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Source: *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), pp. 110-140

Published by: [Feminist Studies, Inc.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178301>

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# "PANTALETS" AND "TURKISH TROUSERS": DESIGNING FREEDOM IN THE MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY UNITED STATES

GAYLE V. FISCHER

And now I'm dressed like a little girl,  
In a dress both loose and short,  
Oh with what freedom I can sing,  
And walk all 'round about!  
And when I get a little strength,  
Some work I think I can do,  
'Twill give me health and comfort,  
And make me useful too.

—*The Sibyl*, April 15, 1859

During the middle of the nineteenth century in the United States, groups of women and individual women who seemed to have little, if anything, in common cast aside their long fashionable gowns and donned trousers worn beneath shortened dresses.<sup>1</sup> No single political ideology, religious theology, or social reform united these women: women's rights activists, Seventh-Day Adventists, hydropathists or water-cure doctors, health reformers, members of the National Dress Reform Association (NDRA), Strangite Mormons, and utopian communities, including Oneida, reflect the diversity of groups that joined the ranks of the dress reform movement.<sup>2</sup> For most members, dress reform was one issue among many and its importance varied. All these dress reformers, however, were linked by their belief in the superiority of reform dress over contemporary fashionable styles. They also shared another connection, one they seldom acknowledged—similar reform costume designs.

An understanding of the design origins and the construction

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Engraving portraying Amelia Jenks Bloomer from the *Water-Cure Journal* 12 (October 1851): 96.

techniques of various reform costumes offers clues to how the female reformers may have seen themselves—and how the American public may have interpreted their actions. Although dress reformers meant to send a particular message, observers quite often saw something different from what reformers had intended. Outraged commentators clearly perceived what dress reformers tried to downplay: by wearing pants—of any kind—women appropriated male dress, and, by association, male privilege and power. Understanding that pants had long been considered a male garment and that this association would be difficult to break, most dress reformers sought a version of bifurcated clothing with no masculine associations. Dress reformers faced the challenge of reinterpreting female garments from outside contexts—"Oriental" costume<sup>3</sup> and children's wear—into acceptable female apparel for middle-class American women. The evidence also indicates that some dress reformers designed their reform garments based on men's clothing and exercise outfits.<sup>4</sup> Borrowing pieces of male or sport apparel immediately implied masculinization and a threat to the nineteenth-century sex/gender system; therefore, few dress reformers openly did so. Surprisingly, when feminists brought orientalized notions of Eastern dress and Oneida Perfectionists brought aspects of children's dress, instead of male pants, into the service of dress reform they failed to mitigate or mute the blatant act of gender appropriation inherent in the act of wearing trousers.

None of the dress reformers left detailed information about the origins of the short dress and pants style, forcing historians to piece together snippets buried in diaries, letters, and published works. Two groups which left intriguing hints about the process of creating reform garments are the Oneida Community and the women's rights movement.<sup>5</sup> Given the political and social differences between the two, it is all the more curious that they shared a belief in their abilities to introduce elements of fashion from "innocent" or "infantile" sources in order to create a new, acceptable, alternative female fashion. How they came to choose Eastern dress and children's wear and how observers reacted to their choices reveal the cultural investment nineteenth-century U.S. society had made in men's pants.

## **PANTS, PANTALOONS, AND PANTALETTES**

A misconception about reform dress that has persisted into the twentieth century is that dress reformers looked solely to men's clothing as the inspiration for their reform garb—observers considered reform dress "a travesty of male attire."<sup>6</sup> Most of nineteenth-century society, including dress-reforming women, thought male dress superior to female clothing and freely expressed this opinion. Dress reformers, however, wanted to reform female dress for comfortable fit, physical well-being, religious beliefs, women's rights, or work opportunities—not to blur distinctions between the sexes. Whether male clothing actually was more comfortable, convenient, or "natural" does not really matter. Trousers represented physical freedom. And some women imagined being freed from societal restraints as well.

Dress reformers wanted to wear pants, so not surprisingly, their arguments stressed that there was nothing inherently male about trousers and that the garment could be adapted and made feminine. Most dress reformers, as women of their time, could not have conceived of themselves as dressed in "true" male garb of pants, jacket, shirt, collar, tie, and hat and played down references to borrowing clothing from the opposite sex.<sup>7</sup> Different camps tried different versions; the pants component of the costume proved to be problematic, because the majority of mid-nineteenth-century women had never worn an exposed bifurcated garment before.<sup>8</sup> Some did turn to men's wear for ideas, but this course was replete with problems.

Mainstream society did not want women to wear men's pants. However, it is difficult to determine if the general public's resistance to female trousers stemmed more from the fear that women would seize male power or from the fear that pants-clad women would be unabashedly "sexy." Most of the diatribes against reform dress printed for mass circulation stressed the opinion that women would somehow become coarsened, more "male," if they wore bifurcated garments. Only a year after the introduction of the "bloomers," cartoons began to appear that depicted one of the biggest fears about reform clothing—that men would become feminine. Numerous articles and essays charged that if women wore the pants then it would logically follow that men would wear dresses and as-

sume the female characteristic of dependence, as this biting poem makes clear:

Now then, my dear,  
 We'll smoke and cheer and drink our lager beer;  
 We'll have our latch-keys, stay out late at night;  
 And boldly we'll assert our female rights;  
 While conquered men, our erewhile tyrant foes,  
 Shall stay at home and wear our cast-off clothes,  
 Nurse babies, scold the servants, get our dinners;  
 'Tis all that they are fit for, wretched sinners!<sup>9</sup>

Most women and men seemed incapable of imagining clothing that was not gender specific. There was also eroticism inherent in the idea of women in pants. The language of dress in the nineteenth century made "men's pants" into charged, even sexualized words. Ironically, euphemisms, such as "inexpressibles," "unwhisperables," and "don't mentions," which were intended to allow polite society to avoid the suggestion of sex, did just the opposite.<sup>10</sup> (See fig. 1.)

In such a charged atmosphere, at least two groups of dress reformers—feminists and Oneida Perfectionists—turned away from men's trousers and looked elsewhere for "safer" models. Clothing from Eastern countries was one choice, although the sexual suggestiveness of pantaloons seemed unavoidable. Western travelers to the East showed a great deal of fascination with Eastern clothing and often affected "Oriental" dress while staying in the Middle East. The veil and the *ferace* (a long, loose robe) captivated Western observers more than any other article of Eastern women's clothing. These articles also suggested eroticism, because they hid the female face and form behind drapery and hinted at the sexual pleasures that could be found beneath the flowing cloth. Fashion historian Valerie Steele, has found that images of the harem were considered both exotic and erotic. Decades after the freedom dress debuted, Steele noted that the "notorious *jupe-culotte* (or harem trouser-skirt) of 1911" caused a scandal, in part, because it indicated the legs.<sup>11</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who lived in the Middle East while her husband served as an ambassador, wrote in 1717 of the freedom she enjoyed wearing her pants "here, within the closely-guarded chambers of the harem." There is a hint of the erotic in her writings, suggesting that

WOMAN'S EMANCIPATION.  
(BEING A LETTER ADDRESSED TO MR. PUNCH, WITH A DRAWING, BY A STRONG-MINDED AMERICAN WOMAN.)

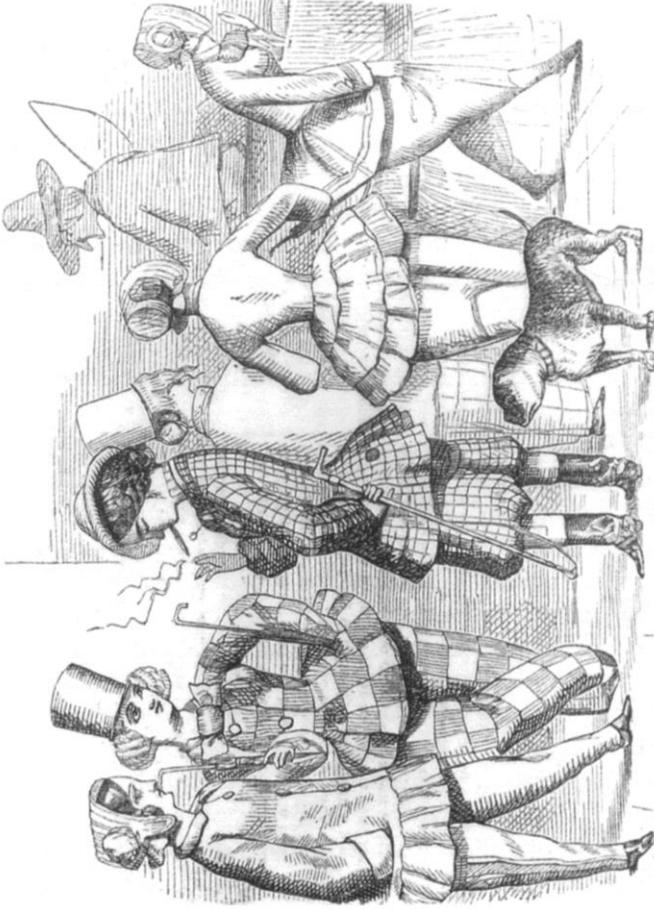


Fig. 1. This cartoon shows that once women have taken over the key symbol of manhood—pants—they will soon adopt others, such as cigars, hats, and jackets. The jackets depicted here are much shorter than any reform dress, perhaps another hint at the erotic. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 3 (August 1851).

women in trousers could not be seen outside protected walls because they might arouse men. In a letter to her sister, Montague insisted that "the first part of my dress is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes, and conceal the legs more modestly than your petticoats."<sup>12</sup> Because no flesh could be seen, Montague argued in favor of the modesty of the bifurcated garments. But the physical release of the body implied a sensuality, stereotypically associated with Eastern culture, that was not possible for a body confined in stays and long skirts.

The prevalence of Middle Eastern elements in nineteenth-century fashionable dress supports the theory that foreign dress influenced some later reform garments.<sup>13</sup> The incorporation of "exotic motifs" into Western fashion was a way of adding a "thrill" of something foreign or rare to familiar fashions.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the growth and prosperity of the East Indian trade resulted in an influx of new fabrics and accessories into the United States. Long shawls, especially "genuine India Cachemire" shawls, as well as imitations, frequently draped fashionable gowns in the 1830s and 1840s. The shawls adapted from the Middle East proved popular among Western women. Turbans of the "Turkish form" and the familiarity of other articles of Middle, Near, and Far Eastern apparel may have laid the groundwork for the introduction of "Turkish trowsers," first as a masquerade costume, later as a reform garment.<sup>15</sup> The proliferation of popular engravings of women in Turkish dress, which included trousers, may have also influenced the decision to adapt this style for reform garments. (See fig. 2.) Furthermore, descriptions of the women's rights freedom dress usually included the term "Turkish trowsers," suggesting that the public readily understood what the phrase meant.<sup>16</sup>

*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, unlike many other contemporary magazines, enthusiastically featured the "Turkish" costume on its fashion pages. The July 1851 *Harper's* article freely criticized "the trailing skirts" of Western women and complimented the "more elegant dresses of Oriental women." The accompanying illustrations of Near Eastern women looked remarkably like Western dress with the addition of "Eastern" jewelry and accessories. The magazine included the opinion that women could wear "trowsers" if "*properly* done." Appar-



Fig. 2. A Western interpretation of Middle Eastern women's dress. Note the full trousers gathered at the ankle and the long overjacket that extends below the knee. The jewelry and emphasis on the breasts and small waist also suggests that Middle Eastern clothing was considered sexually alluring. From *Graham's Illustrated Magazine* 53 (August 1858).

ently the proper way for women to wear pants was to wear imitations of those worn in the "Orient," the implication being that docile "Eastern" women and their clothing did not pose a danger to the existing sex-gender system in the West.<sup>17</sup> (See fig. 3.)

Children's clothing also inspired reform attire. At first it may seem that borrowing a garment from children had a greater possibility of acceptance than trousers borrowed from the Middle East, with their suggestion of the erotic and the exotic. However, in the late 1840s pantalettes for little girls were still a fairly recent import from Europe. By 1821 in Europe and England, and some years later in the United States, most girls wore pantaloons beneath their skirts. Until the 1830s, most Americans still considered pantaloons a novelty. It did not take long for children's pantaloons to become known as pantalettes. At first, "only loose flapping frills tied on with drawing strings below the knee, and hanging over the foot," made up a girl's pantalettes.<sup>18</sup> One of the most obvious disadvantages to these garments was the difficulty in keeping them in place or of losing them entirely. In time, it became common practice to attach the pantalettes to knee-length underdrawers. Girls' pantalettes resembled a boy's first pair of long pants. Both had tucked, embroidered, or ruffled frills at the hem. Often a drawstring added fullness at the ankle for both sexes, not unlike the gathering at the ankle of Turkish trousers.

Many women in mainstream society objected to drawers/pantalettes as an article of female apparel and would not allow their daughters to wear them, after the garment's initial introduction. They based their objections on the drawers being unhealthy, indelicate, and even indecent. But the strongest objection seemed to be that the drawers resembled boys' trousers and that mothers did not want to dress their daughters "like a parcel of boys."<sup>19</sup> Many adult women refused to wear bifurcated undergarments for the same reasons. In the 1840s, adult women began to adopt a variation on girls' pantalettes, drawers, as an undergarment.<sup>20</sup>

The general acceptance that bifurcated garments belonged only to men forced women in the United States who wanted to wear drawers, which extended to the waist, as an undergarment to do so "slowly and cautiously." The adoption of the undergarments proved to be such a remarkable event that



Fig. 3. *Harper's* printed their version of "Turkish Costume" to serve as a model for dress reformers to adapt. *Harper's* interpretation of Middle Eastern clothing mimics Western dress more closely than do other versions. Note the fitted bodice, off-the-shoulder neckline, voluminous skirt—this dress hardly seems the answer to dress reformers' search for a practical outfit for women. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 3 (July 1851).

*Godey's Lady's Book* editor Sarah Josepha Hale could recall the first girl she knew who "courageously" wore them. Hale also remembered whispered remarks about women who wore pantalettes and the practice being called "an abomination unto the Lord."<sup>21</sup> In time, however, the undergarment became an acceptable item of female attire for middle-class women. Upper-class and working-class women adopted the underclothing for general use at a later date.<sup>22</sup>

The assumption of drawers, stockings, and pantalettes sometimes indicated major transitions in a girl's life and could signify an advance from infant to schoolgirl. Some dress reformers questioned why short dresses, "which all agree are decidedly becoming for a young miss," were "so *improper, indelicate, and immodest*, as soon as she has passed into her teens?" They further wondered why women had to cover their "lower extremities to the very tip of the toe with a flowing robe."<sup>23</sup> Sometimes young women used dress to prolong their childhood; for example, Gertrude, an Oneida girl, demonstrated her reluctance to make the change to womanhood and refused to wear the "adult" short dress with pantalettes.<sup>24</sup>

By the time reform garments appeared around 1848, most women had been wearing drawers as an undergarment beneath their gowns for at least a few years. Thus women had some experience, albeit limited experience, with wearing a type of bifurcated garment. Apparently some reform trousers followed the pattern of women's drawers and did not sew the crotch seam closed, but others did. Reform dress introduced trousers as a visible component to women's dress. Previously, a woman's drawers had not been exposed to public view. In fact, a woman's underdrawers seldom surfaced as a topic of discussion. In the first edition of *Lady Chesterfield's Letters to Her Daughters*, written in the middle of the nineteenth century, Chesterfield wrote on the subject of drawers:

I have worn skirts that dragged on the ground, and skirts that ended one inch above my ankles, showing the vandyked or frilled edges of those comfortable garments which we have borrowed from the other sex, and which all of us wear and none of us talk about.<sup>25</sup>

Subsequent editions of the book omitted the above reference to undergarments.

In contrast to adult clothing, from the 1830s until the end of the century young children's clothing sometimes obscured gen-

der differences. (See fig. 4.) Toddler girls and boys wore short, loose-fitting dresses until about two or three years of age. Until the age of five or six, some children wore dresses or suits with short skirts. Both girls' and boys' skirted styles bore a strong resemblance to women's dress of the period, usually reflecting current fashions in sleeve, neckline, and so on. However, that is not to say that boys dressed *exactly* like girls.<sup>26</sup> Descriptions of children's clothing in fashion magazines made it clear that subtle differences between female and male styles existed, yet the basic silhouette remained the same for the sexes.<sup>27</sup>

When women decided to reform their fashionable dresses, nineteenth-century culture offered them few choices from which to choose alternatives—men's pants, Turkish pantaloons, or children's pantalettes. Most dress reformers were not designers or artists talented enough to create something completely new; they relied on their environment to provide them with inspiration. As a result, the various reform dress designs proved remarkably similar, even as the design sources seemed worlds apart.

## TURKISH TROUSERS

The decision of women's rights advocates to wear and their approval of Turkish trousers expands on recent interpretations of nineteenth-century "feminist Orientalist discourse" which charges that nineteenth-century Western feminists defined aspects of Western life they found objectionable as "Eastern" and made them objects of reform. Thus, "Orientalist discourse" was primarily a "strategy (and a form of thought) by which a speaker or writer neutralized the threat inherent in feminist demands and [made] them palatable to an audience that wishe[d] to affirm its occidental superiority."<sup>28</sup>

Mervat Hatem concluded that Orientalism worked against European women because they considered their situations so much better than Eastern women's oppression that they were unable to articulate or understand a different form of subjugation—the one under which they lived.<sup>29</sup> Suvendrini Perera observed Western women consciously appropriating Eastern images to use as representations of the oppression of Western women, yet these same women failed to recognize the suffering



Fig. 4. This picture of juvenile fashions shows the similarity between girls' and boys' clothing. It is difficult to distinguish the sex of the children. However, the toys shown in the illustration would have made it clear to the nineteenth-century readers who was a girl and who was a boy. Dress may have blurred the children's gender, yet distinctive clues were included to avoid any confusion. From *Godsey's Lady's Book and Magazine* 40-41 (September 1850).

of Eastern women as significant.<sup>30</sup> Judy Mabro noticed that for centuries Europeans had been fascinated and repelled by their image of what the veil was and what it hid.<sup>31</sup> These scholars focus on written words or the images of veils and harems—which obsessed Western observers—and they pay little attention to Western women in Eastern clothing or adaptations of Eastern styles. The following 1864 poem is an example of how "Orientalist discourse" theory might be used to understand nineteenth-century antifashion sentiments.

Talk of Turkish women  
 In their harem-coop,—  
 Are we less inhuman,  
 Hampering with a hoop?  
 All free motion thwarted;  
 Mortals *à la mort*;  
 Life's a thing aborted,  
 Through your drabble-skirt.<sup>32</sup>

The poem compares the "inhuman" "Turkish" harem with the "inhuman" Western practice of wearing physically restrictive clothing. The comparison suggests that Western women dressed in the height of fashion are in the same position as oppressed Turkish women. This ploy could potentially set the stage for the introduction of a new garment for women; ironically, and in contrast to Perera's interpretation, the alternative clothing eventually introduced was that already being worn by "imprisoned" Turkish women: Turkish trowsers.

Sociologist and costume historian Jennifer Craik attempts to clarify the complexities of cultural borrowing within fashion by theorizing that "because fashion systems are built on the interrelationship and tension between exotic and familiar codes, exotic looks are all the more effective as techniques of display." Exoticism could be expressed through "foreign or rare motifs in fashion."<sup>33</sup> Costume historian Shelly Foote points out that borrowing from the East in the nineteenth century was fraught with difficulties. In her own research she has found that some Western clothing included adaptations of "pagan motifs" (Egyptian symbols). Foote concludes that the close connection between the Middle East and the Bible might be the key to the acceptance and appeal of "Eastern" images, because Americans in the nineteenth century kept looking for cultural survivals to

put them closer to biblical times.<sup>34</sup> Whether this idea motivated nineteenth-century feminists to try Near Eastern trousers is difficult to determine, but it certainly shows the complex threads involved in adopting aspects of one culture into another. Using Craik's theory we can begin to see the feminists' acceptance of Turkish trousers as part of the tension between freedom of movement (an exotic element) and the constraint of fashion (the familiar).

Craik's discussion of how non-Western cultures incorporate Western elements into their fashions helps us understand what the nineteenth-century feminists may have ended up doing. Craik is convinced that clothing is important in the "deployment of power and prestige," and she suggests that individuals can strategically use elements of fashion from different cultures to produce a new "dress code." These new codes can be commentaries on "political exigencies as well as practical ways to negotiate the conflicting departments of existence."<sup>35</sup>

Once women's rights advocates (led by Elizabeth Smith Miller, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Amelia Jenks Bloomer) decided to try a short dress and trousers combination, they needed to decide what their particular costume would look like.<sup>36</sup> At first, the women did not consider a change in clothing to be a political move but an opportunity to enjoy greater freedom of movement. Because much of nineteenth-century U.S. society considered pants more hygienic and comfortable than long skirts, it is not too surprising that the feminists would contemplate incorporating trousers into their reform. Designing the dress proved relatively easy; the women simply modified the existing fashion. The description of the original "Bloomer costume" paralleled current styles "except that [the] skirts have been robbed of about a foot of their former length."<sup>37</sup> The pants, however, proved more problematic. Renowned costume historian Stella Mary Newton suggests that the number of "popular engravings of melting beauties in Turkish trousers that followed the cult of Byron and the French conquest of Algeria" influenced the feminists' costume design.<sup>38</sup> Avoiding a direct appropriation of Western men's wear, they incorporated Turkish trousers into their costume. In backing away from male trousers, women's rights advocates attempted to distance themselves from the image of power conveyed by the garment.

They also sought to distance themselves from the sexual implications society invested in the "unmentionable" male trousers. Images of Eastern women, however, particularly Arab and Turkish women, conveyed a highly erotic picture to the West.<sup>39</sup>

The freedom costume's soft, curving pantaloons proved to be the most "feminine" of the reform trouser designs. The women's rights leaders gathered the hem of their pants "into a band and buttoned round the ankle," or they created what they thought prettier, a "gathered or plaited up" hem which had been "trimmed to suit the taste of the wearer."<sup>40</sup> This ankle treatment created a line that began at the hem of the skirt, curved slightly away from the body, and then gently rounded back to the ankle. The gathering or pleats added fullness to each leg and the resulting "look" was one we commonly associate with "harem" pants and seldom imagine men wearing. (See fig. 5.) No matter how "feminine" the costume, the connection between the women's rights agitators and reform dress led critics to denounce it as masculine—or to level charges of licentiousness.<sup>41</sup> Bifurcated garments, no matter how "soft" the design, belonged exclusively to men. Stanton, Bloomer, and Miller may have initially tried Turkish trowsers because they were different, exotic, and offered freedom of movement, but at the same time the women unintentionally created a new "dress code." That is, the women made wearing pants with a short dress into a political statement about women's status in the United States.

Whether the sexually provocative elements of Eastern dress made it undesirable to most dress reformers is not clear. However, the women's rights advocates appear to be the only dress reformers to wear Turkish trowsers. Some dress reformers may have shunned Turkish trowsers because they did not want their costumes associated with Eastern clothing. Others rejected the full pants because they associated the garment with the cause of women's rights. Ideological reasons kept some women from wearing any modifications of the Turkish style. Other reformers simply thought the "pretty and piquant dress—too juvenile in its *tout ensemble* . . . for grown-up women."<sup>42</sup> Thus, Turkish trowsers became one means of identifying the political or ideological orientation of the wearer. Unfortunately, not all women's rights advocates favored the "harem" pants, which further complicated one's ability to visually distinguish reform costumes.



Fig. 5. *Sartain's* preferred the name "Camilla" costume for the outfits depicted above but used "Bloomer Costume" because it was more readily recognizable. Note the similarities between these costumes and the illustrations of Middle Eastern dress. Not only do these outfits borrow their trousers from the Middle East, but much of the ornamentation and the silhouette seem to be repeated as well. These costumes exhibit more "feminine" features than were usually displayed on reform garments. One might call these dresses attractive, even sexually alluring, further distinguishing them from most depictions of reform dress. From *Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art* 4 (September 1851).

Historian Amy Kesselman accepts unequivocally that "the new costume" was "modeled after the dress of Moslem women" and that it "met a particularly warm reception among practitioners and advocates of hydropathy and water cure."<sup>43</sup> In contrast to Kesselman's interpretation, evidence reveals that some U.S. water-cure establishments borrowed techniques and spa outfits from European health resorts. Furthermore, the NDRA,<sup>44</sup> which had a large hydropathic following, implied that they based their American costume on men's wear.<sup>45</sup> Because reform costumes closely resembled one another, Kesselman's assumption that they all had the same roots is understandable. However, water-cure doctors and the NDRA objected to Turkish pantaloons for several reasons; they disliked the fullness of Turkish trowsers and the pantaloons offended their sense of Americanism. Many antifashion commentators objected to fashionable dress because of its French origins. They feared that once French dress entered the country then French ideas and French beliefs would soon follow. The hydropaths and the NDRA concurred with these sentiments and often stated that American women needed to get out from under the control of foreign nations, notably French fashions. Turkish trowsers, with their tie to the Near Eastern nations, would have been inappropriate to wearers of the American costume because the American costume "show[ed] the world that in dress, as well as religion, society and government, [Americans] are able to follow [their] own ideas."<sup>46</sup> To wear Turkish trowsers implied that American women were too weak or unsophisticated to create a truly "American costume" and, instead, had to borrow their clothing from another country.

Opponents of dress reform heard women demanding their rights and saw women wearing a garment they believed belonged exclusively to men. Thus, critical observers claimed they saw men or a "third sex" or even "no sex" when they gazed upon women wearing pants.<sup>47</sup> Antagonists of women's rights dress reformers expended an enormous amount of energy to get the women back in long dresses. Caricatures of cigar-smoking, trouser-wearing feminists proved to be one of the more popular forms of attack; the image of the masculine feminist became synonymous with the image of the "ugly feminist." The barrage eventually wore away at the women's rights advo-

lates' resolve and contributed to the collapse of dress reform among them.<sup>48</sup> Once short skirts and trousers became inextricably linked to women's rights, most dress reformers actively pushed to distance themselves from the women's rights movement. The similarity of the dresses made it almost impossible for the reformers to convince outsiders that they did not participate in or share the ideology of the women's rights movement. Each dress reform group pursued its own agenda with reform costume and denying knowledge of other dress reformers helped to distance their costume and their politics.

Writing the *History of Woman Suffrage* years later, the authors (including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony) offered one of several reasons why women's rights activists stopped wearing the freedom dress: "No sooner did a few brave conscientious women adopt the bifurcated costume, an imitation in part of the Turkish style, that [sic] the press at once turned its guns on" the costume.<sup>49</sup> This suggests that perhaps the use of Near Eastern dress may have had something to do with the general disapproval of the short reform dress. According to Marjorie Garber, literary and cultural critic, "despite the rage for artifacts *à la Turquie* in style and home decoration," the freedom dress's "'Turkish' connotations" precipitated negative repercussions. Some critics branded the costumes heathenish because of their association with Islam.<sup>50</sup> In 1853 Mrs. L.G. Abell questioned the morality of women who could give up the dress "civilization and Christianity have so kindly given" them. Abell did not limit her criticism to women dressed in "Eastern" dress but saw women in "male attire" and women wearing "Turkish costume" on the same continuum.<sup>51</sup>

The decision to give up the freedom dress angered Stanton's cousin, reformer Gerrit Smith. To Smith the whole revolution in women's position turned on their dress, and he refused to acknowledge that the women's rights leaders' clothing decision was, in part, a politically expedient measure. Respectably dressed—even fashionable—women speakers were more likely to be listened to by middle-class women. Yet Smith tried, unsuccessfully, to use negative images of "Eastern" women to put feminists back into "bloomers." He identified, as the activists themselves had done earlier, the relationship "between . . . dress and [the] degradation of an American woman." Smith re-

mind the women's rights advocates that American fashion was similar to "the cramped foot and degradation of a Chinese woman" and "the inmate of the harem and the apparel and training provided for her."<sup>52</sup> But unlike Gerrit Smith, Elizabeth Cady Stanton appreciated the undue pressure of public opinion and the politically expedient sacrifice.<sup>53</sup> She "never wondered" again, she said, that "Chinese women allow their daughters' feet to be encased in iron shoes," because those who tried to resist "Custom" or fashion suffered a great penalty.<sup>54</sup>

If the women's rights dress reformers chose Turkish trowsers in order to distance their costume from male dress and make it more palatable to the general public, then they failed. Although many disliked the freedom dress because of its Eastern origins, they were far outnumbered by those who simply felt that women dressed in "Turkish" pantaloons looked like men. The idea of "feminine trousers" seemed a contradiction—society wondered how a female version of an exclusively male garment could possibly exist. In the case of women's rights dress reformers, the original intention of their reform was lost and reshaped by public reaction to it. In contrast, the women in the Oneida Perfectionist Community succeeded almost too well in tying their original concept about reform dress to their ideas about womanhood.

## **CHILDREN'S DRESS**

Although the freedom dress became an unofficial symbol of women's rights and implied empowerment for women, the Oneida "short dress" suggested a different type of womanhood, and the roots of its design were in Western children's wear, not Eastern women's attire. According to the Perfectionist women, they had already "obtained [their] dearest rights."<sup>55</sup> Oneida principles insisted on the rights and importance of women, but this did not mean that women and men were equal. Paul stated the proper relation of the sexes, the community argued, when he wrote that "the head of every woman is the man." God's plan pronounced that man "take care of her [woman], and see that she is 'holy and without blame.'"<sup>56</sup> A "true womanly spirit" included the virtue of "meekness" and "esteemed others better than" oneself, but women claimed their rightful place as the

"free and honored companion of man."<sup>57</sup> In their day-to-day activities, Oneida's gender-specific roles remained remarkably similar to these of mainstream society.<sup>58</sup> (See fig. 6.) The community strongly objected to women trying to act like men, breaking their subordinate connection with men, or becoming independent. They understood the "loud" and "assertive" women's rights activists to be the type of woman they most objected to.<sup>59</sup> Although they discussed and commented on the activities of the women's rights movement, Oneida Community women felt little empathy for the campaign the women waged. Oneida followers even wondered about the dedication of the feminists who had given up their freedom costumes.

The Oneida Community's interest in reform dress predated the women's rights activists' involvement by more than two years. Shortly after moving his community of followers to Oneida, New York, in 1848, John Humphrey Noyes first introduced the topic of reform costume during a discussion of women's contemporary dress. Later that year, Noyes published his ideas about women's dress. He repeatedly wrote that the contemporary woman's dresses denied that she was "a two-legged animal" but was instead "something like a churn, standing on castors!" In contrast to mainstream critiques, Oneida Community criticism of clothing focused on the way dress made the "distinction between the sexes vastly more prominent and obtrusive than nature [made] it." What a costume for women that would "break up effeminacy" and allow them to take "part in many kinds of industry usually considered masculine" would look like generated much discussion. Noyes proposed an alternative costume for women to wear—"the dress of children—frock and pantalettes."<sup>60</sup> Later, the Oneida Association's Annual Report would also recommend that women adapt children's dress for their clothing. Children's clothing seemed an obvious choice for Oneida. The community hoped to institute gender-neutral clothing, and sexual distinctions in children's clothing did not become obvious until about the ages of five or six. In actual practice fabric, trim, and headwear often revealed the sex of a child even when they wore similar garments. The Perfectionists made it acceptable for women to wear trousers because they *really* wore a child's undergarment and pantalettes.<sup>61</sup> And there is no indication that the Perfec-



Fig. 6. A young Oneida woman with an Oneida Community invention. It was not uncommon for the men in the community to invent "labor-saving" devices that the women then used. Courtesy of the Oneida Community Mansion House.

tionist women themselves freely chose or wanted to follow the silhouette of children's dress.<sup>62</sup>

Inspired by the discussion of reform dress—but unaware of alternative designs—two of the community's most prominent women, Noyes's wife, Harriet Holton Noyes, and a favored lover of Noyes, Mary Cragin, set about making a new costume.<sup>63</sup> When the women courageously appeared before the Oneida "family" in their new short dresses, the responses ranged from shock to acceptance. With the encouragement of John Humphrey Noyes, other women followed this example, until frocks and loose pantalettes became the typical attire in the community. However, the recommendation that men also adopt a distinctive costume based on children's clothing never received support.

The short dress costume followed the silhouette as well as the patterns and sewing techniques of children's dress. At Oneida the women wore "pantalettes" while other dress reformers wore "trousers" or "pants" or "pantaloons." Like little girls' pantalettes, Oneida pantalettes consisted of two tubes that either buttoned to the underdrawers at the knee or tied on just above the knee. The Oneida women seem to have been the only dress reformers to wear this version of a bifurcated garment. (See fig. 7.) Every Oneida woman made her own clothes and, within specified parameters, followed her own taste in making the short dress. The women used the same dress pattern year after year, thereby protecting the clothing from fashionable alterations and ensuring that a dress had a long life.<sup>64</sup>

But women attired in reform costume with "true" pantalettes, cotton tubes attached at the knees and ending at the ankles, unquestionably wore a child's garment—while men did not wear reform or gender-neutral clothes. The style unquestionably made Oneida women appear infantile or childlike.<sup>65</sup> Unless a woman lifted her skirt well above the level of modesty, the casual observer would not know whether she wore trousers or pantalettes. The woman who wore pantalettes, however, knew that her garment bore almost no resemblance to male trousers, and this knowledge proved to be significant—childlike women needed "guardians" and "providers."<sup>66</sup> Women at Oneida augmented the childlike reform dress by cutting their hair, reassured of the propriety of the act by



Fig. 7. The Oneida pantalettes are indistinguishable from trousers once the skirt is lowered. Courtesy of the Oneida Community Mansion House.

Noyes. He encouraged the women to cut off their hair in the "simple mode of little girls, down in the neck," and adult Oneida women thus ended up looking like little girls with short dresses and short hair.<sup>67</sup> Harriet M. Worden, Oneida Perfectionist, remembered with pleasure that short hair and short dresses did indeed make women appear so youthful that "visitors often [mistook] our middle-aged women for girls, and our young women for children."<sup>68</sup>

John Humphrey Noyes valued youth and lectured his followers that one way to keep young "was to keep up our attractiveness." He pointed out that the "virgin state" had proven to be the most attractive condition for women and recommended that women "find a way to keep [them]selves in a virgin state all the time."<sup>69</sup> Dressing like children seems a logical way for women to fulfill both criteria—looking young and virginal.<sup>70</sup> Whatever the motivation, pantaletted Oneida women experienced the same negative reactions that plagued the women's rights dress reformers. The community members agreed that the harassment women experienced when wearing the short dress outside the security of the commune had to be dealt with. As a result, whenever Oneida females had to travel in the world, they wore long dresses indistinguishable from those worn by most middle-class women. An exposed bifurcated garment worn by women, no matter what its source or how it was made, angered the public.

## CONCLUSION

Art historian Anne Hollander points out that the "most important aspect of clothing is the way it looks," and to most nineteenth-century observers it "looked" like the dress reformers, regardless of their different political, social, or religious agendas, wore men's pants.<sup>71</sup> They may have adapted drawers, children's pantalettes, or Turkish trowsers, and the reformers may have tried to distance their bifurcated garments from men's trousers, but to most women and men in nineteenth-century America it "looked" like the women stole a male garment and wore it. Observers' reactions to dress reformers' costumes had little to do with particular design origins; frilly pantaloons appeared just as threatening as tapered trousers. Women in any

form of bifurcated garments challenged the mid-nineteenth-century sex/gender system which used the language of clothing to visually distinguish the places of women and men in society.

People could not take their eyes off reform dress trousers and never for a moment thought that they gazed upon anything but an exclusively male garment, even though almost all dress-reforming women continued to wear skirts, albeit shorter skirts, over their pants. It would seem that the feminine skirt would mitigate the horror of women in trousers. However, the design of nineteenth-century men's frock coats included a rather full "skirt" which reached to the knee, echoing the silhouette of reform dress, thus adding fuel to the fire. A report in an 1852 edition of the *New York Times* reveals the true source of this fear:

These ladies assert their claim to rights, which we of bifurcated raiment are charged with usurping. This claim conflicts with, and if secured, will tend to diminish the rights of masculine mankind. . . . But the ladies go still further; and he must be blind who does not perceive in these low murmurings, a storm that shall eventually rob manhood of all its grand prerogatives. . . .<sup>72</sup>

Trousers, no doubt, counted as one of manhood's "grand prerogatives," no matter how innocuous the design origins of the garment worn by women. Today trousers—tomorrow, the ballot.

## NOTES

I would like to thank the following people for their invaluable help in getting this article into shape: Kathryn W. Fuller, Anne Epstein, LuAnne Holladay, the anonymous readers, and the *Feminist Studies* editorial collective.

1. Short dresses and trousers are commonly referred to as "bloomers," however, technically, "bloomers" only refer to the specific garment worn by Amelia Jenks Bloomer and the women associated with the "women's rights movement" around 1851. Furthermore, as Gerda Lerner noted, not only was the word "bloomer" "odious" to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others, but it was an "epithet designed to ridicule" feminists. Therefore, the word "bloomer" will not be used to refer to reform garments; instead, I will use the names the different dress reformers gave their respective costumes. Gerda Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 335; and Alice Stone Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer Woman Suffragist* (Northwood, Mass.: Plimpton Press, 1930), 104-13.

2. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the connections between the variety of dress reform organizations that erupted on the scene around 1850. I cover this topic in my dissertation, "Who Wears the Pants? Women, Dress Reform, and

Power in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States" (Indiana University, Bloomington, 1995), and the book-length study on which I am currently working. General histories of any of the groups listed here will usually mention their dress reform activities; however, the only connection that is often made to other dress reformers is to the women's rights movement.

3. The most basic definition of Orientalism is a Western interpretation of the Orient (or the East) that focuses on the contrasts between the cultures and ends up revealing more about Western culture than Eastern. The interpretations usually imply that the East is inferior to the West. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

4. Shelly Foote, "Bloomers," *Costume* 5 (1980): 11; Patricia Campbell Warner, "Public and Private: Men's Influence on American Women's Dress for Sport and Physical Education," *Dress* 14 (1988): 48-55; Ann Buerman Wass and Clarita Anderson, "What Did Women Wear to Run?" *Dress* 17 (1990): 169-84; Jennifer A. Hargreaves, "Playing like Gentlemen While Behaving like Ladies: Contradictory Features of the Formative Years of Women's Sport," *British Journal of Sports History* 2 (May 1985): 46; Jihang Park, "Sport, Dress Reform, and the Emancipation of Women in Victorian England: A Reappraisal," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6 (May 1989): 16-20.

5. In addition, the Oneida short dress and the women's rights freedom dress were two of the earliest reform costumes developed in the mid-nineteenth century. It appears that the many dress reformers who followed often adapted short dresses and freedom dresses for their reforms rather than seeking to create new styles. Thus, indirectly, later reform dresses can be traced back to children's apparel or Eastern attire.

6. Harriet N. Austin, "The Reform Dress," *The Water-Cure Journal* 23 (January 1857): 3; "The Demoralization of Dress," *The Health Reformer* 4 (September 1869): 57; Madame Demorest, "Dress and Its Relation to Health," *The Herald of Health and Journal of Physical Culture* 9 (January 1867): 16.

7. It appears that some women borrowed male dress or elements of male apparel as an avenue to gain power denied them elsewhere in their lives. Some dress reformers introduced features found exclusively in men's clothing into their reform garments; other women, some of whom identified themselves as dress reformers, donned male garb from head to toe. But these were exceptions.

8. At times skirt length also distinguished costumes. The most popular criteria for the length of the skirt was that a woman should be able to negotiate the stairs with ease when attired in the short dress and many women wrote of their experiences with the costume and stairs. E.H.V.F., "Dress, Disease, and Doctors," *The Water-Cure Journal* 14 (October 1852): 92; Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: As Revealed in Her Letters, Diary, and Reminiscences* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922), 1: 171; "Olive Logan and Woman's Dress," *The Revolution*, 8 July 1869, 10; Blackwell, 104-13.

9. "Men's Rights Convention at—Extraordinary Proceedings, Exciting Scenes, and Curious Speeches: From Our Own Reporter, Chericot," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 45 (April 1852): 268-73. Also see *Yankee Notions* (1851-52) for more examples of caricatures and poems.

10. Phillis Cunnington, *Costume in Pictures* (London: Herbert Press, 1964), 101; Rachel H. Kemper, *Costume* (New York: Newsweek Books, 1977), 123-24.

11. Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 232-33.

12. Mary Wortley Montague's travel writings enjoyed a new audience and populari-

- ty after *Godey's* published her letters to her sister in 1852. See "Costumes of All Nations: The Toilette in Turkey," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 45 (January 1852): 45.
13. Susannah Worth, "Embroidered China Crepe Shawls, 1816-1863," *Dress* 12 (1986): 43-54; Jean Gordon Lee, *Philadelphians and the China Trade, 1784-1844* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984).
14. Jennifer Craik discusses the tension between the exotic and the familiar in *Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 17-43.
15. Near Eastern, Far Eastern, and Middle Eastern images in circulation were not limited to clothing: Mary, "Fallen Babylon," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 40 (November 1848): 275 [a poem]; R. Penn Smith, "Azib and His Friends," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 41 (November 1849): 354-57 [a story]; and "Wandering Life in the East," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 40 (March 1848), no page [an engraving done for *Godey's*]. "Lady Writers on Eastern Life," *Graham's Illustrated Magazine*, August 1858, 111-20. Barbara Novak briefly touches on the influences Eastern imagery and attitudes had on nineteenth-century American painting. See Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 135-37.
16. Stella Mary Newton, *Health, Art, and Reason: Dress Reformers of the Nineteenth Century*, 2d ed. (London: John Murray, 1974), is one of the few historians to make this connection.
17. "Turkish Costume," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 3 (July 1851): 288.
18. *Notes and Queries* 7th series, no. 6 (4 Aug. 1888): 93; C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *History of Underclothes* (London: Michael Joseph, 1951).
19. Jas. B. Morris, *Notes and Queries* 7th series, no. 6 (6 Oct. 1888): 271-72.
20. C.C.B. recalled that in the 1840s and 1850s "respectable farmers' wives" would not allow their female servants to wear drawers, because the article of clothing was considered "fine-ladyish." See *Notes and Queries* 7th series, no. 6 (7 July 1888): 10, also see (15 Dec. 1888): 471.
21. Robert Kunciov, ed., *Mr. Godey's Ladies: Being a Mosaic of Fashions and Fancies* (Princeton, N.J.: Pyne Press, 1971), 12.
22. Kemper, 124.
23. Mrs. R.B. Gleason, "Woman's Dress," *The Water-Cure Journal* 11 (February 1851): 31.
24. Harriet Holton Noyes to Tirzah, 28 Dec. [1881], Oneida Community Collection, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, New York.
25. Lady Chesterfield, quoted in Alice Morse Earle, *Two Centuries of Costume in America, 1620-1820* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1903), 2: 772.
26. Jo B. Paoletti and Carol L. Kregloh, "The Children's Department," in *Men and Women: Dressing the Part*, ed. Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 32-33; Phillis Cunnington and Anne Buck, *Children's Costume in England: From the Fourteenth to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1978); Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Children's Costume* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1977); and Clare Rose, *Children's Clothes since 1750* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1989).
27. "Description of Uncolored Fashions," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 41 (September 1849): 228, is but one example. A six- or seven-year-old boy garment included "a short basque or skirt at the waist," and "loose trowsers of nankin." A four- or five-year-old girl might wear a "skirt very full" with "loose trowsers of cambric muslin, edged at the bottom by a bordering of needlework."
28. Joyce Zonana, "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of *Jane Eyre*," *Signs* 18 (spring 1993): 593-94.
29. Mervat Hatem, "Through Each Other's Eyes: Egyptian, Levantine-Egyptian,

and European Women's Images of Themselves and of Each Other (1862-1920)," *Women's Studies International Forum* 12, no. 2 (1989): 183-98.

30. Suvendrini Perera, *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

31. Judy Mabro, ed., *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1991), 2-6; Graham-Brown, 118-43.

32. "Dress: The Long and Short of It," *Herald of Health* 3 (April 1864): 204.

33. Craik, 17.

34. Shelly Foote, personal notes to the author.

35. Craik, 17-43.

36. The basic story of the origin of the "Bloomer costume" is recounted in many sources, including Dexter C. Bloomer, ed., *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer* (Boston: Arena Publishing, 1895; rpt., 1976); Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 86-87; Paul Fatout, "Amelia Bloomer and Bloomerism," *New York Historical Society and Quarterly* 36 (October 1952): 360-73; Louise Noun, "Amelia Bloomer, a Biography: pt. 1, The Lily of Seneca Falls," *Annals of Iowa* 47 (winter 1985): 575-617; James Laver, *Clothes* (London: Burke Publishing, 1952), 153-71; "The First of the Flappers," *The Literary Digest* (13 May 1922), 44-45; Sally Sims, "The Bicycle, the Bloomer, and Dress Reform in the 1890s," in *Dress and Popular Culture*, ed. Patricia A. Cunningham and Susan Voso Lab (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991), 125-45; Foote, "Bloomers," 1-12; Frances E. Russell, "A Brief Survey of the American Dress Reform Movements of the Past, with Views of Representative Women," *The Arena* 6 (August 1892): 325-39; A.C.W., "Death of Mrs. Bloomer," *Notes and Queries* 8th series, no. 8 (6 July 1895): 6-7; and Judith Elaine Leslie, "Sports Fashions as a Reflection of the Changing Role of American Women in Society from 1850 to 1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1985), 39-43.

37. "Our Costume," *The Lily* 3, April 1851, 31; "Our Dress," and "The New Costume," *The Lily* 3, May 1851, 38; "Our Fashion Plate," *The Lily* 4, January 1852.

38. Newton, 4. Pearl Binder reprints Byron to show the romanticization of Eastern dress:

twelve rings were on her hand,  
Her hair was starred with gems; her veil's fine fold  
Below her breast was fastened with a band  
Of lavish pearls, whose worth could scarce be told;  
Her orange silk full Turkish trousers furl'd  
About the prettiest ankle in the world

Quoted in Pearl Binder, *Muffs and Morals* (New York: William Morrow & Company, n.d.), 238-39.

39. Malika Mehdid, "A Western Invention of Arab Womanhood: The Oriental Female," in *Women in the Middle East: Perceptions, Realities, and Struggles for Liberation*, ed. Haleh Afshar (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 22-23; Alev Lytle Croutier, *Harem: The World behind the Veil* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 71-79; Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 119-22.

40. See note 37.

41. Other dress reformers who wore decidedly more "masculine" versions of reform apparel faced accusations of prostitution and licentiousness. See Mrs. M.S. Gove Nichols, "A Lecture on Woman's Dresses," *The Water-Cure Journal* 12 (August 1851): 34-36; "Dress Reform Convention," *The Sibyl* 8 (June 1964): 1241-47.

42. Mary B. Williams, "The Bloomer and Weber Dresses: A Glance at Their Respective Merits and Advantages," *The Water-Cure Journal* 12 (August 1851): 33.

43. Amy Kesselman, "The 'Freedom Suit': Feminism and Dress Reform in the United

- States, 1848-1875," *Gender & Society* 5 (December 1991): 495-510.
44. The National Dress Reform Association appears to be the only organized dress reform movement in the mid-nineteenth century. See "Dress Reform Convention," *The Lily*, 1 May 1856, 67; "The Dress Reform Constitution," *The Sibyl*, 15 Sept. 1856, 46; and "Dress Reform Convention," *The Water-Cure Journal* 21 (April 1856): 81.
45. "Report of the Proceedings of the Dress Reform Convention Held at Canastota, N.Y.," *The Sibyl*, February 1857, 113-15, 118-20; James Laver, *Modesty in Dress* (London: William Heinemann, 1969), 134-36.
46. "The Shorts Gaining," *The Circular*, 24 July 1865, 1.
47. "Woman's Rights," *American Whig Review* 8 (October 1848): 374-75.
48. Alma Lutz, *Susan B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 35; Blackwell, 104-13; Mabel A. Potter, "How Susan B. Anthony Keeps Young," *Woman's Home Companion* (September 1904): 46-47; Arlene Fanale, "Susan B. Anthony and Bloomerism" *New Women's Times*, 15 July-15 Aug. 1975, 6, 10; "Men's Rights Convention at --," 268-73.
49. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, *History of Women Suffrage* (Rochester, N.Y.: Charles Mann, 1889), 2: 470.
50. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 314.
51. Mrs. L.G. Abell, *Woman in Her Various Relations: Containing Practical Rules for American Females* (New York: R.T. Young Publishers, 1853).
52. Gerrit Smith to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1 Dec. 1855, Gerrit Smith Collection, Syracuse University Library.
53. The arguments of Stanton and Smith conflate the East into one area—therefore, Chinese footbinding and Turkish harems seem to emerge from the same geographic location, even though they did not.
54. Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds., *Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York: Arno and *New York Times*, 1969), 1: 172-73.
55. *The Circular*, 1 Jan. 1874; "Woman's Rights," *The Circular*, 28 Feb. 1856.
56. "Woman's Rights," *The Circular*, 28 Feb. 1856.
57. Harriet Matthews, Diary 1 Feb. [1856?], Oneida Community Collection, Syracuse University Library. "Woman's Position in the Community," *The Circular*, 7 Nov. 1870, 266.
58. Studies of Oneida that concentrate on gender include Marlyn Hartzell Dalsimer, "Women and Family in the Oneida Community, 1837-1881" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1975); Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991); Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Ruby Rohrllich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, eds., *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984); Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marilyn Klee-Hartzell, eds., *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Jeanette C. Lauer and Robert H. Lauer, "Sex Roles in Nineteenth-Century American Communal Societies," *Communal Societies* 3 (1983): 16-28; Ellen Wayland-Smith, "The Status and Self-perception of Women in the Oneida Community," *Communal Societies* 8 (1988): 18-53.
59. *Hand-Book of the Oneida Community; With a Sketch of Its Founder, and an Outline of Its Constitution and Doctrine* (Wallingford, Conn.: Office of *The Circular*, 1867), 25-27.
60. *First Annual Report of the Oneida Association: Exhibiting Its History, Princi-*

ples, and Transactions to January 1, 1849 (Oneida Reserve: Leonard & Co., 1849); *Hand-Book of the Oneida Community; With a Sketch of Its Founder, and an Outline of Its Constitution and Doctrine* (Wallingford, Conn.: Office of *The Circular*, 1867); *Hand-Book of the Oneida Community; Containing a Brief Sketch of Its Present Condition, Internal Economy, and Leading Principles, No. 2* (New York: Oneida Community, 1871); *Hand-Book of the Oneida Community* (New York: Office of Oneida *Circular*, 1875); and Oneida Community, *Bible Communism: A Compilation from the Annual Reports and Other Publications of the Oneida Association and Its Branches* (Brooklyn: Office of *The Circular*, 1853).

61. "The Short Dress: Its Materials—How It Is Made—Under-Clothing—Quantity Used—Etc., Etc.," *The Circular*, 10 Jan. 1870, 342-43; "Short-Dress Finance," *The Circular*, 19 June 1865, 109.

62. *First Annual Report of the Oneida Association; Hand-Book of the Oneida Community* (1867); *Hand-Book of the Oneida Community* (1871); *Hand-Book of the Oneida Community* (1875); *Bible Communism* (1853). With the possible exception of the New Harmony outfit, the Oneida short dress was the only reform costume styled after children's dress, although some of the other reformers borrowed elements and sewing techniques from children's apparel.

63. "Origin of the Short Dress Costume," *The Circular*, 28 Aug. 1856, 126; "Oneida Short Dress," *The Circular*, 26 Mar. 1866, 13.

64. Jessie C. Kinsley, "Memoir, 1914," Oneida Community Collection, Syracuse University Library.

65. "Report of the Proceedings of the Dress Reform Convention Held at Canastota, N.Y.," 113-15, 118-20; Laver, *Modesty in Dress*, 134-36.

66. Francis Wayland-Smith, Diary, March 1877, Oneida Community Collection, Syracuse University Library. Non-dress reform pantalettes were also worn by women, but these could be distinguished from dress reform pantalettes by their trim and the fact that they were always made from white fabric. The point I am making is that dress reformers usually made their pantalettes in the same fabric as the dress—a practice that dress reformers who wore trousers also followed. Thus, pantalettes made from the same fabric as the dress could not be distinguished from trousers made from the same fabric as the dress. Only the wearer would know what she had on.

67. "Woman's Character," *The Circular*, 14 Jan. 1854, 72; "A Communal Journal," *The Circular*, 19 Mar. 1863, 12; Constance Noyes Robertson, ed., *Oneida Community: An Autobiography, 1851-1876* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 297-98.

68. Harriet M. Worden, *Old Mansion House Memories by One Brought Up in It* (Oneida, N.Y., 1950), 10-11.

69. Charlotte M. Leonard, extracts from a journal, 6 June 1876, Oneida Community Collection, Syracuse University Library.

70. The short dress in this context may have reflected a common deviant sexual reaction in Noyes and some of his male followers, namely, that women dressed as children became sexually exciting. References to sexual eroticism and clothing showed up with some frequency in the Oneida papers. See, for example, Harriet Holton Noyes to Tirzah; Harriet Worden, diary entry, November 1868, Oneida Community Collection, Syracuse University Library.

71. Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes: Fashioning Ourselves* (New York: Avon Books, 1980), 311.

72. "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Times*, 2 Aug. 1852, 2.