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## WHEN WEST MEETS EAST: TOWARDS AN EDUCATIVE JOURNEY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY WESTERN CHILDREN'S FASHION

### INTRODUCTION

In 2001, a rare exhibition on the history of children's clothes in France displayed a series of luxury outfits offered as birthday presents to the imperial prince, heir of Napoléon III, by diplomats and European monarchs.<sup>1</sup> The full highland dress, English peasant frock and Mexican outfit, which were worn on specific occasions by the prince, highlight the diplomacy of the time.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these outfits, true miniatures of army uniforms or traditional gowns and worn as formal dress by the prince, echo a trend among the aristocracy across Europe. Reflecting the popularization of this style, department store catalogues displayed children's fashion collections, which flourished in the context of the industrialization of fashion and provide evidence of the taste for these folk inspirations in the wealthy bourgeoisie across Europe from the 1860s until World War I. Russian frocks, Romanian embroideries, and Hungarian outfits compete with sailor suits and American dresses.

Among these items, the hussar costume, based on the military uniforms of the cavalry, reveals a fascination, not only for distant destinations, but also for the grandeur of the Central European and Imperial military forces at the time. However, the durability of this exotic trend in children's fashion could be questioned:<sup>3</sup> why would children be dressed in costumes referring to other cultures and environments? What were the drivers but also the effects of this dressing experience, which reinforced children's distinction from adults via the adoption of a different style? Investigating the archives of the French department stores Au Bon Marché and La Belle Jardinière from 1880 to 1915, and the collections of children's outfits from the Fashion Museum of the City of Paris—Palais Galliera and the Fashion and Textile Museum in Cholet, France, this research explores the contours, context, and fortune of this particular style in the Western bourgeoisie.

AU BON MARCHÉ — PARIS

## Vêtements pour Garçonnetts et Jeunes Gens



58780. <i>Pardessus</i> à double poitrine chevrotte bleu ou noir double chair manches série . . . . . 25. 5 ans. . . . . 27. 4 ans. . . . . 27. 3 ans. . . . . 29. 6 ans. . . . . 31.	58781. <b>COMPLET VESTON</b> à trois pour jeunes gens, en serge bleue et fantaisie. Article très avantageux. 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 27. 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 29.	58782. <i>Quartier-maitre</i> en belle chevrotte liège ou noir, gilet pareil. Article très avantageux. 3 ans. . . . . 8. 25 5 ans. . . . . 14. 5 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 14. 5 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 16. 5	58783. <i>Pardessus</i> capote chevrotte bleue ou noire, tout laine, doublé flanelle. 5 ans. . . . . 14. 5 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 14. 5 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 16. 5	58784. <i>Costume</i> riche, genre anglais, col et parements en soie grains guipure, chemisette soie devant plissé. 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 71. 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 71.	58785. <i>Pardessus</i> en très belle chevrotte bleue ou noir, doublé tartan, col velours. 12 à 15 ans. . . . . 27. 15 ans. . . . . 29. 16 à 18 ans. . . . . 29.	58786. <i>Costume</i> russe en toupeline toute nuance, col et devant garnis d'un large passepoil astrakan. 15 ans. . . . . 36. 16 à 18 ans. . . . . 36.	58787. <i>Costume</i> riche genre russe, tout toupeline, très pris et beige, le col et les parements sont crème garnis aux bords d'un passepoil. 15 ans. . . . . 32. 16 à 18 ans. . . . . 32.	58788. <i>Pardessus</i> pelisse toupeline belle qualité garni trépassé-hermine, large col fourrure. 15 ans. . . . . 59. 16 à 18 ans. . . . . 59.
<b>AFFAIRES REMARQUABLES</b>	<i>Costumes</i> marins en chevrotte liège ou noir doublé col. 5 ans. . . . . 7. 75 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 7. 75 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 7. 75	<i>Costumes</i> marins en chevrotte liège ou noir doublé col. 5 ans. . . . . 7. 75 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 7. 75 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 7. 75	<i>Costumes</i> marins en chevrotte liège ou noir, bouton métal, doublure tartan. 5 ans. . . . . 12. 50 10 à 15 ans. . . . . 12. 50 15 à 18 ans. . . . . 12. 50	<i>Pardessus</i> 3 capuches, pour enfants, 0700 0701 0702 0703 0704 0705 3.90 4.75 5.25 5.75 6.25 6.75	<i>Pardessus</i> 1 fr. par âge en plus.	<i>Pardessus</i> 1 fr. par âge en plus.	<i>Pardessus</i> 1 fr. par âge en plus.	<i>Pardessus</i> 1 fr. par âge en plus.

Figure 1. Au Bon Marché. "Vêtements pour garçonnetts et jeunes gens," *Exposition des toilettes d'hiver pour hommes, dames et enfants* (1898), 20, private collection.

Reflecting on the definition of the child, this paper will first question the role of fashion and dress codes not only in the representation but also in the construction of individuals to be socialized. Then, based on Balut's original interpretation of fashion and dress codes,<sup>4</sup> I will analyze the features of this Eastern inspiration, which seems to last beyond World War I, and the diversity of its expressions.<sup>5</sup> Finally, after contextualizing this analysis of a specific style in childrenswear against children's role in society, I will propose an original approach to children's fashion as an educational and socializing medium.

### PLAYING DRESS-UP OR BEING DRESSED UP: WHO IS THE CHILD TO BE DRESSED?

In researching children's clothing we must identify: who is the child to be dressed? Compared to adults, who follow moral and social rules to shape their identity in fashion, children are a blank page, reflecting their context and family history. As pedo-psychologist Jean-Claude Quentel has demonstrated, despite their ability to talk, manipulate, and express their aspirations and judgment, children can be considered socially immature.<sup>6</sup> Of course, their agency is based on constant interaction with adults and their peers, engaging with society

from birth. However, to embed in children the sense of social belonging and Otherness as defined by Richard Jenkins,<sup>7</sup> to understand their past and future, to identify space and place, to be an actor in history are the core principles of children's education and outcomes of the socializing process. This status, which is a physiological phase that defines childhood, leads to the construction of an identity and understanding of societal rules. Children embed the social time and space during their early years,<sup>8</sup> and they are invited by adults, designers, makers, and educators to explore, experiment, and create. After having been provided a social identity by proxy, children get the opportunity to build their own, using, to this effect, the material culture available to them.

Following Balut's theory,<sup>9</sup> fashion, as dress code, shapes the social identities and creates a sense of historical belonging. Time, space, and social environment are factors in the creation of specific dress codes, helping to define individuals and establishing the social interactions with their peers. Being dressed in the style of a certain space and time contributes to rubbing out the differences between the individuals who wear what is appropriate to their social role and rank. This definition of fashion is therefore paradoxical for a child who acquires a social identity. What should the child be dressed as? Due to this special status, the child can wear any style and adopt any dress code freely. Through constant negotiation with adults and experimenting with both difference from and resemblance to their peers, children's fashion education includes experiences that express their personality. The fashion playground is therefore open to the expression of multiple identities and styles, for the child to learn, understand, and embed the subtle difference between dressing up and being dressed up. For a socializing child, fashion could be a tool to embed these dress codes and social habits. Traveling through time, geography, and environments contributes to establishing a sense of Otherness and supports the construction of the self.

Articulating such definitions of the child and fashion, dress codes can be interpreted as a medium in the construction of children's identity with regard to adults and their peers. Focusing here on the specificities of children's dress codes,<sup>10</sup> this article will examine how the exotic trends in children's fashion contributed to mechanisms involved in socializing children's fashion.

### **1860–1915: HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR A FLOURISHING EASTERN INSPIRATION IN WESTERN CHILDREN'S FASHION**

From a European perspective, the nineteenth century remains a conflicted era, witnessing the construction of sovereign nations as well as a fascination with the distant worlds. The radical changes of a modernizing society led to the rise

of new alliances and to demonstrations of powers among European monarchies. Over the second half of the century, the reconciliation of the British and French empires and later the Franco-Russian alliance allowed for the development of new trade avenues for the sale of increasing industrial production.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the conquest of new colonies supported, among other things, access to the supplies necessary to fulfill increasing demands for goods in Europe. Paradoxically, this flourishing commercial context mostly benefitting the fashion industry, took place in a wartime climate that, from the Crimean conflict against Russia to the Italian, Prussian, and Balkan wars, contributed to redrawing boundaries within Europe. As a symbolic moderation of this European crisis, the opening of the railroad to Byzantium in 1903 connected the frail nations of a soon-exploding world, where tourism became a lifestyle and exoticism a mindset.

In this landscape, comparing belief in sovereign nations with a scientific and cultural interest in alterity, and despite the opposition of the rising Eastern and Western blocs, the fascination for others' lifestyles kept blooming. Indeed, the development of multifaceted and highly influential European folk art benefited from the encouragement of the aristocracy across Europe, in their quest to maintain a rural lifestyle in a rapidly changing society. In Paris, from the mid-nineteenth century until World War I, trends for clothing inspired by Russian, Balkan, and Romanian styles spread through the wardrobes of the bourgeoisie and were displayed in the pages of the expanding fashion press.

Furthermore, this period coincided with the specialization and development of manufactured goods for children. Children's material culture addressed the changing perception of young persons as special individuals to nurture and educate, and it reflected the necessity to create a diversified offering in terms of toys, books, and furniture to equip the newly conceived nurseries of wealthy families.<sup>12</sup> These objects were inspired by the stories, ambiance, and references idealized in a specific childhood culture. The expansion of children's wardrobes is evidence of this market specialization, and the diversified shapes and materials there echoed the voices of the newly established educators and pediatricians who advocated a more healthy and simplified way to dress them up to support their physiological development.<sup>13</sup> Department stores then supplemented the offer of next-door tailors and homemade clothes, supplying garments adapted to the activities undertaken by bourgeois children. In this context, among the sailors and chic English costumes, an emerging fascination for exotic shapes and patterns reflected the adult taste for Eastern folklore. Looking at both the intention of as well as the innovation induced by this creative trend, it would be useful to explore which factors have influenced the development of this style



and the impact that the new shapes had on the conception of innovative and modern children's fashion.

### FOLK ARTS AND CRAFTS: WHO MADE EXOTIC CHILDREN'S CLOTHES?

#### *Arts and Crafts Workshops and Aristocratic Traditionalism*

In the 1880s, the European aristocracy and bourgeoisie, while benefitting directly from the growing industry, also feared the radical changes to their traditional society and lifestyle. In parallel with the development of folkloric and ethnographic studies, the research and collection of traditional arts and crafts developed and support for ongoing production led to the establishment of workshops within these wealthy European families, including embroidery and lace-making studios. Postcards sent from the travelers during their journeys across Europe documented the traditional costumes in Western Europe and fostered a taste for Eastern crafts.<sup>14</sup> Such production aimed mostly to keep workers on the estates, to employ them, especially women, in the winter, and to keep rural craft skills alive. As mentioned by Houze, the "nostalgic of a vanishing idyllic state"<sup>15</sup> constituted the motivation for the conservation of the skills in traditional peasant embroidery. In an unprecedented manner, in Eastern and Central Europe, including Austro-Hungary, Romania, and Russia as well as in western Brittany, Ireland, or Scotland, the "kustar" and "rural industries" created on country estates gave women the opportunity to become teachers, designers, and critics of textiles and to play a major role in the development of the arts. For housewives involved in the development of a new style mostly based on needlework, the creation of children's clothes contributed to their aim to "bring beauty into the house."<sup>16</sup> Influenced by these creations and supportive of their development, royal and aristocratic women dressed their own children in the resulting garments, certainly when staying on their estates. They also organized urban shops and charity bazaars in capital cities, where these garments and embroideries were sold, and set up large displays of their workshop products at all the major international fairs, as seen in Vienna from 1873 on. In this context, the British department store Liberty sold smocks for girls produced in the royal workshops of Princess Elizabeth of Romania, c. 1910. In the introduction to the catalogue titled "A Roumanian [*sic*] peasant handicraft," published on the occasion of the exhibition of these collections, a "well-known expert" of Liberty London acknowledged: "Roumanian [*sic*] Embroidery is a manifestation of an indigenous artistic instinct of the nation, which ranges through all grades of the social scale. This national aptness for the development of a specialised type of decorative art has during recent years been encouraged by the higher

ranks of Roumanian society as a means of promoting the industrial interests of the country . . . this encouragement has been largely due to the personal efforts of the noble ladies of the Royal House."<sup>17</sup> This rural-peasant style became fashionable through these royal and aristocratic connections, relying on the illustrations and photography in the flourishing fashion magazines of the time to promote the new exotic style to the bourgeoisie, which influenced both female and children's fashion.<sup>18</sup>

### *Looking East: Organization of the Fashion Apparel*

This interest in folk fashion, however, didn't solely rely on rural workshops and female homemade production for their interiors, domestic outfits, and for their children. Indeed, in the context of industrial modernization and the development of department stores in which to sell the increasing fashion production and stimulate the needs of customers, the manufacture of children's fashion combined homemade layette and clothes, tailored formal outfits, and the standardized production of underwear and everyday clothes. Thus, researching of children's fashion production in the Parisian landscape of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries allows us to identify tailors and designers who—and this is possibly the reason behind such popular influence—deliberately decided to specialize into the production of collections mostly inspired by the rural-peasant style of Eastern Europe.

Despite a sparse literature on the production of children's fashion in the late nineteenth century, it appears that an extremely influential movement fostered the modernization of silhouettes and encouraged freedom of movement from a young age to support bodily health and well-being. As outlined previously, the creation of new shapes and removal of corsets to support the development of healthy children was the focus of dress reformers of this period. This movement peaked in the 1880s, with the London Health Exhibition, where the theories of Dr. Jaeger led to the foundation of the Rational Dress Society. Among the reformers, designer and theorist Walter Crane was interested in the design of new children's clothes, which he advertised in the *Journal of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union: Aglaia*. Allowing more comfort for toddlers during the toilet training stage, the tunics and utility dresses designed by Crane in 1894 were inspired by the shapes of Central European traditional outfits and embroidered with similar cross-stitching patterns positioned above the waist and on the wristbands.<sup>19</sup> Exhibiting this new style as part of the aforementioned arts and crafts aesthetic, the London-based Liberty department stores retailed these collections and encouraged this new style, which was adopted by children as a visionary approach toward more functional fashion.



Figure 2. “Violette Russe, Spécialités pour enfants, 45 rue de Maubeuge, Paris”: bonnet identified as part of a christening gown, c. 1890, coll. Arbel, Musée du Textile et de la Mode, Cholet (France).

Meanwhile, in Paris, the manufacture and retail of clothes and layette for wealthy children spread among department stores, such as Au Bon Marché or Les Magasins de la Belle jardinière, and their branches in the French main cities, and the next-door tailors and dressmakers addressing the needs of bourgeoisie families. Some of these tailors, migrants escaping the conflicts in Russia and Eastern Europe, specialized in embroidered outfits, christening dresses and baby gowns through which they demonstrated their skills in braiding and piping as well as cross-stitching embellishments directly related to their heritage. Some of these tailors advertised their backgrounds not only in the plates of the fashion magazines but also in the names of their fashion houses, such as Violette Russe, a tailor specializing in children’s clothes and based in the wealthy area of the rue de Maubeuge in Paris.

Influenced by these pioneering designs and ambient taste for folkloric arts, Paul Poiret and Jeanne Lanvin, who both created their fashion houses at the turn of the twentieth century, dedicated part of their collections to the design of children’s outfits, to match female wardrobes and reveal a unprecedented modern style both in terms of silhouette and embellishments.


After a few years of doll making and inspired by her daughter Blanche, Jeanne Lanvin opened her children’s fashion department store in 1908. Her collections, mostly advertised in fashion magazine *Les Modes*, demonstrate the success of styles influenced by the arts and craft approach and inspired by the peasant embroideries of Eastern Europe, as well as Persian, Indian, and Egyptian silhouettes. As mentioned by Dean Merceron in his monograph of the designer,<sup>20</sup> when creating a collection, Jeanne Lanvin re-employed fabrics



Figure 3. Anonymous. "Jeanne Lanvin, Russian dress for girl," *Les Modes* (1920), private collection.

coming from her favorite destinations. The colors, patterns, and embellishments are largely influenced by these inspirations. In the archives of the Fashion Museum of the City of Paris—Palais Galliera, two boy's outfits dated c. 1907, with a fine ivory and pale green silk satin, present a similar shape to a Moujik's tunic: fastened on the front side and tied with a large belt of the same fabric edged with braids.<sup>21</sup> The fastening edge, wristbands and short standing collar are embroidered with thin braids in curved patterns. It is interesting to notice that these types of Russian collections were selected by illustrator Pierre Brisaud in the early 1920s for his advertising campaign for Jeanne Lanvin in the trendy fashion magazine *La Gazette du Bon Ton*.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, *Les Modes* displays matching outfits for a well-dressed mother and daughter, where the gown of the girl incarnates her Russian reference thanks to the fur trims contrasting with the bright woolen cloth of a short tunic



his case, the referent style is not simply copied and pasted, evidence of the embeddedness of the Eastern influence in Western children's fashion, followed by most tailors of the time.<sup>23</sup>

The editor and director of *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, Parisian entrepreneur and designer Paul Poiret, was a very strong influence on and competitor of Jeanne Lanvin. He also demonstrated an interest in creating children's collections, echoing his fascination for an exotic style inspired by Central and Eastern European folklore. Long disregarded, these unknown creations for children were revealed in 2005 in the auction of the collections of his daughter, Nicole Groult, and they have been acquired mostly by the Fashion Museum of Paris—Palais Galliera.<sup>24</sup> These outfits were sold in Poiret's boutique, situated on rue Pasquier in Paris from 1906 until 1909.<sup>25</sup> For Poiret, and as revealed by the family photographs featuring his children wearing his designs,<sup>26</sup> these collections offered a fantastic playground where he could experiment with different shapes and embellishments that wouldn't have been acceptable in casual adult collections. The upcycling of traditional costumes, restyling of rural dresses or tunics, and reuse of vintage embellishments were constants in Poiret's design process. In this production, among Breton hats and Greek blouses, a Romanian tunic embellished with cross-stitched panels was transformed into a girl's dress.<sup>27</sup> This inspiration shows the influence of shapes mostly from Eastern European traditional dress to reinvent the silhouettes of "de-corseted" wealthy children, free to move in their everyday clothes. Such examples were featured among the most known designers of the time, demonstrating the design specialization involved in copying indigenous styles and the ability for these makers to produce an infinite variety of collections based on this fascination for the silhouettes, colors, and embellishments of a distant culture.

### **EASTERN STYLE AND FASHION DRESS CODE: THE MECHANISMS OF THE INSPIRATION**

#### *How to Create an Eastern Style for Children?*

Identifying a specific and ongoing style for children, supported by manufacturing and retail specialization, leads us toward a different approach to children's clothes. The style, which involves the historical contextualization of the arts and crafts, varies depending on ~~the specific historical~~ of time and space.<sup>28</sup> As demonstrated in the investigation of the collections produced by childrenswear designers, and although innovation is part of the creative process, the transfer of the skills and traditional features from a foreign area of from a different environment was made either through precisely copying the inspiring art or by a technical interpretation of the system *en oeuvre*. In the example of one of the

most iconic items in children's fashion, the sailor suit, the Breton stripes and the bridged trousers all refer to the same maritime surroundings.

Eastern inspiration was therefore revealed through copying of hussar dresses, the selection of specific fabrics, colors, and textures, the positioning of fastenings, and the use of specific embroideries arranged in carefully considered patterns. With this model in mind, a systematic analysis of the corpus collated in this research can help to identify the way this style influenced children's fashion and to what extent the reference described by the tailors or the department stores is a true adaptation or a vague interpretation of Eastern influence.

### *Pattern and Clothing Construction*

Eastern references come through in a variety of children's fashion features. The first mentions of boy's outfits inspired by the military uniforms of Central Europe are found as early as the end of the eighteenth century. Therefore, it seems important to go beyond the limited context of this research to fully analyze this reference and its development in the nineteenth century in Western Europe. Criticized as early as in 1765 by philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his education pamphlet, *Emile, ou de l'éducation*,<sup>29</sup> the "Houssard" dress is the expression of an Eastern style that was extremely popular among young boys from the European aristocracy from the late eighteenth century onward. The hussar dress is inspired by the shape, patterns, and embroidery positioning of the costume worn by the troops of Marie-Therese of Austria and influenced by the traditional Hungarian dolman in the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> This flared and collarless fitted jacket is decorated with a large band of golden embroideries at the wrist, along with gold buttons. Close to the male hunting costume, the jacket of the hussar dress is worn with fitted breeches. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the hussar dress followed the evolution of the military uniform of the time. Introducing a revolutionary item in children's wardrobes, the breeches become trousers. They were worn with a short double-breasted spencer jacket tucked with gold buttons and embroidered around the standing collar. This type of costume, allowing more freedom of movement, was then adopted by boys ages two to five and became standard in Britain and France. As mentioned by fashion historian Clare Rose, this costume was qualified as a "skeleton" by Charles Dickens<sup>31</sup> or simply "hussar" in the catalogues. While going through infinite variations in texture, fabric, and color, this outfit kept its initial composition: a bridge trouser associated either with a fitted top or worn under a short dress embellished with braids. Innovative and comfortable, the silhouette of the outfit for the younger boys inspired the shape of the aforementioned healthy dress by Walter Crane. In that example, the shape of



Figure 4. Au Bon Marché. “Costumes pour garçonnetts,” *Catalogue général* (1893–1894): 51, private collection.

an indigenous outfit inspired children’s fashion and accompanied the visionary simplification of children’s clothing as well as the acknowledgment of a new fashion aesthetic.

To pursue our investigation of the influence of Eastern shapes on children’s fashion, we can note evidence of another inspiration in boy’s clothes. In the offerings of department stores of the 1890s, the term “Russian” qualified certain blouses and outfits presented as an alternative to the sailor suits. What is mentioned as “genre russe” in the French catalogues refers to the dress style of the Slavic peasants, the moujiks: a tunic and breeches worn with a small astrakhan hat. The tunic presents a short embroidered standing collar, is fastened on the side of the front, and is tied with a large belt at the waist; a band



Figure 5. La Belle Jardinière. *Catalogue spécial de vêtements pour jeunes gens et enfants* (1890), 4, private collection.

of cross-stitched embroidery or a braid of astrakhan fur is applied along the fastenings.

In the catalogue of Au Bon Marché, the tunic can be qualified as “genre riche” [rich style] when made from silk fabric and an alternative to the “genre anglais” [English style], revealing the importance of references to exotic dress codes in the vocabulary of children’s fashion. In the same context, older boys are offered a series of costumes qualified as “marin russe” [Russian sailor].




If the specificity of the sailor suit remains in the association of breeches and a tucked-in tunic, the Russian aspect of this outfit stands in the style of fastening, similarly positioned at the side of the front of the tunic. The name of the outfit refers clearly to the pattern and the styling. The mention of “Russian dress” qualifies similarly constructed girls’ gowns. From the overalls to the girl’s dresses from the nineteenth century onward, the qualificative “Russian” was linked to a particular outfit construction and was definitely included in children’s dress repertoire 



Figure 6. Au Bon Marché. “Vêtements pour fillettes,” *Album des toilettes d’hiver pour dames et enfants* (1891–1892), 15, private collection.

*Embroideries, Embellishments, Materials and Colors: Eastern Textures*

Beyond inspiring the shape and structure of folkloric garments, the Eastern influence comes through in a decorative system of superpositions, embroideries, and textures that are particularly appreciated in childrenswear. As witnessed in the pages of the catalogues of the Parisian department stores from 1880 to the beginning of the twentieth century, the addition of tassels, braids, and appliqués is frequently sufficient to create a connection with these orientalist inspirations. These embellishments, sometimes resulting in an eclectic medley, are particularly appreciated in the fashion of this time.

Naming of garments and outfits is particularly meaningful to reinforce this reference to Eastern styles. For example, in the fashion magazine *La Mode Illustrée*, a tunic for children ages two to three is entitled “Russian” and embellished with bands of cross-stitched geometric patterns and tied with a cord edged with tassel



Figure 7. Anonymous. *La Mode Illustrée* (1902), private collection.



Figure 8. Anonymous. "Robe ornée de broderies pour enfant de 2 à 3 ans," *La Mode illustrée* (1895), private collection.

Iconically, in what becomes a melting pot of Eastern influences, it is not rare to find friezes of braids in Greek patterns running alongside the fastening line or the collars of tunics "à la russe."

Mono- or bichromatic based on contrasting colors, the symmetric patterns embellish the wristbands, collars, or fastenings. The positioning of these embroideries and their organization in parallel ranges contributes to the Eastern reference, even in the case of a very distant interpretation of shapes. For example, on a girl's blouse, described in the bourgeoisie housewives' journal *La Femme chez elle*, the garment is embroidered in yellow and green, meant to refer to Russian folklore. In this case, the technique of embroidery remains connected to the referring style, as opposed to adopting a fancy color palette.<sup>32</sup>





Figure 9. Griseline. "Les manteaux de fillettes," *La Femme chez elle* (January 15, 1927), 18, private collection.

Les broderies russes au point de croix, en coton de couleur, se disposent fort gentiment autour des encolures rondes et sur les poignets étroits. Quand on les utilise, il faut autant que possible conserver la forme classique en honneur en Russie. [The colorful Russian embroideries are placed around the neckline and wrists. When utilized, one needs to keep the traditional Russian shape as much as possible.]<sup>33</sup>

The influence is sometimes clearly stated, as mentioned in this quote describing a girl's outfit in *Femina*:<sup>34</sup>

Une autre [robe] en drap mastic, se relève de broderies noires au point de soutache dans le style roumain, de même qu'une troisième sorte de gandourah, de souple et chaud tissu blanc orné d'une bordure de grosses fleurs archaïques en laine de couleur vives.

[Another dress in an ivory woolen cloth is embellished with black braids in the Romanian style, as well as a third one, a kind of gandourah, made from a fine warm white cloth decorated with a trim of large archaic flowers embroidered in vivid colors with woolen thread.]

15

LA PETITE MODE

## LES GARNITURES DE BOUTONS



A 122078. *Etiennette*. A 122095. *Jasmine*.

**S**ANS doute serez-vous surprises et ravies, petites lectrices, en voyant sur cette page les utilisations charmantes des simples boutons de porcelaine, de galalithe ou de nacre.

Voilà de quoi occuper vos loisirs pendant les longues soirées d'hiver et, toutes, vous voudrez, à l'aide de quelques boutons cousus de façon originale avec des soies de diverses couleurs, égayer et modifier les robes dont vous êtes un peu lasses, ou bien enjoliver ces toilettes nouvelles que votre maman confectionne pour les fêtes très prochaines du nouvel an.

Le bouton est à la mode et on le retrouve aussi bien sur les toilettes habillées que sur les plus simples. On ne lui demande plus, comme autrefois, d'être utile; on lui demande seulement d'être gracieux et, telle une pierre précieuse, on se plaît à l'enchaîner dans les soies éclatantes des broderies.

Vous voyez, sur la robe "Etiennette", faite de lainage

beige, l'utilisation aimable du galon brodé représenté grandeur nature en tête de cette page. Les boutons sont de galalithe rouge, cousus avec un cordonnet de soie beige, et la broderie, faite au point lancé, en cordonnet rouge.

En drap léger jade, la robe "Jasmine" est aussi très agréablement décorée de boutons de galalithe verts, cousus avec une soie noire et encadrés de ligne de soutache noire. Le tout forme un large galon qui contourne l'entourure, garnit le devant et les manches de cette robe à la ligne simple et droite, coupée au bas de trois volants plats.

Et, pour une blondinette de cinq ans, quoi de plus charmant que la robette "Nina" en velours noir, éclaircie par les jolis reflets de nacre des minuscules boutons posés entre deux rangs de soutache blanche, qui en font toute la garniture?

Vous voyez, mignonnes, qu'il vous sera facile, avec un peu de patience et de goût, d'enjoliver vous-mêmes vos toilettes d'hiver, tout en laissant à vos mamans le soin de les tailler d'après les patrons-moèles 122078, 122095, 122109, que le journal *Lisette* peut leur procurer en pochettes, avec plans, figurines et explications, à raison de: franco, 1 fr. 50; étranger, 1 fr. 75.

Prix des patrons, en papier fort, sur mesures, franco et recommandés: 122078, 6 francs; 122095, 6 francs; 122109, 5 francs.

*Métrages*: Nos 122078, pour 11 à 13 ans, 2 m. 20 en 130; 122095, pour 8 à 10 ans, 2 m. 30 en 120; 122109, pour 5 à 7 ans, 1 m. 50 en 100.



A 122109. *Nina*.

Figure 10. Anonymous, "La petite mode: les garnitures de boutons," *Lisette* (December 7, 1924), 15, private collection.

In this case, the original reference, less commonly assigned to Romanian crafts, is precisely identified.

Until the 1920s, this type of ornamentation was prioritized in the formal outfits of wealthy children from infancy until their adoption of adult dress codes. The trend of cross-stitching was the subject of articles in magazines such as *Lisette*, which was particularly popular among young girls from the French bourgeoisie just after World War I.

The decoration of the buttons was encouraged ornamentation of the “Russian” tunic, and the passion for this type of folk embroidery continued later in the twentieth century in the context of girls’ needlework education in wealthy households.

It is important to note that fabric and material selection are as crucial as the embroidery techniques to the textures of this Eastern style. Cotton or woolen threads were prioritized to create the range of cross-stitched patterns; silk braids were used in the embroideries that contrasted with the cotton muslins



Figure 11. Au Bon Marché, “Nouveautés d’hiver,” *Hiver 1890–1891* (1891), 32, private collection.

of the blouses; the fur or faux fur, combined with the astrakhan, embellishes the fastening lines and hats; the moleskin fabrics used for Eastern-style outerwear.

These materials were carefully considered for their reference to traditional fabrics used in Eastern folk fashion as well as for the effects and textures in their use for blouses, dresses, coats, or accessories.

In each of the aforementioned examples, a close interpretation of various Eastern styles operates through techniques of embellishment, copying the contrast between a plain and matte background, and a colorful and textured pattern. However, the geometric designs were sometimes pale reproductions of Eastern folklore and instead were a mixture of inspirations taken from a variety of styles, enhanced by the designation of the outfit in the adverts or catalogues. Indeed, a “Russian” outfit can present a mixture of embellishment inspired by Greek folklore or Romanian embroideries, when the shape combines the influences of military costume and peasant shapes. The influence of international styles, all gathered in the fantasy of re-imagined oriental fashion, leads to an eclectic interpretation of folklore mixed together in a children’s outfit, designed as an invitation to an educative journey in history.

#### *Inspiration: Making Of and Making Up*

Interestingly, this Eastern inspiration continued through the twentieth century and remains a special feature in children’s fashion. The specialization of a sector of children’s fashion in the design of collections inspired by folk fashion, and especially Eastern European textile traditions, remains a particularity of this industry. As revealed in the pages of the magazines *Milk* or *Elle*, the Balkanic and Bohemian influence is a noticeable trend and a quest for the stylists specializing in children’s fashion.<sup>35</sup> Among other brands particularly representative of this style, Catimini, a childrenswear company created in France in 1976, dedicates each season a collection to this Eastern influence principally appreciated as a way to showcase sophisticated knitwear and embroideries. This creative direction culminated in the early 2010s with an advertising campaign showcasing children in a nostalgic Bohemian setting.<sup>36</sup> On this occasion, Eastern inspiration was expressed via the vivid and contrasting color palette combined with the textures generated by the superposition of clothes, reproducing one of the principle folkloric European costumes. The superposition of the traditional skirts is accented by the frills at the back of the dress; the waistcoats fastened with faux fur are worn on top of multiple layers; the abundance of knitwear reinforces the “homemade” aspect of the collections and directly refers to an “ethnic” style; the folkloric aspect of the silhouettes is enhanced by the use of clashing tones.

The composition of an Eastern inspiration doesn't rely solely on the reuse of embroideries or the reproduction of a specific shape but demonstrates, on this occasion, that the structure of the costume leads to a specific silhouette that likewise reproduces eclectic traditional inspirations.

Furthermore, echoing the extensive use of vernacular designations for the outfits in the catalogues of the past and reinforcing sometimes distant references in the outfits themselves, the construction of Eastern inspiration is based here on the settings and ambiance of the advertising campaign in contemporary fashion. When the communication team decided to stage the models in an old-fashioned Bohemian gathering, it was the atmosphere more than the garments themselves that created the inspiring connection. The presentation of the collections makes up the influence when the collection itself results in a sometimes pale Eastern fantasy.

### CONCLUSION

Identified as a common influence in both adults' and children's fashions in the flourishing of the modern fashion industry, the Eastern style, popularized in the second half of the nineteenth century, demonstrates the impact of political and social shifts on the evolution of fashion trends. Eastern folklore, particularly popular during this period, inspired radical changes in clothing shape and a new aesthetic, first evidenced in the often pioneering children's fashion. As noted in this in-depth analysis of fashion archives, children's dress codes, far from simple micro-scales of adult styles, reveal in their features and specificity that they are dressing whole beings as well as future adults.<sup>37</sup> Taking some distance from the political context at the origin of this influence, the continuity of Eastern style in contemporary fashion, sometimes eclectically mixed with other influences, demonstrates the importance of storytelling as a major feature of childrenswear. Analyzing the mechanisms of the style shows the contours and reality of this inspiration, whether as a true reflection of the original trend or an interpretation of the inspiring style. Makers can likewise refer to this style via representations based on the commercial design, staging, or styling of a collection. Whatever the stylistic intentions and expression, the outcome is always the creation of an outfit on which to project different stories for a child eager to learn new tales.

These mechanisms, specific to children's material culture, reveal the importance of the narrative of collections in inviting a nostalgic yet futuristic, nomadic, and always extraordinary journey where children can envision different worlds, where they can learn from one another and pretend to be someone else for a moment. Reading children's fashion history as the interpretation of styles



of other times, locations, and environments could therefore complement typical comparisons with adult fashion. Children's clothes and dress code play an active role in the socialization of future adults and the embeddedness of a sense of Otherness. A systematic analysis of the mechanisms involved in children's fashion, the original approach developed in this article, foresees the possibility of a renewed discourse on children's material culture and asserts that identifying its technical and historical specificities will lead to a better understanding of the educational role of clothing for a socializing child.

## NOTES

1. Catherine Join-Diéterle and François Jétard-Vittu. *La mode et l'enfant, 1780 . . . 2000* (Paris: Paris-Musées, 2001).
2. *La mode et l'enfant*, cat. 282, 87: Mexican outfit of the imperial prince, c. 1862, musée du Second Empire, Compiègne (France), inv. FPN 4915–4918; cat. 549, 168: Blouse of the imperial prince, 1860–1861, musée Galliéra, coll. Killer-Gorlin, inv. 1992.298.4; highland dress of the imperial prince, musée du Second Empire, Compiègne, inv. FPN 4919–4225.
3. Used at several occasions in this article, the word “exotic” refers to its definition as: “Characteristic of a distant foreign country or environment.” <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/exotic>. This refers to “Exoticism” as a recurring fashion trend which, since the middle of the fourteenth century, merges inspirations from distant worlds in the dress code of the Western aristocracy. Cf. Leclerq, Jean-Paul (ed.), *Touches d'exotisme* (Paris: RMN, 1998).
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16. Houze, "At the Forefront."
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19. Newton, *Health, Art and Reason*, 140.
20. Dean Merceron, *Jeanne Lanvin* (Paris: La Martinière, 2007), 54–55.
21. Blouse for boy, c. 1910, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris-Palais Galliera, inv. 2002–33–4 and inv. 2002–33–5.
22. Pierre Brissaud, Advertisement for Jeanne Lanvin, *La Gazette du Bon Ton* 3 (1920), 23.
23. Anonymous. Advertisement for Mme Havet, *Les Modes* (1920), private collection.
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26. *La création en liberté*, 128–29, 205.
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