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Book review: Patterns of Fashion 1: Englishwomen's dress c.1720-1860 (London: The School of Historical Dress, 2021); Patterns of Fashion 2: Englishwomen's dress c.1860-1940 (London: The School of Historical Dress, 2022); Patterns of Fashion 6: European Women's Dress c.1695-1795 (London: The School of Historical Dress, 2021)

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Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1: The content, cut, construction and context of Englishwomen's dress c.1720-1860* (London: The School of Historical Dress, 2021) 134 pp., col. illus. throughout. Pbk £40.00. ISBN 9780993174445

Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 2: The content, cut, construction and context of Englishwomen's dress c.1860-1940* (London: The School of Historical Dress, 2022) 166 pp., col. illus. throughout. Pbk £40.00. ISBN 9780993174469

Janet Arnold, Sébastien Passot, Claire Thornton & Jenny Tiramani, *Patterns of Fashion 6: The content, cut, construction and context of European Women's Dress c.1695-1795* (London: The School of Historical Dress, 2021) 172 pp., col.illus.throughout. Pbk £40.00. ISBN 9780993174452

In 2020, the publishing rights of the first four volumes of Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion* series were given by Macmillan Publishing to the School of Historical Dress. As Jenny Tiramani says in her introductions to these new editions of *Patterns of Fashion 1* and *2*, the decision was made not simply to re-print the original books, but to honour Janet Arnold's longstanding wish that the books contain colour photography. It was also seen as an opportunity to revise the layout and presentation more generally, reconsider the garments presented and make some thematic changes. Of the two revised editions, *Patterns of Fashion 1* has undergone the more significant changes.

*Patterns of Fashion 1*, formerly a relatively slim volume of 76 pages (first published 1964) has expanded to 134 pages. This is accounted for by the introduction of much new photography and by the addition of seven patterns by Janet Arnold; three of these are unpublished sets of patterns and drawings from the Janet Arnold archive; the remaining four have already been published elsewhere, in the back numbers of costume journals. The new dates attached to this revised edition, 1720-1860 instead of the original's 1660-1860, reflects

the removal of two patterns from the original content: one for a set of covered stays has already migrated to Patterns of Fashion 5, and one for a mantua now appears in Patterns of Fashion 6. This adjustment is thematically appropriate, as the trend has been to use the newer volumes in the series to illustrate the development of garment types: thus POF 5 is devoted mainly to stays and hoops, while POF 6 is devoted to gowns and mantuas.

Stylistically the revised POF 1 retains the landscape format of the original book, the cover is now dark grey instead of black, and a new selection of costume drawings, in white outline, appear on the cover; thus the design links it to the original POF 1, but cannot be confused with it. The new edition has the same introductory section on pattern drafting, cutting and construction that appeared in the original, but with some extra material on historical pattern drafting, and digital copies of period illustrations replace Arnold's own hand-drawn copies of these. There follows a guide to sewing, a lexicon of seams and stitches, after which there are some 40 pages of photographs and prints relating to the garments which feature in the pattern diagrams which occupy the last half of the book. The patterns themselves cover a wide range of dress forms, from formal eighteenth century dresses to Victorian evening wear. Almost half of the patterns are drawn from the costume collection amassed by Charles Paget Wade at Snowhill Manor, Gloucestershire, but now housed at Berrington Hall, Herefordshire. This re-location is recognised in the new POF 1, an important part of the updating as museums and collections change location and identity over time.

The pattern section opens with a mantua and petticoat (c.1620); the costume drawing and pattern diagram occupy 4 pages, one of which folds out. This is a revised version of a pattern that appeared back in 1972 in the *Costume Journal*, but makes its appearance in POF 1 for the first time. Comparing the two, there seems to have been a small reworking of the detail of the darts and pleats that shape the upper front of the mantua. There are also changes to the accompanying text to reflect changes in thinking about this gown, its textiles, its context. The

pattern's presence here also rescues it from the relative obscurity of the back numbers of *Costume Journal*. The great advantage of this new iteration is that it separates out the pattern pieces which in the original had been overlapped to fit within one landscape page. This was difficult to decipher, to separate the pattern outlines from the background grid and each other, and this had been further complicated as the wide pattern diagram was split down the middle so that it could be printed over two pages of the journal. This new iteration also distinguishes the pattern pieces from the grid by filling them with block colour. The pattern, although still complicated because of the garment's history of alteration and then restoration, is much easier to comprehend.

The order of presentation of the pattern studies has also changed here and there – partly because curatorial dating of some garments has shifted slightly since the 1960s. One major adjustment in the presentation of each garment study, which is of real benefit, is the pulling together across the book's double-spread, of Arnold's costume drawing of the mounted garment, accompanying sketches of its details, and its pattern diagram. Formerly, in the original publication, these were often separated over several pages, and they did not have linking reference numbers. This has been remedied here, so it is easier to make the visual connections between the drawings and patterns. Revisions to the pattern diagrams themselves include additional information about fastenings, facings, piecing, etc. There is also the reversal of many lining pattern pieces, so that they are now shown right side up.

The same strategies are to be found operating in the revised *Patterns of Fashion 2*. This follows more closely the content of the original version, with only one additional pattern, an unpublished study by Arnold of a delicate floral day dress from the second decade of the twentieth century. The main impact of this new edition comes from the photographic section, placed between the historical information and the patterns themselves. Here the reader will find, for each garment, a set of photographs of the dress showing both its general form and

numerous close-ups of details as well as some well-chosen contextual period images – studio photographs or fashion plates. While Janet Arnold’s drawings and patterns give all the essentials for each dress form, the new photographic supplement helps enormously by showing the details of internal construction and finish and a clearer sense of the textiles. This seems to me the strength of this new version.

In the pattern studies section itself there is no alteration to the original sequence of the 1966 publication and the presentation style established in the new, revised *Pattern of Fashion 1* is maintained in this new volume. Where possible, the overlapping pattern pieces that were often a feature of Arnold’s diagrams, have been separated for ease of understanding, and the pattern shapes themselves have again been tinted in pastel shades to separate them from the background grid. To those unfamiliar with the original *POF 2*, the costumes described range from wide skirted Victorian dresses that were underpinned by steel-boned corsetry and full cage crinolines to the more relaxed dresses of the twentieth century which were underpinned by softer, elastic-panelled girdles and brassieres. A significant number of Paris-based dressmakers and couturiers feature among the range of twentieth century dresses that are described in detail, including some by innovators Madeleine Vionnet and Elsa Schiaparelli.

*Patterns of Fashion 6*, by contrast to these two revised editions, is a completely new set of patterns, devoted thematically to women’s dressmaking, tracing the evolution of European dress forms across the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This parallels the thematic link that runs across *Patterns of Fashion 5* which documents stays, covered stays and hoops - the underpinnings of the gowns and dresses that feature in *POF 6*.

*Patterns of Fashion 6* is the largest yet in the series, with 172 pages. It has 51 patterns. Of these, fourteen are by Janet Arnold, and five of these fourteen are by Janet Arnold alone. The other nine which are credited to her have been augmented by the co-authors. A few of the

Arnold patterns have appeared elsewhere but are here given fresh iterations. In addition to the names credited with the main authorship, all of whom supply new pattern diagrams, a number of collaborators have also contributed new pattern analyses. Melanie Braun, Adrien Chombart de Lauwe, Luca Costigliolo, Niki Miles and Paweł Tomaszewski – take a bow.

Only eight of the Arnold patterns are accompanied by her costume drawings. Arnold's peerless line drawings are missed but obviously there is only a finite number of those surviving. However, all patterns in the book are well supplemented by photographs of the source material to help bring clarity. Of the fifty-one patterns in the book, nine are based on items owned by the School for Historical Dress, while eleven patterns are based on items from the Hopkins Collection. The other costume studies are drawn from collections across Europe and North America.

The book opens with a section on materials, followed by a double page spread of diagrams of the cut of gowns featured in the book. This helps show the evolution of different styles across the eighteenth century and helps readers orient themselves. Next comes a section on published historical tailoring diagrams from Spain and France for cutting out gowns, and discussion of the approach of the original mantua makers, who were working in a tradition of procedures and strategies. As can be seen from the pattern diagrams, their final shape was often achieved by darts, pleats and tucks. There follows a section on stitches and decorative techniques, then a discussion of the layers of underdressing worn in the eighteenth century. After a further section on fabrics and dress construction, we reach the patterns themselves. These are organised under various headings: flat cut gowns; close fitting gowns; sacs, sacques, sacks; late styles; separates; accessories. The dress styles range from loose Watteau gowns to Court dress where the wide-hooped petticoat dominates; from informal quilted jackets to late, pre-Revolutionary dress styles where paniers and pocket hoops have been abandoned for simpler underpinnings.

Leafing through the book's many illustrations of mantuas in richly patterned textiles, there is a strong sense of the competitive nature of dress at the elite levels of European society. These gowns, underpinned by stays and paniers, were hardly practical, limiting the physical actions of the women who wore them, but giving them a strong physical presence, conspicuously displaying wealth and status, each gown composed of large quantities of narrow silk cloths of complex weave. These textile patterns have been digitised and applied to the pattern diagrams. This represents a significant new development in the style of presentation of the pattern diagrams. Whereas POF 1 and POF 2 in their revised versions have the pattern pieces tinted in pastel colours, helping to distinguish them from the background grid, in POF 6 the pattern shapes are filled with the textile patterns, allowing the orientation of the patterned cloth to be shown, and also reveal the small misalignments of the pattern where selvages are joined. This innovation comes into its own, for example, with a closed gown and its petticoat where an expensive, elaborately patterned silk has been extensively pieced to squeeze maximum value from the textile. The pattern analysis can now show this complicated patchwork of pieces more clearly. This to some degree reflects the shift in the philosophy of these books, for as Jenny Tiramani acknowledges in POF 1, the original publication POF 1 had a drama audience in mind, one that might use the information for costume design and costume making. But as time has gone by, the books have become valuable reference for costume curators and so the books have increased their level of documentary detail. In this book, for example, embroidery motifs that are a feature of some dresses are drawn at full scale alongside the pattern diagrams. Janet Arnold herself had moved in this direction, an increasing level of information, by the time of POF 3 when she was at last allowed to introduce photography, and had extended that book's historical discussion.

Janet Arnold's patterns and the newer patterns of Jenny Tiramani and her associates represent periods of concentrated observation and measurement, the careful plotting of key points on

graph paper and the slow establishment of each panel's shape and dimensions, the cross-referencing of connecting panels, the annotations on construction and embellishment that further define each garment. Consequently, the patterns take time and careful reading to yield their full value, and in fact, cannot be fully appreciated until an attempt has been made at reconstruction. Only then will the reader have completely assimilated the information laid out so carefully across each book's pages.

These books are a gift to costume designers and costume makers. Fashion designers, like the late, great Vivienne Westwood, might also find them inspiring. They have a natural home on the bookshelves of costume curators and dress historians. In terms of value for money, these books are astonishing – they will last you a lifetime and you will always be learning from them.

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