

Children's Costume: The Complete Historical Sourcebook.* John Peacock. London: Thames and Hudson, 2009. 159 pp.

Reviewed by Kelly Richardson

Children's Costume: The Complete Historical Sourcebook is the latest effort from John Peacock, former senior costume designer at the BBC, fashion designer, and lecturer in fashion history. This book follows the same format as his other titles dealing with individual decades of the 20th century, general historical overviews, and individual topics such as shoes, jewelry, other accessories, and men's clothing.

The book is organized into six parts: "From 'Little Adults' to 'Children' 1500 BC-AD 1833;" "The Invention of Childhood 1834-1866;" "Nineteenth-Century Confidence 1867-1899;" "The Dawn of the Twentieth Century 1900-1933;" "Into Modern Times 1934-1966;" and "From 'Children' to 'Little Adults' 1967-Present Day." These sections consist of illustrations drawn by the author from unnamed, unknown sources. The images are captioned with the wearer's age and gender, as well as date. At the end of each section are numbered line drawings that correspond to individual pages with short descriptions of the illustrated ensembles, necessitating flipping back-and-forth between the illustrations and descriptions. A brief two-page introduction outlines the book's structure and provides a cursory summary of children's fashion from ancient times until the present. The last five pages consist of basic silhouette line drawings of differently-aged children through time. Finally, Peacock has included a two-page bibliography of sources, but no index.

This book is appropriate for those seeking a very general overview of children's clothing history. Peacock states that fact in his introduction, noting that this title is directed toward "the designer, student, collector and non-specialist enthusiast" (p. 7). It has little to offer the serious historian of dress or costumer seeking in-depth information into this subject. The copious drawings (the back of the jacket notes that there are "Over 1,000 specifically-drawn illustrations"—no small accomplishment) are without attribution. Are they from paintings, photographs, other publications? Peacock's experienced costumer's imagination? Without source information, the reader has no way of knowing if the ensembles pictured in the book are typical or representative of their time, or from which country or region they come. Because the chapters are not framed within a socio/historical context, despite his provocative section titles, no insights into influences such as contemporary ideas of children's status and gender, child-rearing practices, and the merchandising of fashion and childhood can be gained. For instance, a six-year-old boy is pictured (p. 49) in a white and blue sailor suit dated to 1846, an obvious reference to the Winterhalter portrait of Prince Albert of Wales, who was painted wearing a sailor suit that year. The sailor suit became popular for boys and girls throughout Europe and the United States by the 1880s, but was by no means common in 1846.

The drawings themselves are nicely executed, with finely drawn details, and a variety of colors and patterns. Yet Peacock's use of identical facial features on all figures renders his subjects stiff

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and unnatural, more like paper dolls than actual children. For the general public and those seeking costuming ideas and inspiration, *Children's Costume: The Complete Historical Sourcebook* is a fine resource. The serious researcher, however, might be better served by consulting extant garments, primary sources, and more scholarly works. Serious inquiry in the field of children's dress (and, to an extent, men's) is lacking when compared to existing research on the clothing of adult women. Hopefully, this title will inspire some to take a closer look at this intriguing aspect of social history.

Kelly Richardson is the Assistant Curator of the Sage Collection, in the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Interior Design at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her research interests are children's clothing, 20th century design, fashion publications and periodicals, and the digitization of costume collections. She recently curated the exhibitions "Child's Play: Aesthetics, Gender, and Children's Clothing", and "Fantasia: Fans from the Sage Collection", as well as presented research on the sailor suit and contemporary children's clothing to the Costume Society of America and the Popular Culture/American Culture Associations.