

JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE IN LATVIA: LOLITA AND MORI FASHION

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During the last decades - in the era of globalization and fast information exchange, Japanese popular culture is disseminating worldwide and has found its way also to Latvia. Similarly as in the world, many young people in Latvia appreciate Japanese *anime*, *manga*, J-rock, J-pop, cosplay, *Nintendo* games and also – fashion.

On the global stage, Japan has proved itself as a country, who's popular culture is able to break or mold with local cultures and traditions, ethical and aesthetical principles, shaping a new kind of younger generation with different value and beauty criteria. Indeed, worldwide Japanese popular culture elements appear in people's everyday lives as frequently as American hamburgers or coca-cola, though in Latvia, it is not so influential and young people interested in it are not so many as in other countries. Comparatively, Latvia can be considered as a latecomer in the appreciation of Japanese popular culture. Speaking about the first Lolita costumes, as the author could trace, they appeared in 2005 - the second Anime Festival with cosplay show in Riga and individual meet-ups in the same year.

Before analyzing the „Lolita” fashion culture in Riga, the author would like to say a few words about its definition.

„Lolita” is a Japanese fashion subculture, where mostly young women,

but sometimes men dress like dolls, covered from head to toe in lace, ruffles and bows taking inspiration from Victorian-era costumes and Rococo period clothing (Pict. 1-2). Nowadays such people are most often seen walking the streets in Harajuku district of Tokyo or cosplay events.

In the West, the term “Lolita” is often associated with the title character in Vladimir Nabokov’s novel (1955) - an adolescent girl who has a sexual relationship with her middle-aged stepfather, but in Japanese interpretation, “Lolita” does not refer to the imagery of child’s body, eroticism and sexuality, but to “a personal expression of bodily identity that goes so far as to shape a style and some attitudes and positions that distance themselves from contemporary hegemonic feminities (Rahman, Wing-sun, Lam and Mong-tai 2011).

The Lolita subculture emerged from the fertile ground of the *kawaii* or cute craze that began in the 1970s. By the 1980s, Japanese mainstream culture became obsessed with all things *kawaii*, and cuteness has become a significant part of the Lolita subculture, as seen in the use of stuffed animals, ribbons etc. as accessories and childlike silhouettes (Winge 2008:47). Recently modern culture of Japan is often called the “*kawaii* culture” where the elements of cute, innocent, childish appear in diverse aspects and are used also for the economical as well as political aims such as popularization of the image of Japan abroad as well as an effective tool for the promotion of Japanese products abroad.

The Lolita movement represents a similarly powerful rebellion against the conventions of the contemporary society. In Japan there is a widespread use of uniforms in the vast majority of areas of public life that coexists with other more flexible forms of representation, and these forms revive the imagination and individual desires (Mc.Veigh 2000).

The 1980s ushered in the *vijuaru kei* (visual-*kei* or visual style) rock bands, such as Buck Tick who wore elaborate make-up and costumes that explored the Lolita look (Winge 2008:48). Visual-*kei* was part of Japanese underground scene, it incorporated various bands that were not characterized by specific sound, which would be rock, heavy metal or pop, but by the androgynous performances carried out on the stage: their members were men who dressed and acted like women. One of the artists Mana of the band Malice Mizer contributed greatly to the popularization of the Lolita style by creating a Gothic Lolita style brand *Moi-meme-Moitie*. Lolita began to gather worldwide support as the fashion became more accessible through stores outside Japan and online web shops.

From 2000 to present, Lolita fashion has undergone extensive metamorphosis. Early designs were rather simple, up to 2005, clothing prints were relatively rare, and the few that existed consisted of simple motifs. From 2006 the prints got more intricate and detailed, the style changed from more classic look to a more childish and cute.

Nowadays Lolita fashion has grown to be popular all over the world. In Europe there are Lolita communities in Croatia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland etc. The transnational fandom enjoys magazines for Lolita fans such as „Gothic Lolita Bible”, websites devoted to Lolita clothing and accessories, blogs devoted to chronicling and reflecting on the style. A movie featuring a Lolita girl was created by Tetsuya Nakashima „Kamikaze Girls” (2004) based on the novel 「下妻物語」 „Shimotsuma Monogatari” (2002) written by Novala Takemoto.

The “rules” of Lolita fashion don’t exist, but there exist qualifiers of what makes an outfit Lolita. As T.Looser explains, Lolita style is “creative rather than imitative”, “with an open view of life” or “not really a style at all but a set of open traits that are played with differently in different locales” (Looser 2009:57).

A typical Lolita outfit is comprised of the following basic elements: headwear, bell-shaped skirt, bloomers, blouse, socks (overknee), shoes (Mary Jane type).

There are a variety of Lolita styles. The most popular are:

- Sweet (*Ama/Kote*) Lolita – the most childlike of the Lolita styles, using many bows, ruffles and light pastel colors: pink, white, powder blue. Common motifs are toys, strawberries, cherries, cakes, candies, hearts, polka dots and flowers. Prints inspired by fairy tales are quite common. Light, natural make-up, teased out pig tails and bouncy curls are commonly worn.
- Gothic Lolita was influenced by Victorian and Goth styles. It is characterized by bell-shaped skirt, puff sleeves, black or rich dark colors such as burgundy, purple or navy, or contrasting colors such as black and white.
- Sailor Lolita was inspired by Japanese sailor styled uniforms. Typical for the style are sailor collars, dark blues and whites, and such symbols as ship anchors and wheels.
- *Guro* Lolita or “Gore Lolita” has gory looks. Typical motifs are

- bandages, a sling, some blood splatters. It tries to portray a “broken dolly”. It is a gruesome yet innocent sub-set of Lolita (Pict. 38-39).
- Country Lolita is featured by dress in natural colors, straw baskets, hats, fruit, gingham patterns.
 - *Mori* Lolita is a style that combines Lolita and *Mori* elements.
 - *Ero* or Erotic Lolita contains more fetish elements such as leather, collars, corsets.
 - *Kodona* “boystyle” Lolita for both men and women, men style often referred as *Ouji* (Prince) or Dandy (Pict. 6). In this style there are common short *capri* style pants cut off at a knee (prince pants), suspenders, ties, bowler caps, long socks. Some of the more extravagant styles can involve spats, canes, top hats, capes. Hair is often held in a boyish style, those with a longer hair tend to put it in a less girly way such as hiding a bun under a cap.
 - *Hime* (Princess) Lolita is an elegant style reflecting royalty and class that involves miniature crowns, tiaras, an extravagant or large hair and dresses. Pearls, roses and bows suit this style well.
 - *Wa* Lolita is recognized by kimono-esque look of outfits.
 - Black Lolita has clothes all in black color that is often paired with White Lolita – all dressed in white.

Each of these styles communicates non-verbally but visually through the particular symbols revealed. There are many more styles and the fashion is endlessly evolving giving space for new forms and creativity in their interpretation.

The research of Lolita and Mori fashion in Latvia was done taking interviews with Lolita fashion wearers, photographing them, attending some of events where such costumes were worn, researching the media in Latvia, studying the information allocated in certain internet sites that Lolita and Mori fashion fans visit, reading the academic studies on this subject.

Based on the gathered information, the author assumes that Lolita fashion community exists in Riga from around 2005, with no more than 50 people who have worn a Lolita costume at least one time up to now, aged around 14-20, and with at least 800 followers online, centered around web pages such as www.alternativefashion.forumotion.com or www.otaku.lv. While Lolita costumes occasionally appear in cosplay and some events in Latvia, there are some individual wearers who do not communicate much

with others, most Lolita fashion wearers centre around a group organized by Lolita fashion designer Lauma Vāvere (26). The author met her in person in her home and the information and photo material gained from her was very crucial for this research. Lauma Vāvere was among the first Lolita dress wearers in Riga (Pict. 7). From 2006 she started organizing Lolita meet-ups in Riga with different topics: Circus Lolita, Sweet Lolita, Lolita Teaparty, Lolita Picnic, Bloody Lolita etc., so we can call her the main Lolita fashion promoter and coordinator in Latvia. From 2008 she created a home page www.alternativefashion.forumotion.com and an online shop “Eat me Ink me” (www.etsy.com/shop/EatMeInkMe) where she sells her home made Lolita costumes and accessories.

When the author went to visit Lauma in her home; she had just returned from work wearing a Casual Lolita costume (Pict. 4). From the first glance it was clear that she is a “Lifestyle Lolita” who wears self made Lolita costumes every day, regularly communicates with local and international Lolita communities. On the computer she showed her favorite web pages: www.egl.livejournal, www.hellolace.net, www.bodyline.co.jp which provide much information and are important communication and inspiration sites for Lolitas. Her studio was full of Lolita outfit sketches, costumes that she already made or is going to make (Pict. 5). Lauma has graduated Latvia Academy of Arts, Graphic department and continues to develop her excellent drawing skills sketching Lolita dresses. Recently she has been interested mainly in Rococo inspired costumes and showed some of her newest dresses that were sold to the clients abroad (Pict. 1-2).

Lauma told that first she got acquainted with Lolita fashion around the age of 15 through Japanese Visual-*kei* group Malice Mizer and its member Mana – a man who dressed like a Gothic Lolita. At first, she did not pay much attention, but later, she re-discovered it. She also mentioned that she was surprised to discover that Mana is actually a man. In the second *Animefest* in Riga there was a cosplay group who played Malice Mizer.

Before turning to Lolita fashion she had been a goth, punk, cyber-punk, cyber-goth until she understood that “Lolita” best fits her character. In another interview online, she said she was interested in a more feminine fashion after the Soviet years when clothes were rather uniform and with little choice and she grew up dressed very boyish. Later she was tired of jeans worn all around.

Last six years Lauma Vāvere has organized different meet-ups and events

for Lolita fashion wearers in Riga like picnics, tea-parties, museum visits, photo sessions of Lolita costumes in Old Riga, Riga gardens and parks.

As Lauma recalled, her first Lolita meet-up was organized in an apartment in Riga in 2006. There was a plan to go out in the streets of Riga in their costumes, but they felt shy, so stayed indoors. In a photo from this party there are seen two costumes: one Gothic Lolita and another *Ouji* Lolita. Lauma said that she helped to dress up the boy (that was a big fun for the girls) (Pict. 6). One of the girls who participated in this event had just returned from Japan where she had got acquainted with this fashion style and later tried to wear it herself.

The same year one of the first photo sessions was organized near an old church in Riga. One of the most popular styles was Gothic Lolita.

Next, in Lolita gatherings in 2008 „Lolita Tea Party” (Pict. 8-11) and „Lolita Hunt” (Pict. 12-16) participants got more courage to go out in the Riga city streets. In 2009 other events followed: „3 min Lolita”(Pict. 17-20), „Lolita Fairytale”(Pict. 21-25), „Back in Town Lolita”. The first costumes were rather simple, the most popular styles being Gothic Lolita, Black Lolita, White Lolita, Sweet Lolita, Punk Lolita. The photos obtained in these events reveal a unique cultural phenomenon: a harmonious blend of two cultures and mentalities: Japanese and Latvian. The modern costumes inspired by Japanese popular culture fit well in Riga historical settings several hundreds of years old. The author was fascinated by their Japanese-like youthful crave for unusual, bizarre, unacustomed, extravagant, well balanced with elegant correctness typical to North Europe. Another factor is worth mentioning: most of the costumes were self made, revealing individual taste in the choice of colors and materials. Dealing with the topic of Japanese fashion they adjusted it to the local environment and individual taste.

According to (Gagne 2008) „youth who identify with subculture often use an inner group language/vocabulary”. Of course all cosplay, *manga* and *anime* fans wear certain „signs” in their outfit, one of the most popular ones are badges with *anime* characters. This is also sometimes evident in some typical Japanese ways of posing in front of camera that the costume wearers are trying to imitate, but it can be said that in most cases their poses and arrangement for photos are more influenced from local culture. Another aspect are some Japanese words that Lolita girls used in the interviews, for example, Ekaterina after the interview said to the author „*jya ne!*” (then see you again!).

One of the most interesting Lolita meet-up was „Circus Lolita” 2009

(Pict. 26-31), which was organized in Forest Park (Mežaparks, Riga, Latvia). As it is common for Lolitas, the participants baked cakes in one of girl's home there. Pictures obtained from this event display some of the most creative Lolita costumes. Some of their peculiar, antique accessories were borrowed from collections that once belonged to their grandmothers and grandfathers, like the top-hat one of Lolitas is wearing, showing yet another aspect of how old and new, different cultural customs intertwine in the global era (Pict. 28-29).

As time went on, gradually the costumes became more complicated, details more elaborately worked out, materials - in higher quality. For some participants the history of Lolita meet-ups was also the history of their own development in design, sewing, embroidery and other crafts. Recently with the development of online shopping some outfits are purchased, but they are considered rather expensive. Most of Latvian Lolita costumes are self made or adapted, reworked clothes from home collection or vintage goods. One of Lolita meet-up participants Darja des Mortes is a vivid example. Her costume from Bloody Lolita meet-up in 2011 (Pict. 38-39) was decorated with elaborate pearl embroidery, while the earlier ones are more simple. As Darja told the author in the interview through the internet with her, she designs and sews her costumes herself. Lolita fashion is her hobby apart from studies of English Philology in the University of Latvia and work as an English teacher. Her recent costumes (2012, Pict. 41-44) are miracles of how much an amateur can do in costume making. Darja got interest in Lolita fashion 6-7 years ago from Malice Mizer singer Mana. She was amazed of his costumes, their elaborate details, innocent but at the same time wicked looks, Mana's doll-like face. Wearing Lolita costumes she enjoys letting feeling herself not as an adult but still one who is growing up (Haijima 2012). This is similar, what Lolita fans worldwide say. Rahman et al call this „a form of escapism – a way of taking flight from adolescence or adulthood and returning to childhood. By wearing a childlike Lolita style in a fantasy setting, wearer may enter into an imaginary world and momentarily remove her/himself from everyday reality. Lolita subculturists „wear more than one hat in life” and their lives are filled with performance, imagination, illusions and even confusion.” (Rahman, Liu, Lam, Tai 2011). According to (Bocock 1993) „In the state of postmodernity, when hyper-reality has superseded the importance and significance of reality, people do not merely fantasize about their imaginary world, but also create their desired identity, and this process or lived experience becomes reality itself.”

Though we cannot say that all Lolita costumes are meant only for fantasies and lack the practical, down-to-earth usage. One of Darja's Lolita dresses she wore in the high school graduation ceremony (Pict. 44). There are certain events and places in life when Rococo, Victorian inspired costumes with their classic elegance fit the occasion. Another aspect evident in Darja's and other's costumes, especially Gothic Lolitas, is the strong influence by Goth culture¹. Perhaps the best example are Darja's dark costumes, especially the one with a cemetery in the background. Takahara Eiri has referred to the Gothic sensibility as „...essentially a variation on the heritage of the past. However, this is a fabulous past which has never actually existed (Takahara 2004:1). This is a nostalgic sensibility which looks to the past, not with a desire for historical accuracy, but rather in search of a particular mood (Mackie 2009). Goth subculture could be interpreted in a way that by wearing fear they try to eliminate their own alienation and fear inside. Though Gothic Lolitas are a much softer variation of Goth culture, mixed with other features.

Another Lolita dress wearer Ekaterina (Pict. 46-48) the author met in Riga centre for an interview and a photosession. Ekaterina said that Lolita fashion stimulated her to become more feminine as after being attracted to Lolitas she got an interest in cooking, sewing and making Lolita accessories. Ekaterina sells her home made accessories in the cosplay, *anime* and *manga* fan events. The Gothic Lolita costume seen in the (Pict. 47) she

¹ „Gothic referred originally to the East Germanic Goth tribes, and the term came to be used as a term of abuse, signifying the meaning of „barbaric“. The label was attached to a form of medieval ecclesiastical architecture, characterized by clustered columns, ribbed vaults, pointed arches and flying buttresses, reflecting the state of architectural technology at the time of the construction of the great medieval cathedrals. The Gothic style has regularly been revived in order to invoke a sense of archaism and tradition, in the nineteenth century university buildings, chapels, residential colleges, banks, railway stations, for example.

Gothic novels are characterized by fascination with horror, morbidity, melancholy, darkness and the supernatural, in stories set in cemeteries, ruins, castles and monasteries, and populated by ghosts, vampires and werewolves. From the late twentieth century this nostalgic sensibility is seen in horror movies, film noir, 1980s rock groups like Souxsie and the Banshees and Bauhaus. Consumption of these cultural forms has also come to be associated with a particular form of dress and an associated subculture.

The generic features of the Goth style include dyed black hair, pale foundation, exaggerated black eyeliner and black nail polish. Clothing is black, purple or sometimes red and is characterized by decorative features such as lace, or corset like lacing. Some features such as heavy work boots, body piercing or torn stockings have antecedents in the punk style. Ornate crosses refer to Christian symbolism and witchcraft. The color black is a feature which distinguishes Goth from other styles, while at the same time placing it in the lineage of black fashion styles: Women in Black-Religious dress-Mourning-Bohemian-Little Black Dress-Beatnik-Punk-Fetish-Goth-Gothic Lolita-Lolita-Maid (Mackie 2009).

designed herself, asking a professional sewer to make it ready, while the head accessory is made by her. Similarly were created other outfits in her collection. Ekaterina also said, that she is very good at making cup cakes! Ekaterina told that „Every girl wants to be a princess, at least for a while”, and that is the reason why she started wearing Lolita costumes. Her hobby helped her also psychologically: she was very shy to talk with people, come out on the stage, but cosplay shows opened her up, gave courage and now she feels more confident in herself. Ekaterina mentioned that another reason why she wears Lolita costumes is that they help to cover weak points of the body and single out the attractive ones.

Egija, a Lolita fashion admirer from Latvia (Pict. 45), in the interview (Haijima 2012) said that she was attracted to this style because of many feminine details: ribbons, lace etc. Egija is interested also in Asian culture, especially j-rock, j-pop, k-pop, Chinese music as well as various other music types. Egija wants to develop her skills as a model and also learn sewing. Egija said she is a newcomer in Lolita community and still does not have so much experience as others. From Egija collection the author chose a photo taken in Bristol, U.K (Pict. 45) where she is temporaly living. Here Egija is wearing a warm winter coat in Lolita style with high boots. This style could be called „Winter Lolita”, perhaps a new term, but comes out of reality of North European cold climate which requires thick, warm fabrics as well as cosy, warming boots. Japanese costumes, on the contrary, are lighter and more thin.

At present she buys her Lolita costumes on ebay, but she said it is rather expensive. Perhaps Egija is one of the examples of how transnational fandom focused on fashion are subjected to transnational political economy of design, production, distribution, marketing, publication, commentary and publication.

There is a flourishing export trade of Gothic Lolita fashion styles from Tokyo to the world, and the import of such products as Vivienne Westwood shoes from Britain to Japan. Furthermore, there is a shadow economy of second-hand trading and swapping. Even the handmade elements of the style may depend on the purchase of fabrics, trimmings, threads, sewing implements and pattern books. Transnational style and transnational fandom, then, are ultimately matters of transnational political economy, demonstrating the infinite capacity for the appropriation and identity under the systems of transnational capitalism (Mackie 2009). Latvia fandom of Lolita fashion each in some aspect are subjected to this transnational

political economy, but in case of Latvia, the fans depend on self made items more than in other countries, so we can say, that at least to some extent, they are trying to escape this transnational capitalism.

At the end, regarding the Lolita fashion in Latvia we can conclude with the following: Latvia is a relative latecomer in the appreciation of Lolita style, the followers are younger than in other countries – aged 14-20. The costumes are adapted according to the local cultural, social as well as weather conditions and reveal a unique cultural phenomenon: a peculiar blend of two cultures and mentalities: Japanese and Latvian. Most outfits are self made, revealing individual taste in the choice of colors and materials. Lolita fashion leads into personal development since this hobby requires skills that in the modern consumer society are forgotten by many, for example, those who can't design and sew are trying to learn it. Great number of girls are attracted to Lolita fashion because of its womanly nature and try to develop more feminine lifestyle by learning cooking, handicrafts etc. Sometimes articles from home collection are adapted for Lolita costumes, especially accessories, like top hats, canes can come from grandparents times, showing yet another aspect how old and new, different cultural customs interlink in the global era. Among most popular Lolita styles in Latvia are Gothic Lolita, Black and White Lolita, Sweet Lolita, Punk Lolita, while here is quite strong Goth culture influence on some of the practitioners. Lolita costumes show the tendency to develop in quality with the time, recently they are becoming more and more complicated and technically elaborate. For some of Lolita outfit wearers this fashion style helps also psychologically: to fight with alianation, lack of self confidence, helps to find new friends through social meet-ups and internet. Lolita costumes are sometimes worn by TV journalists or pop singers, too, in Latvia.

Mori Girl (Forest Girl) is another Japanese fashion subculture that has many connections with Latvia (Pict. 50-54). This fashion style emerged in Japan in 2007 after the movie *Honey and Clover* (2006) was released. The actress Yuu Aoi who played Hagu became the archetype of *Mori Girl* fashion. The fashion style can be interpreted as Japanese society reaction against super urbanization evident in Japan and wish to be closer to the nature.

This fashion style stresses the use of soft, natural and calm colors, which as are found in the forest: earth tones such as antique white, beige, brown, ivory, mustard, also dark blue, bordeaux, dark green etc. The clothing is

casual, loose, layered. Vintage goods can be used, stressing practicality and economy. Respect for the traditional, old is shown through the quaint accessories like old watches. Natural materials are used: cotton, wool, leather and fur. Hand made items are also in vogue. *Mori* fashion can also include lifestyle close to the nature. *Mori* (Forest) girls like travelling therefore *Mori* Girl magazines such as *Spoon*, *Fudge* or *Mori Girl Papier* often include advertisements of travels in the nature.

On the whole, in Japan the *Mori* fashion style or lifestyle is meant for those who live in the city but want to imitate looks and life as if they were living in the forest. If in Japan it is a fashion subculture, then in Latvia it is a natural way of life for many since there is little population and nature is all around. Therefore we can say that elements of *Mori* fashion in Latvia are evident in everyday life. Though there are some young people who have turned their lifestyle into an art form inspired by *Mori* aesthetics. One of the examples could be Elīza (18) – her photo collection in *Mori* style was taken in Zvejniekciems (Fishermen's Village by the Baltic sea, Latvia) where some Latvian families spend their summer vacation in their summer homes. (Pict. 54). Elīza is a high school student who likes writing stories, photography, reading, surfing the internet and wants to study medicine in the future. She also has costumes in Lolita style, about which she got to know in 2007 from her internet friend in England. The interest in Japanese fashion started with *Visual-kei*, later turned into EGL (Elegant Gothic Lolita), and finally lead into *Mori* fashion and *Dolly-kei*.

Elīza perhaps is one of the young persons who wants to experience different fashion styles and her interest is switching from one into another, but sometimes these searches lead into interesting results.

Besides Elīza who is well informed about *Mori* fashion in Japan, there are many people in Latvia who wear *Mori* style clothes and live like Japanese *Mori* girls but they do it unconsciously since this is their true lifestyle but not just a temporal fashion.

At the end, the author would like to conclude that *Mori* fashion displays common appreciation of nature, natural materials, practicality, casualness, interest in the old, traditional in the two countries – Latvia and Japan. *Mori* fashion can be interpreted to some extent as the representation of *wabi-sabi* principles in the modern fashion form that in the age of globalization have found common appreciation in very distant countries.

Mori and Lolita styles will never be mainstream, but even as the

alternative fashion forms they display many interesting features and will continue to develop in Latvia.

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Abstract

Lolita fashion – one of the elements of Japanese popular culture as a fashion subculture was created in Japan, taking inspiration from Victorian-era costumes and Rococo period clothing. Amazingly, through the global dissemination of Japanese popular culture this fashion found its way back to Europe.

In Riga cosplay events, staging various costumes from Japanese manga and anime world take place since 2004 with the start of the 1st. *Anime Festival*. Since then, every year various other events like Cosplay Con, Christmas, Halloween parties and individual gatherings attract several hundreds of participants who are given a possibility to show their various costumes inspired from Japanese anime and manga world. Among them there is a group of girls in Riga who like Lolita fashion and organize different meet-ups and events like and picnics, tea-parties, museum visits, photosessions of Lolita costumes in Old Riga, Riga gardens and parks. The photos obtained in these events reveal a unique cultural phenomenon: a harmonious blend of two cultures and mentalities: Japanese and Latvian. The modern costumes inspired by Japanese popular culture fit well in Riga historical settings several hundreds of years old. The author was fascinated by their Japanese-like youthful crave for unusual, bizarre, unacustomed, extravagant, well balanced with elegant correctness typical to North Europe. Another factor is worth mentioning: most of the costumes were self made, revealing individual taste in the choice of colors and materials. Handling the topic of Japanese fashion they adjusted it to local environment and individual taste. Some of their peculiar, antique accessories were borrowed from collections that once belonged to their grandmothers and grandfathers showing yet another aspect how old and new, different cultural customs intertwine in the global era. The interviews taken with „Riga Lolitas” give insight how these girls took interest in Japan, Lolita fashion, how they created their costumes, what they think of Japanese culture, etc. Lolita fashion in Latvia is also analyzed from the points of relationship with *kawaii* culture, connection with Goth culture, sign/language system used by members of certain subcultures, women sexuality, transnational political economy. It is discussed also in terms of creativity, rebellion against the conventions of contemporary society, feminine lifestyle, self development, psychological impact.

Mori (Forest) Girl – another Japanese fashion subculture evident in Latvia, that is to some extent similar to Country Lolita or *Mori Lolita*, emerged in Japan in 2007 as a reaction against Japan's super urbanization, and displays common appreciation of nature, natural materials, practicality, casualness, interest in the old, traditional in the two countries – Latvia and Japan. *Mori* fashion can be interpreted in some features as the representation of *wabi-sabi* principles in the modern fashion form.

Santrauka

Lolitos mada – vienas iš japonų populiariosios kultūros elementų, kuris, kaip mados subkultūra, atsirado Japonijoje, įkvėptas Viktorijos laikų kostiumų ir rokoko periodo aprangos. Visų nuostabai, globalios japonų populiariosios kultūros sklaidos dėka ši mada rado savo kelią atgal į Europą.

Rygoje *cosplay* renginiai, kuriuose pasirodoma įvairiais Japonijos komiksų (*mangos*) ir animacijos (*anime*) pasaulio kostiumais, vyksta nuo 2004 m., kuomet ir įvyko pirmasis *Anime* festivalis. Nuo to laiko kasmet įvairūs renginiai, pvz., *Cosplay Con*, šv. Kalėdos, Helovino vakarėliai ar privatūs sambūriai pritraukia šimtus dalyvių, turinčių galimybę pasirodyti savo kostiumais, kurie yra įkvėpti Japonijos komiksų ir animacijos pasaulio. Tarp tokių dalyvių yra grupė merginų, kurioms patinka Lolitos mada: jos organizuoja susitikimus, iškylas, arbatos vakarėlius, muziejų vizitus, Lolitos kostiumų fotosesijas senojoje Rygoje, jos soduose ir parkuose. Šių renginių nuotraukos atskleidžia unikalų kultūrinį fenomeną – harmoningą dviejų kultūrų ir mentalitetų (japoniško ir latviško) derinį. Modernūs kostiumai, įkvėpti populiarios japonų kultūros, puikiai tinka istorinei kelių šimtų metų senumo Rygos aplinkai. Autorė buvo sužavėta merginų gebėjimo suderinti japonams būdingą jaunatvišką troškimą kažko neįprasto, keisto, ekstravagantiško ir elegantišką korektiškumą, būdingą Šiaurės Europai. Kitas dalykas, kurį svarbu paminėti: didžioji dalis kostiumų buvo pagaminti jų pačių, jie atskleidė merginų individualų skonį renkantis spalvas ir medžiagas. Išlaikydamos japoniškos mados temą jos pritaikė ją prie vietinės aplinkos ir individualaus skonio. Kai kurie išskirtiniai, antikvariniai aksesuarai buvo pasiskolinti iš kolekcijų, kurios kažkada priklausė jų senelėms bei seneliams, o tai tik dar vienas iš pavyzdžių, iliustruojančių, kaip sena ir nauja, skirtingi kultūriniai papročiai susipina globaliame amžiuje. Interviu su „Rygos Lolitomis“ leido suprasti, kaip šios merginos susidomėjo Japonija, Lolitos mada, kaip jos kūrė savo kostiumus, ką jos mano apie japonų kultūrą ir t. t.

Lolitos mada Latvijoje taipogi analizuojama iš *kawaii* kultūros perspektyvos, sąsajos su gotų kultūra, moterų seksualumu, transnacionaline politine ekonomija, ženklų, kalbos sistema, kurią naudoja atitinkamos subkultūros.

Taip pat aptariamas kūrybingumas, maištas prieš įsigalėjusią šiuolaikinės visuomenės tvarką, moterišką gyvenimo būdą, savęs tobulinimas, psichologinė įtaka.

Mori (liet. k. „miško“) mergina – dar vienas japonų mados subkultūros įrodymas Latvijoje, kuris šiek tiek panašus į kaimo Lolitą (*Country Lolita*) ar *Mori* Lolitą, kurios atsirado Japonijoje 2007 m. kaip reakcija į Japonijos urbanizaciją. Ji įkūnija gamtos, natūralių medžiagų, praktiškumo, paprastumo, domėjimosi tuo, kas sena, tradiciška, puoselėjimą. *Mori* mada pagal kai kuriuos savo bruožus gali būti interpretuojama kaip *wabi-sabi* principų atspindys modernioje mados formoje.

Lolita Fashion in Latvia



Pict. 1. “Rococco Inspired Classic Lolita”, designer Lauma Vāvere, 2012, Bīriņi castle, Latvia, photo collection of Lauma Vāvere.



Pict. 2 .“Rococco Inspired Classic Lolita”, designer Lauma Vāvere, 2012, Bīriņi castle, Latvia, photo collection of Lauma Vāvere.



Pict. 3. „Black Lolita”, Latvia 2012, design Darja des Mortes (internet name), picture collection of Darja des Mortes.

Lolita Fashion in Latvia



Pict. 4. Lauma Vāvere in her home, with Lolita costumes in her wardrobe, Agnese Haijima photo, 2012.



Pict. 5. Lauma Vāvere's sketches and her shop logo, Agnese Haijima photo, 2012.



Pict. 6. Lolita meet-up 2006, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 7. Lauma Vāvere in her first Lolita costume, 2005. Lauma Vavere photo collection

Lolita Tea Party, June 2008, Riga, Latvia



Pict. 8. Lolita Tea Party, 2008, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 9. Lolita Tea Party, 2008, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 10. Lolita Tea Party, 2008, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 11. Lolita Tea Party, 2008, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection

Lolita Gathering August 2008, Riga



Pict. 12. A poster drawn by Lauma Vāvere, inviting for Lolita meet-up. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 13. Lolita gathering, August 2008, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 14. Lolita gathering, August 2008, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 15. Lolita gathering, August 2008, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 16. Lolita gathering, August 2008, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection

3 min Lolita Gathering May 2009, Riga



Pict. 17. Poster for 3 min Lolita gathering, May 2009, Riga, drawn by Lauma Vāvere.

„Any kind of Lolita can participate: Sweet, Kodona, Gothic, Ouji etc. Let's stand in a line facing the clock and freeze for 3 minutes. Let's conclude the meet-up in some park (with your own tea in a beautiful cup). Photographers will come!”



Pict. 18. 3 min. Lolita gathering, May 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 19. 3 min. Lolita gathering, May 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 20. 3 min. Lolita gathering, May 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection

Lolita Gathering June 2009



Pict. 21. A poster drawn by Lauma Vavere inviting to a Lolita Fairytale Meet-up in Riga, June, 2009. „ At 16:00 Let's meet at the Laima clock that will be a starting point for the walk through the Old city. This will be a chance for the characers from fairy tales to meet and get acquainted...”



Pict. 23. Lolita Fairytale gathering, June 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 22. Lolita Fairytale gathering, June 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 24. Lolita Fairytale gathering, June 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 25. Lolita Fairytale gathering, June 2009, Riga. Lauma Vāvere photo collection

Circus Lolita meet-up, September 2010, Mežaparks, Rīga, Latvia



Pict. 26. A poster inviting to Circus Lolita meeting, 2010, drawn by Lauma Vāvere. „ Lolita meet-up with Circus theme. Beginning in September 6th 13:00 in front of the Zoo, let's go for a walk in the Mežaparks (Forest) park, to the children playground, let's take pictures. At the end we will go to bake apple cakes and drink tea in Sabine's home. Yo Ho Ho.



Pict. 28. Circus Lolita meeting, with 100 years old top hat, Mad Hatter, September 2010, Mežaparks (Forest park), Riga, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 30. Circus Lolita meeting, September 2010, Mežaparks (Forest park), Riga, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 27. Circus Lolita meeting, September 2010, Mežaparks (Forest park), Riga, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 29. Circus Lolita meeting, with 100 years old top hat, Mad Hatter, September 2010, Mežaparks (Forest park), Riga, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 31. Circus Lolita meeting, September 2010, Mežaparks (Forest park), Riga, Lauma Vāvere photo collection

Lolita meet-up „Picnic” 2010, Riga, Latvia



Pict. 32. Lolita meet-up „Picnic 2010, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 33 Lolita meet-up „Picnic 2010, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 34. Lolita meet-up „Picnic 2010, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 35. Lolita meet-up „Picnic 2010, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 36. Lolita meet-up „Picnic 2010, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 37. Lolita meet-up „Picnic 2010, Riga, Latvia, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 38. Bloody Lolita meet-up, 2011, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 39. Bloody Lolita meet-up, 2011, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 40. Lauma Vāvere as Sailor Lolita, Lauma Vāvere photo collection



Pict. 42. Vampire costume, cosplay, 2012, Darja des Mortes photo collection



Pict. 41. „Lolita Dress”, Latvia 2012, Darja des Mortes photo collection



Pict. 43. Classic Gothic Lolita costumes (featuring thrown away dolls), Darja des Mortes photo collection



Pict. 45. Lolita costume, Egija Medne collection



Pict. 44. Lolita costume, Darja des Mortes photo collection



Pict. 46. Lolita dress, Ekaterina Horolska collection



Pict. 47. Gothic Lolita, Agnese Haijima photo collection. Riga park 2012



Pict. 48. Gothic Lolita, Agnese Haijima photo collection. In front of Black Heads House, Riga, 2012



Pict. 49. *Le Chevalier d'Eon*, Darja des Mortes photo collection

Mori (Forest) Girl Fashion in Latvia (2012)



Pict. 50. *Mori* (Forest) Girl fashion, 2012, Latvija. Elīza Malnača photo collection



Pict. 51. *Mori* (Forest) Girl fashion, 2012, Latvija. Elīza Malnača photo collection



Pict. 52. *Mori* (Forest) Girl fashion, 2012, Latvija. Elīza Malnača photo collection



Pict. 53. *Mori* (Forest) Girl fashion, 2012, Latvija. Elīza Malnača photo collection



Pict. 54. *Mori* (Forest) Girl fashion, 2012, Zvejniekiems, Latvija. Elīza Malnača photo collection