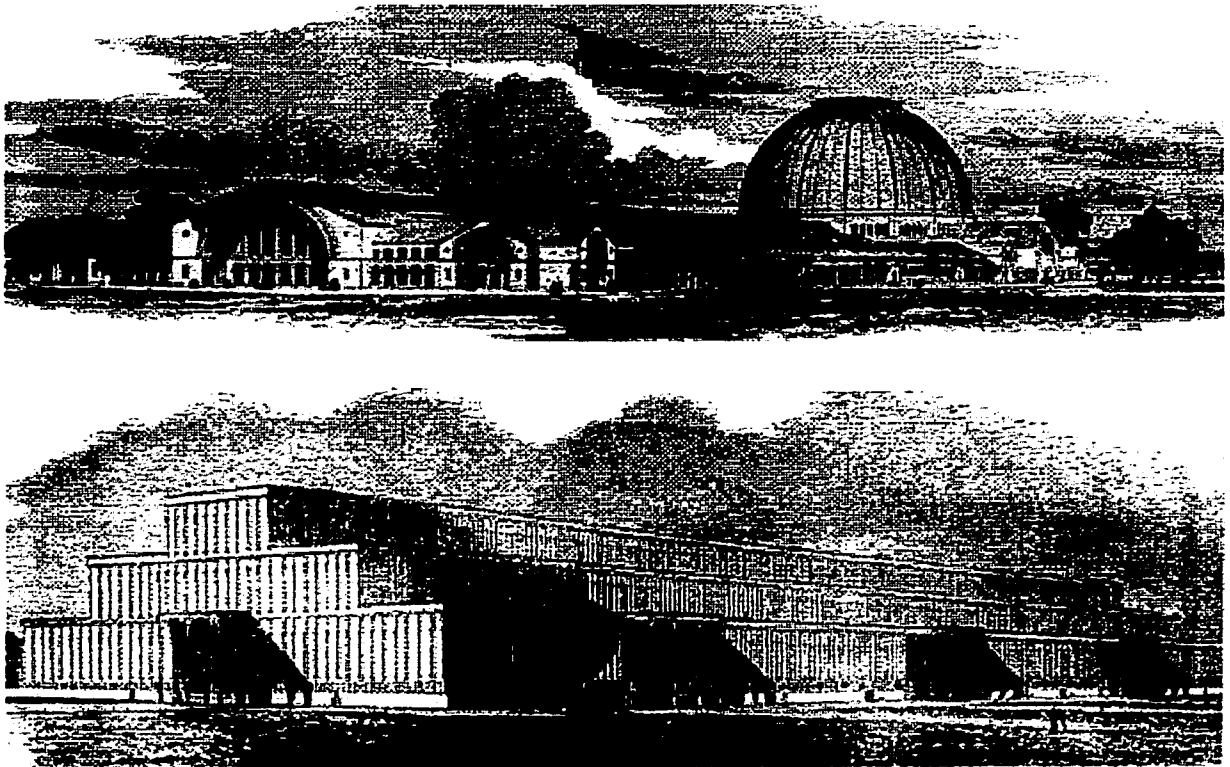
Punch (1853).

Figure 18



The Modern Governess.
Punch (1861)

Figure 19



Original design (top) and Joseph Paxton's design (bottom) for the Great Exhibition, published in the *Illustrated London News*, 6 July 1851.

Figure 20
DON'T SLEEP UPON IT.
Punch (1851).

DON'T SLEEP UPON IT.

Among the wonders of the Exhibition is a Bed that upsets itself by machinery at a certain hour, and thus the adage of "as you make your bed so you may lie," becomes a lie indeed, as far as this bed is concerned; for, after a given time, you cannot lie in it, however much care you may have been at in making it. The bed in question is a sort of *Ut de justis*, inflicting appropriate punishment on the slothful, by turning them out of bed, neck and crop, when they have lain long enough.

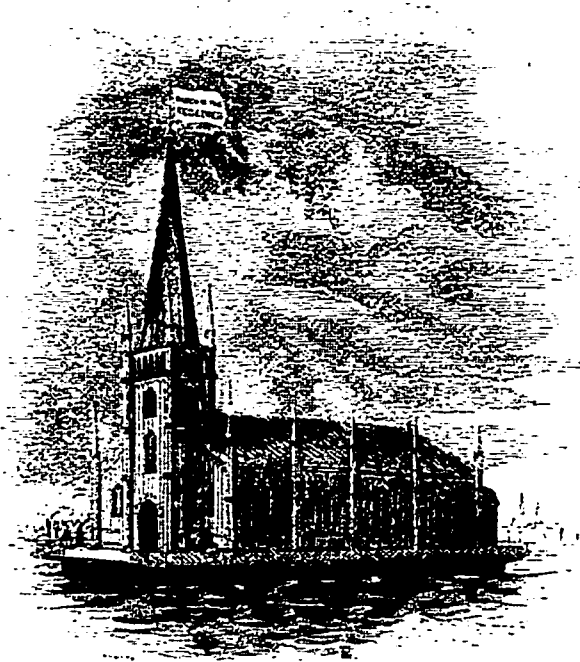
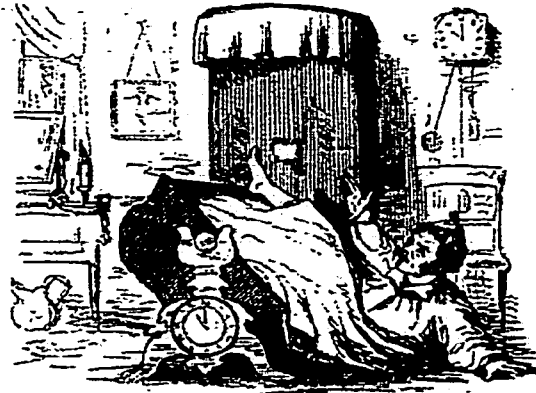


Figure 21
Floating Church for Seamen.

Figure 22

THE LADIES AND THE POLICE.—THE BATTLE OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE.



THE LADIES AND THE POLICE.—THE BATTLE OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE.
Punch (1851).

Figure 23



THE POUND AND THE SHILLING.

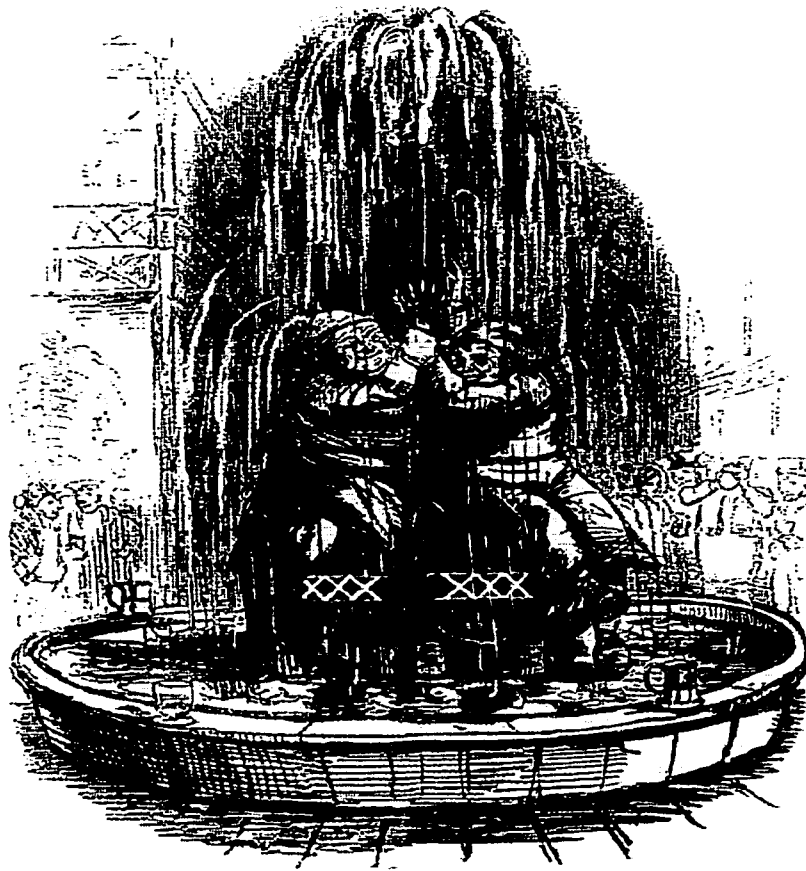
“Whoever Thought of Meeting You Here!”

THE POUND AND THE SHILLING.

“Whoever Thought of Meeting You Here!”

Punch (1851).

Figure 24



DESIGN FOR A FOUNTAIN
To be Placed in the Transept on the Shilling Days.

DESIGN FOR A FOUNTAIN.
To be Placed in the Transept on the Shilling Days.
Punch (1851).

Figure 25



DINNER-TIME AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.
Punch (1851)

Figure 26



CLOSING OF THE EXHIBITION.

The Amazon Putting on her Bonnet and Shawl.

Amazon (to Greek Slave). "WELL, MY DEAR! I'M VERY GLAD IT'S OVER. IT'S VERY HARD WORK KEEPING IN ONE ATTITUDE FOR FIVE MONTHS TOGETHER, ISN'T IT?"

CLOSING OF THE EXHIBITION. The Amazon Putting on her Bonnet and Shawl.

Amazon (to Greek Slave). "WELL, MY DEAR! I'M VERY GLAD IT'S OVER. IT'S VERY HARD WORK KEEPING IN ONE ATTITUDE FOR FIVE MONTHS TOGETHER, ISN'T IT?"

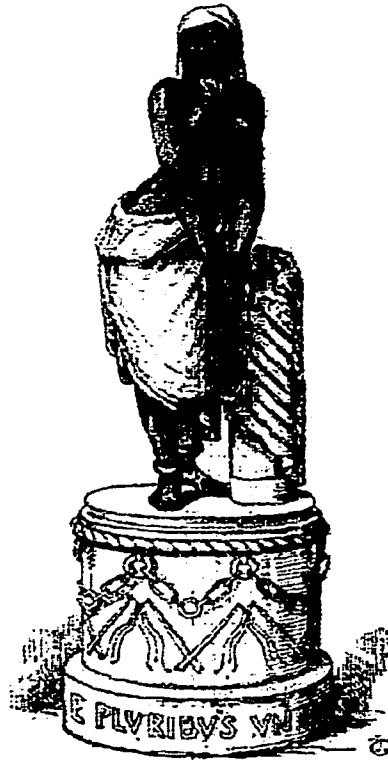
Punch (1851).

Figure 27



The Greek Slave, 1843. Hiram Powers.
The Art Journal (1850).

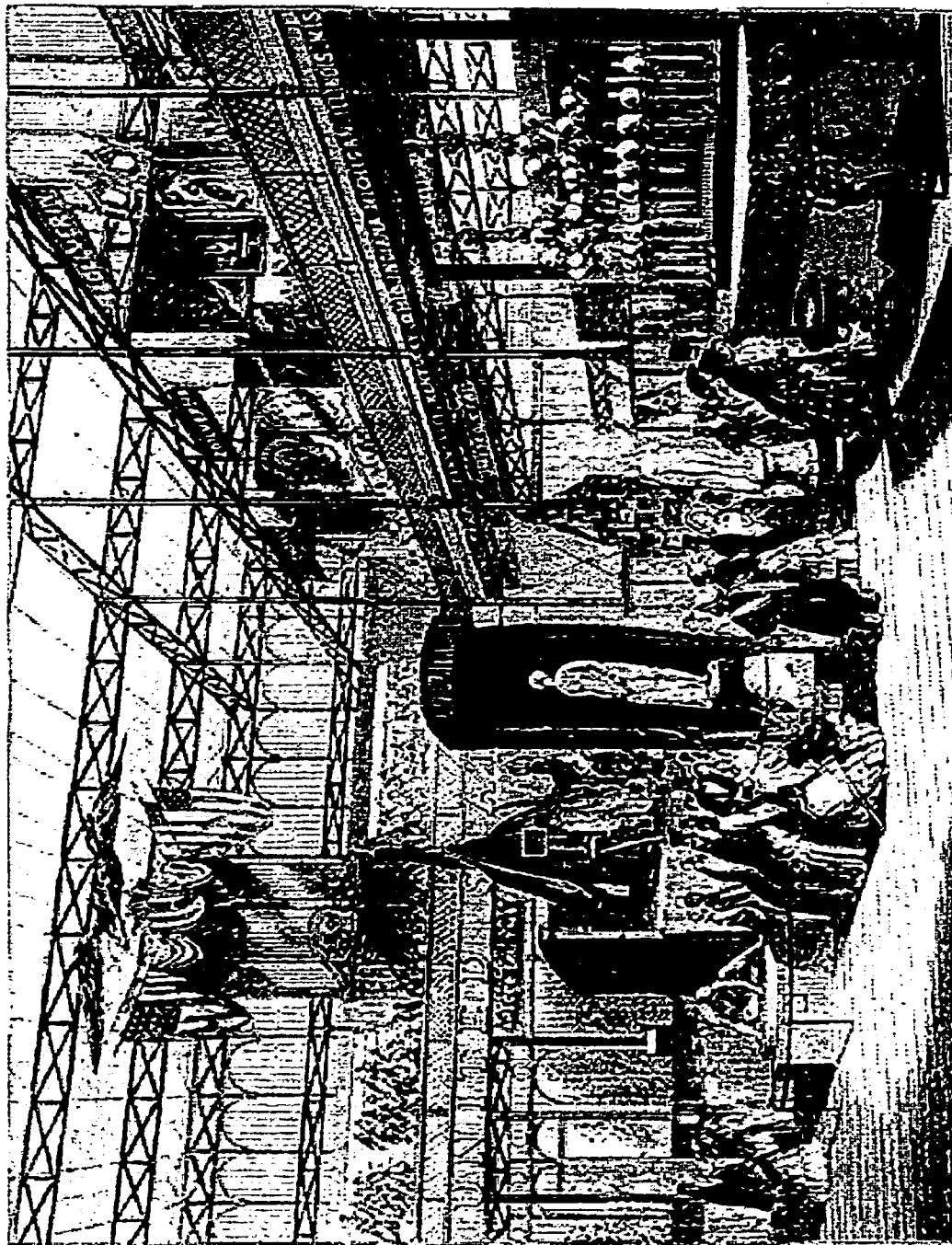
Figure 28



THE VIRGINIAN SLAVE.
INTENDED AS A COMPANION TO POWERS'S "GREEK SLAVE."

THE VIRGINIAN SLAVE.
INTENDED AS A COMPANION TO POWER'S "GREEK SLAVE."
Punch (1851).

Figure 29



THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT.

The United State's Department.

Art Journal: Illustrated Catalogue of the Exhibition of 1851 (1851).

AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GREAT EXHIBITION.

ALL the American Contributions have not yet arrived. This delay accounts for the empty space, which is so painfully noticed, at the end of the Exhibition. The following rare goods, however, are on their way from the United States, and may partially make up for the lamentable American deficiency:—

- The Leg of a Multiplication Table.
- The pair of Ship's Stays found drying on the Equinoctial Line.
- The Bonnet generally worn with the Veil of Nature.
- The Paletôt of the Heavy Swell of the Atlantic.
- The Key of LOCKE's Music.
- A Tooth-brush for the Mouth of the Thames.
- A Hat-stand made out of the Horns of a Dilemma.
- A Tumbler for the Jug of the Nightingale.
- A Mattrass for the Falls of Niagara.
- A Dressing-case for the Mirror of Nature.
- The Whip with which America flogs all creation—especially the coloured portion of it. And, lastly,
- The tremendous Wooden Style that separates the American from the English Fields of Literature.

AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE GREAT EXHIBITION.

Punch (1851).

Figure 31



THE END OF BLOOMERISM.

THE END OF BLOOMERISM.

Punch (1852).

Figure 32



No. 44.
A DRESS OF THE FUTURE.
(Made for Mrs. King by Worth & Co.)

A RATIONAL DRESS.

No. 45.

(WORTH ET CIE, 4, Hanover Street, and Brighton.)

"Dress of the Future" (made for Mrs. E. M. King).

Black satin merveilleux. Knickerbockers slashed with red satin and trimmed with lace. Full bodice. Zouave of velvet.

Entry No. 45. (Worth et Cie, 4, Hanover Street, and Brighton)

"Dress of the Future" (made for Mrs. E. M. King). Black satin merveilleux. Knickerbockers slashed with red satin and trimmed with lace. Full bodice. Zouave of velvet.

Figure 33



No. 46.

A DRESS WITH DIVIDED SKIRT.

(By Messrs. WORTH ET CIE.)

Awarded a Silver Medal.

No. 46.

(WORTH ET CIE, 4, Hanover Street, London, W., and 74, King's Road, Brighton.)

Entry No. 46. (Worth et Cie, 4, Hanover Street, London, W. and 74, King's Road, Brighton.)
A Dress with Divided Skirt.(By Messrs. Worth et Cie.) Awarded a Silver Medal.

Figure 34



A STATUE OF VENUS.
(*Exhibited by Messrs. BELLMAN & IVEY.*)

A STATUE OF VENUS. (*Exhibited by Messrs. BELLMAN & IVEY.*)

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❧ APPENDIX A ❧

ARTICLES IN *PUNCH* DIRECTLY PERTAINING TO BLOOMERISM

Drawing only

† Article only

‡ Article and drawing

VOLUME XX (1851)

A "Bloomer"†

VOLUME XXI (1851)

Woman's Emancipation ‡

Latest from America-Quite New and Very Chaste-The Free and Enlightened
Continuations

A Check to Blooming †

Mrs. Bloomer to the Female Race†

Bloomerism-An American Custom (full page drawing)

A Probable Incident if that Bloomerism Isn't Put Down

Real Bloomerism†

Bloomerism and Bunionism ‡

Declension of Bloomerism†

Apropos of Bloomerism

The Closing of the Exhibition

A Pretty Polka†

A Bill for the Bloomer Committee†

The Meeting of the Bloomers‡

Different Views of the Bloomer Costume‡

An Exotic That Won't Do†

The Graces

Bloomerism

The Bloomer Convulsion†

The Sort of Leg That Looks Well in Bloomer Petticoats

One of the Delightful Results of Bloomerism-The Ladies Will Pop the Question

The Ex-Unprotected Female, Under the United Influence of a Strong-Minded
Friend, and The Insults of Mr. Jones, Displays Symptoms of Bloomerism†

Something More Apropos of Bloomerism

The Christmas Pantomimes†

Mrs. Grundy on Bloomerism‡

The Ex-Unprotected Female Attends a Lecture on Bloomerism†

The Proto-Bloomer†

Bloomeriana-A Dream (two full pages)

A Poser for a Bloomer
The Bloomer Ball‡
Progress of Bloomerism‡
Funny Market and Witty Intelligence
Bloomerism!‡
The Worst of British Bloomerism†
The Ex-Unprotected Female Takes Part in a Bloomer Lecture†
Unpublished Anecdote of Mrs. Bloomer†
Advice to the Bloomers†
The Bloomers to the Tailors‡
The (Bloomer) Barmaid‡

VOLUME XXII (1852)

Clerical Mrs. Bloomer†
The End of Bloomerism
Bloomer's Practice of Physic†
Doctors in Pettiloons†

VOLUME XXIV (1853)

5 pp. At front of volume entitled "The Ladies of Creation," consisting of cartoons and articles on women in male professions, all wearing Bloomers.

VOLUME 84 (1883)

The Rational Dress Show † (poem)
A Sportsman on Rational Dress† (poem)