



The Dress of Women: A Critical Introduction to the Symbolism and Sociology of Clothing

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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Originally serialized in 1915 in *The Forerunner*, and never before published in book form, *The Dress of Women* presents Gilman's feminist sociological analysis of clothing in modern society. Gilman explores the social and functional basis for clothing, excavates the symbolic role of women's clothing in patriarchal societies, and, among other things, explicates the aesthetic and economic principles of socially responsible clothing design. The introduction, by Hill and Deegan, situates *The Dress of Women* within Gilman's intellectual work as a sociologist, and relates her sociological ideas to the themes she developed in some of her other works.

Although written in 1915, Gilman's treatment of clothing and dress remains relevant. This pioneering effort adds substantially to Gilman's reputation as a sociological theorist and feminist. In addition, it represents one of the earliest full-length specifically sociological analyses of clothing and the fashion industry. Ultimately, the author concludes that harmful and degrading aspects of women's dress are amenable to reform if men and women will work together rationally to change the controlling institutional patterns of the society in which they live. This groundbreaking work will appeal to those interested in Gilman, feminist theory, sociological theory, social psychology, women's literature, and women's studies.

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