

Prisoners of Progress? Women, body and fashion in the 19th century: a reflection on city, society and conspicuous consumption

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Abstract

Progress is the basis of the material and social transformations on a century of revolutions as the nineteenth century. It assumes its claims on the structures of social life and in the private sphere consequent to the industrial revolution, capitalism and the redefinition of codes of the modern life determinants of the nineteenth-century society.

The power of tradition will give place to new patterns of social and cultural relations with reflections on new practices promoted by the city and urban life.

All these transformations are also reflected in the emergence of the fashion industry throughout the nineteenth century, with emphasis on women's body, rather than what happened during the eighteenth century in which men's clothes, prevailed as a form of representation and affirmation of power, The bourgeois society of the nineteenth century affirms and sublimates status and social differentiation through the conspicuous consumption of objects and goods.

Fashion is a form of affirmation of power. The adorned and caged woman is a consequence of this kind of power and the city its main stage. This article aims to emphasise not only an approach to nineteenth-century society and emerging modernity but also in what will become one of the most flourishing industries of western societies: Fashion relating to women, main producers and consumers, its biggest victims.

Keywords: Progress, women, fashion, body, city