



# Mummies are Called upon to Contribute to Fashion

## Pre-Tutankhamun Egyptian Revivalism in Dress

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*The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 instantly inspired "Egyptomania" garments and accessories for women. However, "Tutmania" flappers had numerous precedents throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This paper correlates surges in Egyptomania styles with contemporary events in Egypt, archaeology, and Egyptology. Archaeological discoveries and international tours of artifacts sparked fresh waves of Egyptianizing fashions. Socio-political events, such as Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, also stimulated fashions. Ancient Egypt inspired motifs, textiles, color, and even personality—in the form of Cleopatra—that have passed from one civilization to another, crossed the East–West divide, and traveled through millennia. This article analyzes attestations of Egyptomania fashions scattered throughout European and American fashion magazines before the 1920s to establish the trends beyond jewelry, painted portraits, and operatic costumes.*

Keywords Egypt, Egyptomania, Tutankhamun, fashion, textiles, jewelry, painted portraits, nineteenth century, early twentieth century

- 1 Howard Carter and A. C. Mace, *The Discovery of the Tomb of Tut. ankh. Amen* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 94–96.
- 2 For a list of international Tutankhamun exhibits, see Nicholas Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, The Tomb, The Royal Treasure* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 212–213. The first significant tour, which seems not to have generated the same level of furor as in 1978, began in Washington, DC, in 1961 and traveled the United States until 1964, after which it went to Canada. Reeves explains that by the last tour, the artifacts had suffered from the constant packing, unpacking, and transport, and the Egyptian government determined that there would be no more international displays after the artifacts returned from West Germany in 1981.
- 3 *Saturday Night Live*, Season 3, Episode 18, accessed June 18, 2007, <http://snltranscripts.jt.org/77/77kingtut.phtml>.
- 4 For example analyses of Egyptomania in ancient times, see James Stevens Curl, “Some Manifestations of Egyptianisms from the Time of Trajan to the Early Renaissance Period,” in *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 43–108; Carla Alfano, “Egyptian Influences in Italy,” in *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, ed. Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 276–291; and Jeremy Tanner, “Finding the Egyptian in Ancient Greek Art,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Egypt*, ed. Roger Matthews and Cornelia Roemer (London: UCL Press Institute of Archaeology, 2003), 115–145.
- 5 Martin R. Kalfatovic compiled a bibliography of 1150 travel accounts of Egypt and the Nile in *Nile Notes of a Howadji: A Bibliography of Travelers’ Tales from Egypt, from the Earliest Time to 1918* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1992).
- 6 For additional examples beyond those cited above, see Richard G. Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meaning, 1808–1858* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), and William H. Gerds, “Egyptian Motifs in Nineteenth-Century American Painting and Sculpture,” *Antiques* 90, no. 4 (October 1966): 495–501. Egyptomania is a recurring *topos* throughout David Watkin and Philip Jewat-Jaboor, eds., *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer* (New Haven: Yale University Press for The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, 2008). The catalogue portion of the exhibit considers “Egyptian and Egyptianizing Sculpture” as one aspect of Hope’s life and work (pp. 329–341). Along with Curl’s work cited above, the following work is essential: Jean-Marcel Humbert,

WHEN HOWARD CARTER saw “wonderful things” in the antechamber of Pharaoh Tutankhamun’s tomb on November 26, 1922 an immediate wave of “Tutmania” and generalized “Egyptomania” pervaded architecture, the fine and decorative arts, and fashion.<sup>1</sup> The enthusiasm was so great, both during the 1920s and again in 1978–1979, when the treasures toured North America for the last time due to their fragility, that comedian Steve Martin quipped that Tutankhamun “gave his life for tourism” in his famous song routine.<sup>2</sup> Prior to his performance, Martin remarked “. . . it’s a national disgrace the way we have commercialized [the exhibition] with trinkets and toys, t-shirts and posters.”<sup>3</sup> He did not realize that Tutankhamun had already been heavily commercialized as of December 1922 and that Egyptomania in all its artistic forms, replete with *tschotschkkes*, had existed as an integral part of Western culture since Classical times: both Greeks and Romans worshipped Isis and Osiris, and Herodotus wrote the first Egyptian travelogue ca. 450 BCE in a popular text actively preserved through the millennia.<sup>4</sup> Numerous published accounts of Egyptian journeys ultimately created an impressive bibliography.<sup>5</sup> In the biblical context, the stories of Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, and Jesus’ childhood in Egypt placed the land of the Pharaohs on the itinerary for Holy Land tours and kept the ancient civilization at the forefront.

Given that the Egyptomania phenomenon has existed since ancient times, an impressive body of scholarly work has examined all of its manifestations in terms of fine arts and sculpture, architecture, the decorative arts, and interior design throughout the centuries.<sup>6</sup> However, studies of Egyptianized fashions typically limit themselves to the 1920s and subsequent years; this is understandable, as the relevant ephemera of that period are readily accessible and there are more extant

examples.<sup>7</sup> But these studies create an impression that there were few precedents outside the domain of *Aïda* costumes and jewelry, which is well represented in museum collections.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Tutmania fashions were a descendant of preceding generations who had enjoyed their moments of Egyptomania styles. However, references are scattered throughout fashion journals, many of which have yet to be indexed or digitized and are therefore less well known and can only be found through patient serial reading. Descriptions in these journals are rarely illustrated, and few examples, if any, of the various styles in question survive. For these reasons, although there is generalized awareness of the existence of these historic fashion precedents, systematic compilations and analyses of references containing a significant number of clothing examples have been lacking.

Since Greco-Roman times, ancient Egypt has represented an “attractive territory for appropriation” on multiple levels, resulting in a creative use and reuse of the ancient culture in Western manufactured goods.<sup>9</sup> Egypt has consistently been employed to associate “products with ideas of luxury, wisdom and eternity; testimony to the power that it is assumed to have to move and, mysteriously, to induce confidence.”<sup>10</sup> This cultural appropriation has been distilled into a representative group of Egyptian shapes and motifs, including but not limited to sphinxes, obelisks, pharaonic statues, temple colonnades, hieroglyphs, and pyramids, that, as Michael Rice and Sally McDonald explain, are often

. . . second-hand, derived from the meretricious and often comically inaccurate interpretations of film, theatre and opera directors, thus piling fantasy upon illusion. This process of consumption and re-consumption with images and products feeding off one another to produce

**increasingly complex forms and sets of references, can only take place in an era of mass communication. This explains the considerable increase in the number of Egyptianizing products from the mid-19th century onwards.**<sup>11</sup>

In the case of fashion, it should be noted, the descriptions in the relevant journals improve considerably by the mid-nineteenth century; prior to that time, they can be frustratingly vague. To give one example, the September 1830 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine* described a muslin evening dress with a skirt “superbly embroidered in an Egyptian pattern.”<sup>12</sup> With no illustration and no further description, it is difficult to determine whether the embroidery design drew from ancient or modern Egyptian inspiration, a common but not universal characteristic of the early references. The July 1836 fashion plate of the same journal depicted a “Paris Carriage Dress” that featured a cashmere scarf with an Egyptian pattern and fringe on each end.<sup>13</sup> The flowers on the scarf resemble the rose in the figure’s hand, and the whole outfit is too impressionistic to clarify the source inspiration; thus even an illustration can raise more questions than it answers in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Cultural appropriation through reduction to symbolic essentials, such as hieroglyphs, sphinxes, and pyramids, performed another important function in Western society of the nineteenth century. Richard G. Carrot suggests quite rightly that “old vocabularies” were devoted to “new purposes.”<sup>14</sup> Egyptomania “survived on a myth that it hailed from an imperviously pure source,” allowing cultural consumers to participate “in the very origins of civilized life which predated Judeo-Christian codes for millennia.”<sup>15</sup> Integration of the arts and fashions of a powerful and long-lived ancient empire into products made nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century consumers heirs to

that greatness and hopeful acquirers of that longevity. This romantic myth endured while colonial European governments jockeyed for power over Egypt and other territories to create new empires.<sup>16</sup> Edward Said’s careful and nuanced analysis of the evolution and manifestations of Orientalist discourse illustrates how Western culture declared its superiority over Eastern, and revered ancient Eastern civilizations over modern ones, with the result that Muslim Egypt of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was regarded as another example of Oriental despotism and decadence.<sup>17</sup> As Egyptologist David Jeffreys adds, Egypt’s African context was also ignored.<sup>18</sup> The results of these cultural and Orientalist assumptions are evident in the domain of fashion: ancient motifs were the standard fare for Egyptianizing styles; appropriation of styles currently popular in Egypt at the time of an event was often associated with perceived Western military, intellectual, or technological triumphs, of which Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign represents a prime example. They were also the products of Western industry and not contemporary Egyptian manufacture.

Waves of Egyptomania were triggered by archaeological events, such as an important discovery or exhibit, or by socio-political or economic events, such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1868. The following is a brief list of key moments in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries that contributed to Egyptianizing fashions.

- Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt in 1798 and subsequent defeat at the hands of the British in 1801.
- Giovanni Belzoni’s excavations beginning in 1815, which resulted in important acquisitions for the British Museum and Sir John Sloane’s purchase of King Seti I’s alabaster sarcophagus.
- Jean-François Champollion’s successful decipherment of hieroglyphs in 1822, and

Michael Pantazzi, and Christiane Ziegler, *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730–1930* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994).

- 7 For examples, see Micki Forman, “Tutmania,” *Dress* 4 (1978): 7–16, which provides only one pre-Tut example; Dilys E. Blum and H. Kristina Haugland, *Best Dresses: Fashion from the Birth of Couture to Today* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1997), 26–27; Ellie Laubner, *Fashions of the Roaring ‘20s* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 1996), 29, 88, 134–135; Humbert, Pantazzi and Ziegler, “Tutankhamun and Art Deco,” *Egyptomania*, 506–551.
- 8 Because of its importance, jewelry will be mentioned here, but it is not the primary focus of this article. For more detailed discussions, see Dale Reeves Nicholls, Shelly Foote, and Robyn Allison, *Egyptian Revival Jewelry & Design* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2007) and Charlotte Gere and Judy Rudoe, “The Egyptian Revival,” in *Jewellery in the Age of Queen Victoria* (London: The British Museum Press, 2010), 379–386. Curl goes so far as to state that “jewellery accounted for much Egyptian Revival work in the course of the century” (Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, 344). Although other operas receive due recognition, “Egypt at the Opera” devotes twenty pages to its analysis of *Aida* sets and costumes (Humbert, Pantazzi and Ziegler, *Egyptomania*, 426–447).
- 9 Michael Rice and Sally MacDonald, “Introduction—Tea with a Mummy: The Consumer’s View of Egypt’s Immortal Appeal,” in *Consuming Ancient Egypt*, ed. Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice (London: Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 2003), 7.
- 10 Rice and MacDonald, “Tea with a Mummy,” 7–8.
- 11 Rice and MacDonald, “Tea with a Mummy,” 8.
- 12 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, September, 1830, 143.
- 13 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, July, 1836, 178. Egyptian shawls are mentioned again shortly thereafter: “Shawls are also in favour. . .The shawls are square, of a large size, and of Egyptian patterns, in beautiful, but rather full colours” (*Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, August, 1836, 240).
- 14 Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival*, 17. He was speaking specifically about architecture, but his description applies equally to other facets of Egyptomania.
- 15 Adam Gaczy, *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17th to the 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 81–81.
- 16 For a discussion of the role of Egyptian revival jewelry in France and England, and the differing national identity politics the jewelry represented, see Gere and Rudoe, “The Egyptian Revival,” 380–381.

- 17 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
- 18 David Jeffreys, "Introduction—Two Hundred Years of Ancient Egypt: Modern History and Ancient Archaeology," in *Views of Ancient Egypt since Napoleon Bonaparte: Imperialism, Colonialism and Modern Appropriations*, ed. David Jeffreys (London: Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 2003), 4.
- 19 Nicholas Reeves, *Ancient Egypt: The Great Discoveries: A Year-by-Year Chronicle* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 62.
- 20 Reeves, *Ancient Egypt*, 19–57.
- 21 The work of Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680) is an excellent example of this school of thought. He claimed to have deciphered Egyptian writing, and he translated the cartouche simply bearing the name of Roman emperor Domitian as follows: "Osiris is the source of all fecundity and vegetation; the Holy Mophta draws this power of generation from the sky into his realm." Cited in Brian Curran, "The Renaissance Afterlife of Ancient Egypt (1400–1650)," in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Changing Visions through the Ages*, ed. Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion (London: Institute of Archaeology, University College London Press, 2003), 128–129.
- 22 Curran, "Renaissance Afterlife," 121.
- 23 The complete title is *Lettre à M. Dacier, secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, relative à l'alphabet des hiéroglyphes phonétiques employés par les Egyptiens pour inscrire sur leurs monuments les titres, les noms et les surnoms des souverains grecs et romains* (Paris: Didot, 1822). Champollion deciphered hieroglyphs by determining the names of Ptolemy and Cleopatra on the Rosetta Stone.

the gradual publication of the monumental *Description de l'Égypte* throughout the decade.

- Giuseppe Ferlini's discovery of Meroitic gold jewelry in 1834. The Nubian kingdom of Meroë, which flourished ca. 800 BCE–350 CE, adopted the Egyptian religion, culture, alphabet and its artistic forms in an ancient example of Egyptomania.
- Well-publicized events throughout the 1850s and 1860s included François Mariette's discovery of the Serapeum in 1851, the Harris Papyri (1855), the Smith Papyri (1862), and the 1859 discovery of Queen Ahhotep's tomb and jewelry, which was subsequently exhibited in London in 1862 and Paris in 1867.
- The period between 1881 and World War I is considered the "Glory Years" in the annals of archaeology.<sup>19</sup> Some of the great discoveries include the Pyramid Texts and the cache of royal mummies in 1881, the diplomatic correspondence of Akhenaton in 1887, the Faiyum portraits in 1888, the jewels of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasty princesses in 1894–1895, the tombs of Queen Nefertari in 1904 and of Tutankhamun's great-grandparents Yuya and Thuya in 1905, the famous bust of Queen Nefertiti in 1912, and the treasures of the "three princesses" (minor wives of Eighteenth Dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III) in 1916.<sup>20</sup>

These are but a short list of the many archaeological finds that made headlines and kept ancient Egypt in the public eye in the years leading up to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.

With this background in mind, I will discuss several common motifs that are shared by Egyptomania fashions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prior to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. These motifs help link an otherwise

very disparate corpus of references and surviving objects whose chronology in this study extends from 1800 to 1922. I will begin with Egyptian hieroglyphs and then discuss some key symbols such as sphinxes and pyramids, among other things. Cleopatra is naturally a topic unto herself. Lastly, I will briefly discuss the adoption of contemporary Egyptian fashions in contrast to ancient inspiration.

### **Hieroglyphs; Or, Ancient Texts for Textiles**

Hieroglyphs, of whose artistic value Egyptians themselves were well aware, represent an important motif in Egyptianizing fashions. The West never lost its knowledge of Latin; Greek reentered Western academia in the early Middle Ages, but hieroglyphs defied all attempts at decipherment. Ancient Egyptian was consequently the object of two concurrent viewpoints in the annals of dead languages. On the one hand, hieroglyphs were thought to represent profound mystical hermetic knowledge, even the secrets of the universe, heavily "encoded" in "allegory and enigma."<sup>21</sup> Surviving Greco-Roman mystical texts written in Greek served to strengthen this perspective and maintain the association between allegory and hieroglyphs in popular imagination. On the other hand, the hieroglyphs were thought to be merely a collection of pretty pictures to select, rearrange, invent, and alter as suited an artist because, in their undeciphered state, they meant absolutely nothing, so any attempt at accuracy was pointless. Artists' distorted interpretations were the result of a combination of artistic license and an inability to interpret Egyptian texts visually. Such nonsensical hieroglyphic passages date back to Roman times.<sup>22</sup> Thus Egyptian hieroglyphs meant everything and nothing all at once until Champollion cracked the code and published the *Lettre à M. Dacier* in 1822.<sup>23</sup>



As a direct result of centuries of fascination with the language, hieroglyphs were consequently common motifs in Egyptomania fashions, both in jewelry and in textiles in the pre- and post-decipherment periods. For example, the manufacturer Haussmann, based in Alsace, printed a handkerchief ca. 1818 depicting wounded French soldiers attacked by Russians surrounded by a hieroglyphic border.<sup>24</sup> References to hieroglyphs in fashions that had no accompanying illustration are tantalizing. For example, in 1857, *Peterson's Magazine* described "... a very beautiful head-dress styled the *coiffure Egyptienne*. It is formed of two bandeaux of currant-color velvet, embroidered with gold, and on one side there is a lotus flower, and on the other a bow of groseille [gooseberry]-color ribbon, figured with hieroglyphics in gold."<sup>25</sup> That same year, *Godey's Lady's Book* communicated the latest jewelry fad: a hair bracelet studded with enamel and gold allegorical devices and hieroglyphs formed with diamonds and rubies.<sup>26</sup> This short description, with its mention of allegory juxtaposed with hieroglyphs, underscores the notion of deep mystical knowledge and meaning commonly associated with Egyptian texts. Shortly thereafter, in 1860, Empress Eugénie of France wore an Egyptianizing parure to a ball, showing a continued interest in hieroglyphic jewelry: "The coiffure consisted of a coronet of burnished gold, figured with Egyptian hieroglyphics in black enamel. The necklace and bracelet corresponded in style with the coronet."<sup>27</sup>

Egyptian styles were reinterpreted through the lens of the prevailing Western fashions of the moment and were also commonly combined with other sources of inspiration, including completely unrelated cultures and time periods. Examples include two rare hieroglyphic dresses from the late 1830s in the collections of the Worthing Museum and

**FIGURE 1** Hieroglyphic printed cotton, late 1830s. Detail. Platt Hall Collection, object number 1947.2057. Photo © Manchester City Galleries.



Art Gallery (Worthing, UK) and Platt Hall (Manchester, UK) (FIGURE 1).<sup>28</sup> The design of each dress consists of alternating vertical bands of floral stripes and light blue (Worthing) or purple (Platt) stripes, both barred with identical horizontal hieroglyphic bands. The hieroglyphs consist of a sequence that is depicted from right to left and then left to right in two lines. The signs are distorted though still recognizable, but meaningless as words or a phrase. Other than the hieroglyphs themselves, there is nothing else particularly Egyptian about the fabric pattern. Fashion magazines also document the popularity of the use of hieroglyphs with other motifs in textiles; the February 1835 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine* provided one example with suitable references to major ancient Egyptian cities:

- 24 Humbert, Pantazzi and Ziegler, *Egyptomania*, 244–245. The handkerchief is in the Musée d'Unterlinden in Colmar, France. Other hieroglyphic Haussmann designs from the 1820s to the 1840s survive in the form of paper drawings and blocks for silk printing.
- 25 *Peterson's Magazine* 31, no. 5, May, 1857, 399. *Godey's Lady's Book* repeated the same headdress a few months later with a slight color change: "Among the recent importations from Paris is a very beautiful headdress, styled the *coiffure Egyptienne*. It is formed of two bandeaux of groseille-color velvet, embroidered with gold; and on one side there is a lotus flower, and on the other a bow of groseille-color ribbon, figured with hieroglyphics in gold" (55, no. 3, September, 1857, 288).
- 26 *Godey's Lady's Book* 55, no. 2, August, 1857, 190.
- 27 *Peterson's Magazine* 37, no. 5, May, 1860, 411.
- 28 For a full-length view of the Platt Hall dress, see Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes 1770–1870* (Powys, Wales: Laura Ashley Limited; City of Manchester Cultural Committee, 1983), 33. The illustrations also include a fashion plate from *La Belle Assemblée* (June 1829) showing a similar style of textile.

FIGURE 2 Printed hieroglyphic dress-weight silk, crazy quilt, 1919. Object number S1992-04-028, Anonymous. Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University.

- 29 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, February, 1835, 68. The same journal mentioned "*satin luxor*" (italics original) in January, 1835 (p. 27), and "*satin Memphis*" reappeared in 1836 (February, p. 70, and March, p. 108).
- 30 I would like to thank Egyptologist Dr. B. Bohleke for his patient examinations of this and all other hieroglyphic textiles to verify whether or a not a real inscription was contained therein.
- 31 *Ladies' Home Journal*, October, 1914, 31.



The most fashionable among the latter are the *satins luxor* and the *satins Memphis*. The first has a very slight mixture of cashmere, which renders the draperies of this material particularly graceful. The patterns are various; some of the Turkish kind, others flowered. Plain *satin luxor* is also fashionable, though not so generally adopted in full dress. The *satins Memphis* are all silk, the grounds are light, the patterns hieroglyphics [*sic*] generally in rich colours.<sup>29</sup>

The satins and cashmeres represent an expense not possible for most average 1830s household clothing budgets, but the two printed cottons that have survived demonstrate that affordable versions of luxury designs were readily available, considered desirable, and worth preserving.

Another hieroglyphic textile survives in two pieces on a crazy quilt dated February 18, 1919 in the collection of the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University (FIGURE 2). The lightweight printed dress silk is of good quality, and, unlike most of the rest of the silk samples in the quilt, shows no signs of shattering. The artist was evidently looking at one or more real inscriptions because portions of the text are legible: the hieroglyphic words "eternity" and "people" appear in the columns. A complete phrase,

"Thrones of the Two Lands" also appears; it is part of the titles of the god Amun who is "Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands."<sup>30</sup> To create the rest of the inscription, the artist evidently selected other elements at random and reinterpreted them liberally, resulting in distortion and lack of meaning while still creating a striking design.

Another important hieroglyphic motif warrants mention: the cartouche used to frame the names of pharaohs, their queens, and some royal children. Napoleon appropriated the cartouche to encase the bee he chose as his personal and dynastic symbol on the title page engraving of the *Description de l'Egypte*. Ironically, this was a particularly apt appropriation because the bee was also part of a pharaoh's titulary naming him king of Lower Egypt. Scholars in the very early nineteenth century knew that the sign of the bee appeared frequently in inscriptions prior to a cartouche, but they did not know what it meant. The cartouche represents a bold possibility for textile design, as illustrated by Irene Castle's dance dress from October 1914 (FIGURE 3).<sup>31</sup> Again, artistic distortions are evident. The cartouche is missing its base, and the nearly illegible signs inside do not spell any royal name. The plump vulture with outspread wings, often used on Egyptian

FIGURE 3 Irene Castle in dance dress with cartouche print. *Ladies' Home Journal*, October, 1914, 31.





**FIGURE 4** Silk ribbon belt with vultures and abstracted hieroglyphic motif in rectangular cartouches, ca. 1900–1910. Buckle consists of gold wash over brass and is stamped “Royal M Mfg Co. 795.” Author’s collection.



32 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, January, 1830, 35.

pectorals, adds to the Egyptian theme of the textile, as does the other bird standing on a base, possibly a pintail duck representing the biliteral transcribed *s3* (sa) in the hieroglyphic alphabet. Like the bee, this symbol is more than mere common fauna that occurs frequently in inscriptions: the words *S3R* (Sa Re) “Son of Re” preceded the king’s birth name immediately above a cartouche. A similar well-fed vulture motif, combined with distorted hieroglyphs in sharply delineated rectangles instead of cartouches is woven into a ca. 1900–1910 silk ribbon belt (FIGURE 4). While the signs inside the cartouches are mere abstractions, the *shen* sign in the vulture’s talons is accurately rendered. Cartouches, as can be seen in these examples spanning several decades, represent an artistic medium in which the combination of graphic design and color allow the wearer to appropriate the textual trappings and prerogatives of ancient royalty while remaining entirely within the current

fashionable silhouette. This phenomenon thrives today, as common tourists continue to purchase necklaces with their names punched into cartouches using the ancient Egyptian monoliteral alphabet. These necklaces ignore the bi- and triliteral hieroglyphs that an ancient Egyptian would actually have used.

### **Designs from the Dead; Or, Fashionable Mummies**

Among the many symbols and artifacts with which ancient Egypt is indelibly associated, mummies inevitably come to mind. The deceased might not be particularly inspiring, but their coffins were, according to the January 1830 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*:

**Some caps, named *Egyptian*, have been seen at the Italian Opera; they have two very broad lappets, which descend no lower than the throat—they appear like the head-dress seen on some mummies; a female ought to be pretty, who ventures to wear this head-dress.**<sup>32</sup>



The best-known mummy “cap with lappets” is the striped *nemes* headdress that appears, for example, on Tutankhamun’s funeral mask, but before then was also featured on the coffin of King Nubkheperre Intef, discovered in 1827. This Seventeenth Dynasty pharaoh’s grave, the first royal burial to be discovered, represents a possible inspiration for the 1830 headdresses and provides evidence for the association between the *nemes* and mummies in the cited passage.<sup>33</sup> The *nemes* appears frequently in other royal temple, tomb, and statuary contexts, but its form and iconographic function were not yet widely known in 1830.

The *nemes* was limited to pharaohs only, and hence was depicted most commonly on men; however, women such as Queens Hatshepsut (Eighteenth Dynasty) and Sobeknefru (Twelfth Dynasty) who ruled as pharaoh were also shown wearing it. Even though Egyptian pharaohs had other headdresses—the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, the *khepesh* war helmet, and the *khat* head cloth are some examples—the *nemes* seems to have caught Western eyes and become the standard when referring to Egyptian headgear in a general sense, which makes the specific instance of the 1830 headdress with lappets an example of feminine appropriation of the accoutrements of masculinity—a phenomenon which has long been an integral component of fashion history.

The bold play of vertical stripes above the forehead that shift to horizontal around the face represents dramatic design possibilities, and the *Capuchon égyptien* (Egyptian hood) illustrated in the September 2, 1877 issue of *La Mode Illustrée* clearly takes the *nemes* as its source (FIGURE 5). The hood “[s]e compose d’un carré long en gaze de soie blanche, à rayures mates et satinées, drapé sur la tête et orné de nœuds en ruban noir et ruban pourpre mélangés” (“is composed of a long square in white silk

gauze with matte and satin stripes, draped on the head and trimmed with bows of black and purple ribbon mixed together”).<sup>34</sup> Reshaped, lightly draped, and trimmed with bows, the *nemes* is refashioned into an entirely feminine form.

Mummy linen inspired a fabric: *Peterson’s Magazine* informed readers in 1879 that “mummy clothes [sic],” were very popular.<sup>35</sup> The same magazine provided instructions in 1882 for a “Traveling-Bag” of “heavy linen mummy-cloth.”<sup>36</sup> Fashion also incorporated the faience amulets and the bead nets that decorated linen-wrapped mummies during Late-Period Egyptian history (664 BCE–395 CE). For example, they were sources of inspiration in 1866:

**All the new jewelry is strongly Egyptian in its character, and the mummies are now called upon to contribute to fashion. The greenish-blue beads in the shape of figures which generally decorate these preserved specimens of antiquity, are now imitated for our fashionable belles. These beads, or rather ornaments, are of graduated sizes, covered with hieroglyphics [sic] in gold and mounted on black velvet as necklaces, or are set as ear-rings, pins, or armlets.**<sup>37</sup>

The faience beads and amulets were widely and cheaply produced in ancient Egypt, and affordable to nearly all. Beyond the allusion to mummies, this passage shows the artistic possibilities of hieroglyphs once again. In covering what historically were cheap beads with gold hieroglyphs, the 1866 fashion adds the luxury and expense factor with which ancient Egypt was indelibly associated.

Charles Frederick Worth did not find much inspiration in ancient Egyptian sources, but he did design a beaded wrap, reminiscent of the beaded nets seen on mummies and Egyptian women’s dresses, which appeared on the cover of *Harper’s Bazaar* on March 4, 1893, illustrated on a model standing near a sphinx

33 Reeves, *Ancient Egypt*, 32–33.

34 *La Mode Illustrée* 18, no. 35, September 2, 1877, 273–274.

35 “Fashions for April,” *Peterson’s Magazine* 75, no. 4, April, 1879, 332. The passage consistently used “cloths” for the plural, suggesting that “clothes” in the citation was an error.

36 *Peterson’s Magazine* 81, no. 3, March, 1882, 245 & unnumbered frontispiece engraving.

37 *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 72, no. 3, March, 1866, 292.

FIGURE 5 “Capuchon égyptien” (Egyptian Hood) based on the nemes headdress. Cover, *La Mode Illustrée*, September 2, 1877, 273.



**FIGURE 6** Beaded wrap by the house of Worth staged in one of the Egyptian rooms in the Louvre. Cover, *Harper's Bazar*, March 4, 1893.



in the Louvre (**FIGURE 6**). Elizabeth Ann Coleman underlines the apparent inspiration from “old Egyptian costumes” implied by the illustrative context and beaded swags.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Ann Coleman, *The Opulent Era: Fashions of Worth, Doucet and Pingat* (New York: Thames and Hudson and the Brooklyn Museum, 1989), 68.

### Beetles, Flora, Fauna, and “Dust of the Ruins”

Egypt, both ancient and modern, was a source of diverse flora, fauna, and color, as the duck and vultures on Irene Castle’s dress demonstrate. The scarab (**FIGURE 7**), associated with the sun god Re, is another symbol linked to Egypt. The dark blue glass scarab (**FIGURE 7**, left) is a very early-nineteenth-century piece, ca. 1800–1802. With the Egyptian scarab and the surrounding Indian paisley or *buto* motif, the West’s tendency to combine cultures and time periods in its consumption of Eastern products is again evident. The painted porcelain example (**FIGURE 7**, right), ca. 1900–1910, shows the enduring appeal of this particular insect. Raised outlines of the applied gold leaf scarab give it texture, and the

**FIGURE 7** Left: Dark blue scarab of glass or dyed chalcedony surrounded by black glass paisley or *buto* motifs, ca. 1800–1802. Setting of brass with yellow gold wash. The serrated edge of the bezel setting is characteristic of the early nineteenth century. Height: 7/8”; width 13/16”. Right: Twice-fired porcelain scarab on 6-pointed prong mount, ca. 1900–1910. Applied scarab probably of gold leaf. Height: 1 1/4”; width 2 1/2”. Author’s collection.





- 39 *Godey's Lady's Book* 66, no. 4, April, 1863, reported that "...headdresses are daily becoming more eccentric. For instance, coronets of velvet spotted over with scarabees, or beetles of a brownish red color, spotted with gold and emerald, producing a brilliant effect" (p. 408). In this instance, in spite of the use of the word "scarab," the beetles in question are most likely the South American variety that became popular for jewelry, and in this instance represent a recognizable word associated with an exotic variety of non-Egyptian beetle. While these beetles were sometimes used in Egyptomania jewelry designs, this was not always the case. See Gere and Rudoe, *Jewellery in the Age of Queen Victoria*, 233, for examples and a brief discussion.
- 40 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, February, 1824, 70.
- 41 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, February, 1824, 70.
- 42 Coleman, *Opulent Era*, 70, 112, pl. 3 p. 115. Coleman describes it as a "delicate blocked stripe Egyptian-revival motif," and further humorously comments, "While the motif is diminutive, by both Egyptian and Worth standards, the wearer was not" (p. 70).
- 43 *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 6, April, 1883, 389.
- 44 *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 8, June, 1883, 520.
- 45 Letter written in Paris dated September 1820 cited in Elisabeth McClellan, *History of American Costume 1607–1870*, new ed. (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1942), 377. She does not specify her source. "Egyptian-sand" also appears in the *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, October, 1828, 141 and November, 1828, 178.
- 46 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, June, 1825, 215 and June, 1826, 215; *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, October, 1828, 143.
- 47 "Nile Green" in McClellan, *American Costume*, 386; "Nile water green" in *Ladies' Pocket Magazine*, May, 1824, 180; "verd nile [sic]" in *Godey's Lady's Book* 79, no. 474, December, 1869, 552; "Nile-Green" in *Peterson's Magazine* 63, no. 3, March, 1873, 235; "Nile-green" in *Peterson's Magazine* 93, no. 6, June, 1888, 575; more examples can be found in *The Delineator* 42, no. 5, November, 1893, 569, 582–583; 98, no. 5, November, 1896, 645; 70, no. 5, November, 1907, 656–657. Many more examples could be cited. For additional attestations, see also Deb Salisbury, *Elephant's Breath & London Smoke: Historical Colour Names, Definitions, & Uses* (Neustadt, ON: Five Rivers Chapmanry, 2009).
- 48 *Peterson's Magazine* 62, no. 2, August, 1872, 153.
- 49 *Godey's Lady's Book* 79, no. 474, December, 1869, 552.
- 50 Robert Ridgeway, *A Nomenclature of Colors for Naturalists, and Compendium of Useful Knowledge for Ornithologists* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1886), pls. III and IX respectively.

blue background recalls Egyptian faience.<sup>39</sup> Taken together, the two brooches are certainly not masterpieces destined for a museum collection, but they represent a piece of Egyptomania jewelry readily affordable to a middle-class consumer. This is another hallmark of Egyptianizing fashions: they are not the unique domain of the wealthy elite, as already evidenced by the cotton 1830s hieroglyphic dresses. Ancient Egypt was broadly available to—and incorporated into—the lives of the middle classes.

The flora most commonly associated with Egypt are the heraldic lotus and papyrus, which represented Upper and Lower Egypt respectively. As mentioned previously, the 1857 headdress combined both hieroglyphs and a lotus flower. The February 1824 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine* illustrated a pale yellow satin ball dress "...ornamented at the border by a row of diamonds a l'Antique; each diamond, or lozenge, separated by a double lotus leaf."<sup>40</sup> The same issue included a morning dress "...of red lilac poplin or bombasin [sic], ornamented at the border with a row of large, united lotus leaves, the same colour, in satin."<sup>41</sup>

The lotus, combined with the ancient Egyptian double feather, appears on a ca. 1880 Worth silk damask reception gown, formerly housed in the Brooklyn Museum.<sup>42</sup> Shortly thereafter, Madame Demorest noted the lotus motif in listing the fashionable textiles for spring redingotes "...made of figured silk and wool stuffs in palm leaf and small lotus patterns."<sup>43</sup> Once again a high-fashion textile was made available in a less expensive version for the middle class consumer who could not afford a Worth gown with a similar design. Madame Demorest's fashion correspondent "M.T.K." further described an ensemble worn in Paris that featured Nile lilies, another name for the lotus, embroidered in heavy silk floss on a square-mesh net ground, with coordinating

embroidered motifs on the gloves and shoes.<sup>44</sup>

The naturalistic world of plants and animals, as depicted by ancient and modern artists, was highly colorful. But Egyptian topography, still limited to blue, brown, yellow, and green today, inspired a variety of names to describe different fabric colors, even if the fashionable garments themselves were not examples of Egyptomania. In 1820, one of the newest colors was called "Egyptian-sand," and it was compared to "the common sand sold by stationers, to prevent writing from blots."<sup>45</sup> The *Ladies' Pocket Magazine* also referred to it as "terre d'Egypte" in 1825 and even more poetically as "poussiere [sic] des ruines" ("dust of the ruins") in 1828.<sup>46</sup> Reference to "Nile green," also called "Nile water green," first appeared in the 1820s and continued throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> *Peterson's Magazine* pointed out the inconsistencies associated with the color in 1872:

**The hues of the new silks are of the strangest description, and the greens defy description, so vague and complicated are the shades; there are bronze greens in all hues, lizard green, Celadon green, serpent green, and Nile green—which, although called green, bears to the eye no family relation whatever. It requires all a Parisian dress-maker's art to harmonize these colors to advantage.**<sup>48</sup>

There was also "Egyptian brown"<sup>49</sup> as well as "mummy brown" and "Nile blue."<sup>50</sup>

### Monumental Fashions: Temples, Tombs, Sphinxes, and Pyramids

Egyptomania fashions were not limited to hieroglyphs and mummies. Sphinxes and generalized "Egyptian heads" were rendered somewhat indistinguishable in a typical nineteenth-century description. *Godey's Lady's Book* gave several references to Egyptian heads in 1866:



**The Empire style of dress. . . is about to be discarded in favor of the Egyptian. We cannot, of course, at this early date, be very sanguine of its success, but if its struggles for ascendancy are successful, we will find ourselves consulting works on the ancient Egyptians for hints respecting dress. . . . We cannot define it in all its particulars, but the coming fashion is especially discernable in the flat bands like bracelets, in lieu of sleeves, and in the scarf-like *bêrthe* [*sic*] gathered up in the center and on the shoulders by Egyptian heads in onyx, ornamented with necklaces and head-dresses of precious stones.**<sup>51</sup>

In a conflation of Sphinx heads and other motifs, *Godey's* further added: "Striped plushes and wool materials striped with gold, are among the richest materials for opera cloaks, and the trimmings are of the Egyptian order. The buttons are either triangular in shape, or a sphinx head. . . ."<sup>52</sup> In this vague description, "Egyptian order" could represent a variety of motifs, but the triangular buttons can be associated with the Pyramids. Later in 1866, *Godey's* mentioned buttons with "large Egyptian heads in bright silver on a ground of oxidized silver."<sup>53</sup> The association of ancient Egypt and luxury is highlighted through the richness of the Egyptian trimmings, and silver buttons on the rich gold-striped fabrics. Such buttons were not limited to the 1860s: the pictorial buttons of the 1880s showed a variety of Egyptian scenes, including Cleopatra's asp-assisted suicide,<sup>54</sup> and the 1896 *Delineator* described buttons consisting of red stones, turquoise and "Egyptian carving."<sup>55</sup>

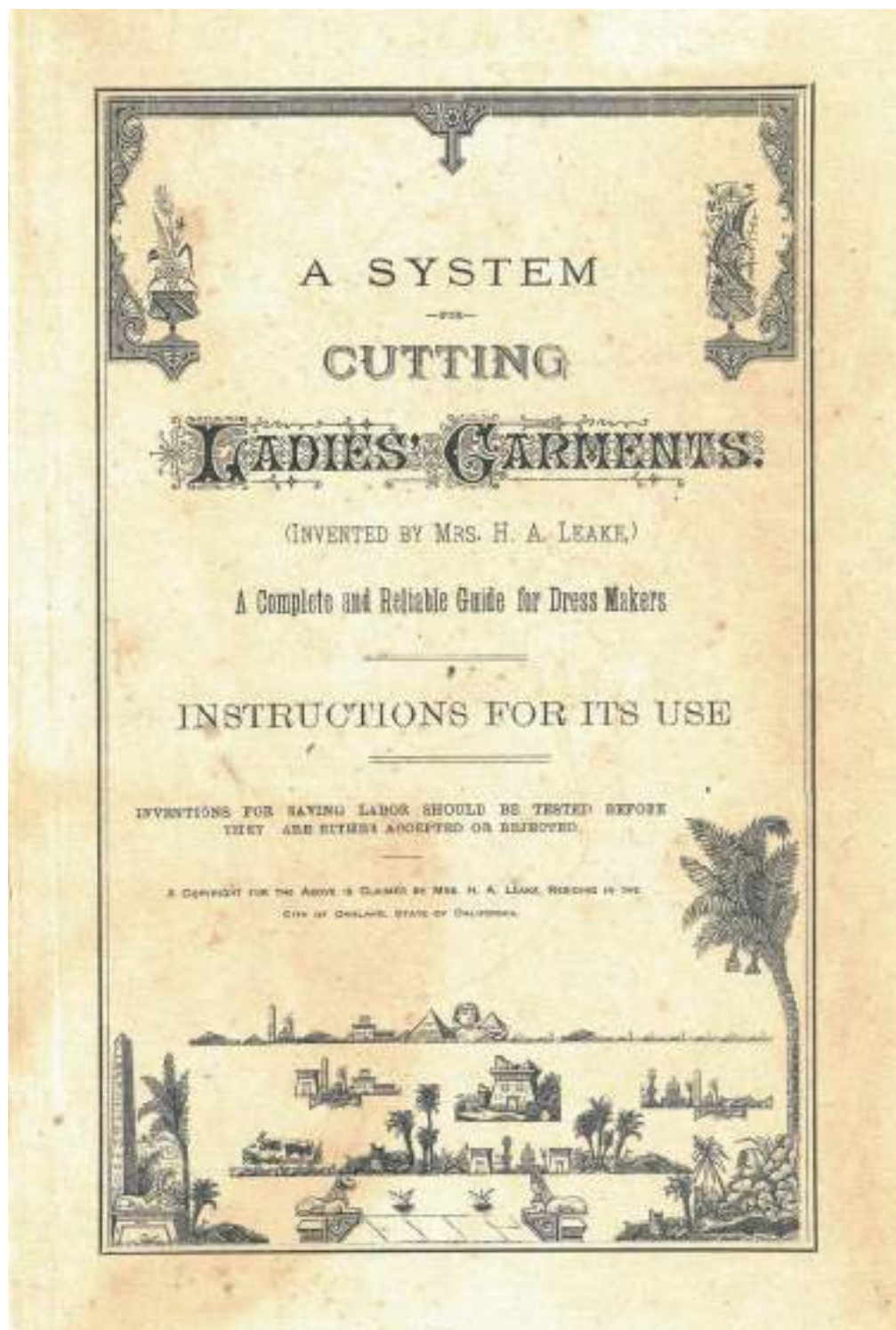
The Giza Pyramids, Sphinx, and other ruins were an enduring source of inspiration: the Manufacture d'Oberkampf à Jouy-en-Josas in France depicted the monuments of Egypt on a cotton roller-printed fabric ca. 1808. One piece in black and brown survives at the Musée de l'Impression sur Etoffes

at Mulhouse, France; another piece in red and yellow is housed at the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>56</sup> In 1865, Manufacture Thierry-Mieg et Cie (Mulhouse et Dornach) prepared a wood block-printed cotton in thirteen colors which depicted everything Egyptian: irises, lotuses, sphinxes, columns, and the ram-headed god Amun, copied from the Meroitic representations of the god. In an interesting chain of appropriation spanning the centuries, the artist preparing this textile was copying another printer's earlier design, which was based on Meroitic sources, which adopted ancient Egyptian culture, as previously mentioned.<sup>57</sup> In a later example, Mrs. H. A. Leake used ancient monuments to illustrate the cover of her ladies' pattern drafting guide of 1883 (FIGURE 8).<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Leake used the allusion to ancient monuments that were built with a high degree of precision and engineering skill to indicate the product quality and lasting appeal that a lady using Mrs. Leake's system could expect to find in her garments.

As discussed in the examples above, Egyptian motifs were rarely copied with any degree of exactness; accuracy was never the point of the appropriation as motifs were reworked to fit contemporary fashions and purposes. But there is one surviving example that is refreshingly precise: the Warner Textile Archives (Braintree, UK) preserves an example of 1870s silk trim for a dress (FIGURE 9),<sup>59</sup> in all likelihood copied from Owen Jones' publication, *The Grammar of Ornament*.<sup>60</sup> Jones probably drew the source of this illustration while on his grand tour from 1832–1834, during which he visited Egypt. The ribbon trim depicts a frieze of heads of the goddess Hathor from the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of the chief steward Senenmut, the high official best known as the probable lover of Queen Hatshepsut, a woman who reigned as pharaoh.

- 51 *Godey's Lady's Book* 72, no. 3, March, 1866, 291.
- 52 *Godey's Lady's Book* 72, no. 3, March, 1866, 292.
- 53 *Godey's Lady's Book* 73, no. 4, October, 1866, 367.
- 54 See Debra J. Wisniewski, *Antique & Collectible Buttons: Identification & Values* (Paducah, KY: Collector Books, 1997), especially pp. 81 and 94 for some examples.
- 55 "Fashionable Trimmings," *The Delineator* 48, no. 5, November, 1896, 645.
- 56 Humbert, Pantazzi and Ziegler, *Egyptomania*, 166–167.
- 57 Humbert, Pantazzi and Ziegler, *Egyptomania*, 369–371. Thierry-Mieg was copying an older 1864 cotton produced by Steinbach, Koechlin et Cie, also located in Mulhouse. Both cottons are in the Musée de l'Impression sur Etoffes in Mulhouse.
- 58 Mrs. H. A. Leake, *A System for Cutting Ladies' Garments. (Invented by Mrs. H. A. Leake.) A Complete and Reliable Guide for Dressmakers* (Oakland, CA: Mrs. H. A. Leake, 1883).
- 59 Such Egyptian dress ribbons were produced in the 1880s as well: *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* reported that "[t]he newest ribbon is the so-called 'Egyptian,' a brocade of Egyptian design and coloring on a brownish panel, brown as the sand of the desert; the satin and Ottoman ribbons of plain color have also Egyptian borders" (19, no. 8, June, 1883, 529). The latter description represents an interesting combination of the contemporary Ottoman style with what is most likely ancient Egyptian.
- 60 First published in 1856 by Day & Son, London, available in a reprint: London: Parkgate Books, Ltd., 1997. Jones credits the scene to "the upper part of the Wall of a Tomb, Sakhara" in error. There is only one known similar Hathoric frieze in Saqqara, of which only a small portion of the carving survives, and the excavators reconstructed the fragments. The bas-relief thus would not have been available for viewing in the 1830s. See Ludwig Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs S'a3;hu-Re*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1910–1913). *Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft in Abu-sir: 1902–1908*; 6–7 (WVDOG; 14, 26), Vol. 1, p. 101, Abb. 124. The fact that Jones painted the scene in color situates the likely source as plaster relief in a Theban tomb, and Senenmut's tomb (TT 71) is the only match. See "Kheker Friezes," *Ancient Egypt* Part 1 (1920): 119–121 and unnumbered "Kheker Friezes" frontispiece engraving.

FIGURE 8 *A System for Cutting Ladies' Garments*, featuring human-headed and ram-headed sphinxes, obelisks with nonsense hieroglyphs, pyramids, temple pylons, ruined columns, antelopes/gazelles, ibises, dahabeeyah houseboats, mosques, and what appear to be houses. The mosques and dahabeeyahs make the setting contemporary, but the ancient dominates the modern as the focus of interest. Cover. Author's collection.



**FIGURE 9** Dress trim fragment with Hathor head frieze, probably woven in Lyon, France. Measuring 11.5 cm wide by 6.5 cm high. Scrapbook, 1878. © Warner Textile Archive. Braintree District Museum Trust Ltd.



### Cleopatra and her Legacy of Fashion

Hatshepsut was a powerful female ruler of Egypt like Cleopatra, but her story was one that had to be rediscovered through decipherment of the Egyptian language and archaeological excavation. In contrast, the latter queen's legend has always been subjected to as much liberal reinterpretation as the artistic canon of her country, if not more. Until decipherment of hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian, Greco-Roman histories and poetry were the only contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous accounts of Cleopatra's life.<sup>61</sup> The victor's version of events is rarely favorable to the loser, and Roman propaganda subsequently set the tone for later artistic interpretations of Cleopatra's achievements and legacy. Therefore, because of Greco-Roman histories, she was depicted as a seductress, fascinating intellectual, murderess and torturer, beauty queen, consummate politician, and the epitome of many other nefarious attributes. The famous, or infamous, Cleopatra (b. 69 BCE, reigned from 51 to 30 BCE) was the seventh of that name and the last member of the Ptolemaic dynasty that had ruled Egypt since the death of Alexander the Great and his progeny. She remained ethnically a Macedonian Greek, but one who nonetheless became highly Egyptianized. While her legend may have left her both flattered and insulted, the fashions

she inspired would simply have left her confused. The styles attributed to her during the nineteenth century were often a marketing ploy building upon her well-known name and legacy of wealth, beauty, and beguiling charm rather than a true Egyptianizing fashion.

One of the earliest examples of the fascination with this queen was the Cleopatra hairstyle, depicted in the November 1825 *Ladies' Pocket Magazine* (FIGURE 10). To highlight the reference to Egypt, and to best show the elaborate hair, the artist drew the dress on the figure in a direct frontal view, but depicted the head fully turned to the figure's right side, presenting an Egyptian-style profile. While the artist did not go so far as to make the figure's one visible eye look directly at the reader, its lids and brows are engraved rather heavily in a way that echoes Egyptian eye make-up. When contrasted with the typical depiction of women in this journal in a more natural three-quarter view, the orientation of the figure is distinctive. Although Cleopatra's coinage shows her with a simple bun at the nape of her neck, extant statuary and bas-reliefs carved during her lifetime depict her with ringlets, braids, and a variety of Egyptian wigs.<sup>62</sup> The fashion plate depicting the Cleopatra hairstyle owes more to Classical statuary in its broadest sense and, more importantly, to Renaissance depictions of the ill-fated queen, in which the bun is placed higher on the back of her head and ringlets and braids are an additional component reflecting the fashions of that time period.<sup>63</sup>

Throughout the 1860s and following decades, Cleopatra's name was associated with a variety of fashionable garments, and her name was used to market the designs. *Peterson's* introduced the "Cleopatra cloak" of velvet and lace in 1860 (FIGURE 11).<sup>64</sup> *Godey's* followed suit and published a sack coat with

61 For an analysis of the Roman depiction and manipulation of Cleopatra and her actions, see Christopher Pelling, "Anything Truth Can Do, We Can Do Better: The Cleopatra Legend," in *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, ed. Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 292–301.

62 For surviving examples of Cleopatra's different hairstyles throughout the text, see Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*.

63 For examples, see "The Head of Cleopatra" (ca. 1533, catalog number 378) and the suicide of Cleopatra cameo (ca. late sixteenth century, catalog number 379) in Walker and Higgs, *Cleopatra of Egypt*, 354–356. Item number 378 clearly intends for the viewer to equate the braids and dangling locks of hair with the asp draped around her neck.

64 *Peterson's Magazine* 37, no. 2, February, 1860, 175, and unnumbered frontispiece engraving.



FIGURE 10 Cleopatra hairstyle “interspersed with white gauze, blue corn-flowers, and roses.” *Ladies’ Pocket Magazine*, November, 1825, 176.





FIGURE 11 Cleopatra cloak of black velvet and lace. *Peterson's Magazine* 37:2, February, 1860, unnumbered frontispiece engraving.



FIGURE 12 Cleopatra sack coat. *Godey's Lady's Book* 53:6, December, 1861, 518.



pagoda sleeves called the “Cleopatra” in 1861 (FIGURE 12).<sup>65</sup> It was corded with paisley pines and large-scale figure “8”s—in other words, nothing particularly Egyptian but the name. The coat represents the manner in which names, places and styles were assimilated and reworked through the Western perspective until their amalgamation created a fresh look: “pagoda” sleeves were believed to be Chinese in origin, and the paisley pine or *buto* was derived from Indian design, as previously noted. Madame Tilman of Paris produced Cleopatra floral wreaths for women and girls in early 1861.<sup>66</sup> Cleopatra had her own dress in *Peterson's Magazine* in 1862 (FIGURE 13). The description provides limited information: “Dinner dress of gray silk, figured, trimmed with plain gray silk edged with black lace.”<sup>67</sup> As the engraving shows, the dress is ornamented with a variation of the Greek key motif that was so popular in the 1860s. Since Cleopatra’s primary language was Greek (she was purportedly the first of the dynasty to learn Egyptian), this association was closer to her identity than the other styles named for her. This fashion plate, as was the case with the Cleopatra hairstyle, depicts the body in a frontal view while turning the head to present

an Egyptian profile to make clear the cultural reference. In 1864, Madame Demorest designed the “Cleopatra sleeve,” which had nothing Egyptian about it but the name.<sup>68</sup> Lastly, one must not neglect the feet: in 1893, fashionable ladies could purchase “Cleopatra slippers” obtainable “in bronze and in light colors.”<sup>69</sup> These diverse styles provide evidence that Cleopatra’s name possessed a significant recognition factor and implied that fashions associated with her would possess an equal amount of intrinsic beauty in the mind of the consumer who could then assimilate into her own life some of Cleopatra’s mystique, duly reworked according to current styles.

The figure of the Egyptian queen wearing a vulture headdress in the advertisement for Madame Rowley’s Medicated Toilet Mask implies that one could be as beautiful as ancient royalty (FIGURE 14). The advertisement appeared twice in 1879 in *Peterson's Magazine* and then vanished.<sup>70</sup>

These examples show that ancient Egyptian inspiration was commonplace in the fashion lexicon throughout the nineteenth century, so much so that a connection between modern Occident and ancient Near East had become thoroughly familiar. While visiting the tomb of Pharaoh Ramesses III during her 1827–1828 journey, Mrs. Charles [Sarah Gascoyne] Lushington commented on the furniture textiles depicted on the walls: “. . . it was an amusement to us all when I discovered some patterns exactly similar to those which I had sent, only seven years ago, to a gentleman of our party.” She later described mummy bracelets as “resembling so much the fashion of the present day, yet, from the absence of device, not nearly so pretty.”<sup>71</sup> Her prose implies that the ancient examples were inferior. Her dismissive observations help interpret the distortions and alterations so visible in Egyptomania fashions: the process of selecting and changing them for

- 65 *Godey's Lady's Book* 53, no. 6, December, 1861, 517–518.
- 66 Descriptions of the wreaths appear in *Les Modes Parisiennes* 933, January 12, 1861, 14 and 940, March 2, 1861, 97.
- 67 *Peterson's Magazine* 42, no. 1, July, 1862, 79.
- 68 *Madame Demorest's Quarterly Mirror of Fashions and Journal du Grand Monde* 4, no. 4, Summer 1864, 6.
- 69 “Evening and Dinner Gowns,” *The Delineator* 42, no. 5, November, 1893, 581.
- 70 *Peterson's Magazine* 76, no. 1, July, 1879, and 76, no. 2, August, 1879, unpaginated advertisements.
- 71 *Narrative of a Journey from Calcutta to Europe, by way of Egypt in the Years 1827 and 1828*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1829), Reprint *Elibron Classics Series* (s.l.: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005): 66, 83.

FIGURE 13 Cleopatra dinner dress of gray silk with Greek key trimming. *Peterson's Magazine*, 42:1, July, 1862, unnumbered frontispiece engraving.



contemporary use was not simply a question of modernizing them, but also one of “improving” upon them in a Western context for modern use while retaining essential ancient characteristics.

The wide-ranging consumption of ancient style did not receive universal approbation.

Madame Demorest protested in 1883 that “[t]he best, so far that our artists and artificers have been able to do, is to copy. We have ‘Gothic’ cottages, and ‘Queen Anne’ houses. . .and Egyptian, Byzantine, and Florentine jewelry. . .but we have not as yet struck out anything original from the silver of

**FIGURE 14** Madame Rowley's Medicated Toilet Mask, featuring an Egyptian queen wearing the vulture headdress of the goddess Nekhbet and a uraeus. Advertisement. *Peterson's Magazine* 76:1–2, July–August, 1879, unnumbered advertisements.



- 72 *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* 19, no. 6, April, 1883, 381.
- 73 Letter dated Tuesday, 8 Jan. [1799] from *Jane Austen's Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 17.
- 74 Susan Watkins, *Jane Austen in Style* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 146. For additional examples and discussions, see also Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism*, 80–81, and Aileen Ribeiro, "Fashion à l'Antique: Thomas Hope and Regency Dress," in *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer*, 83–84.
- 75 Cited in Watkins, *Jane Austen*, 141.
- 76 *Godey's Lady's Book* 64, no. 4, April, 1862, 415; 64, no. 5, May, 1862, 518.
- 77 *Godey's Lady's Book* 66, no. 4, April, 1863, 408.
- 78 Minnie S. C. Ross of Wisconsin purchased a "longed-for" Assiut scarf during her tour of Egypt, which occurred at an unspecified time between 1902 and 1906, and explained with evident relish how she bargained down the price. See *Around the Mediterranean* (New York: The Grafton Press, Publishers, 1906), 150.
- 79 Estelle B. Stillman, "Dites moi [sic] (Tell Me) Waltzes," (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1914). Collection of B. Bohleke.

Nevada or the gold of California. . . .<sup>72</sup> This criticism is ironic, coming from the woman who had marketed Egyptianizing styles more than once. Her plea for the creation of original American styles in an age of imitation is a theme that acquired greater urgency in the early twentieth century and became particularly acute during World War II.

Because of the overall preference for ancient culture and art forms, Western styles found a limited source of fashion inspiration in contemporary Ottoman Egypt. Generally speaking, surges in popularity for Ottoman Egyptian fashions were associated with events that were usually imperialistic ventures. In the wake of Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra in 1799: "I am to wear a mamalone cap" to a ball.<sup>73</sup> According to biographer Susan Watkins, Jane's "cap" was actually "a turban trimmed with an ostrich feather" and that

all things Mamluk were highly fashionable following the Battle of the Nile, fought August 1–3, 1798.<sup>74</sup> The fad lasted some time: the *London Recorder* described the royal drawing-room fashions in 1806, stating that "[t]he head-dresses were either Grecian or Egyptian; ostrich feathers were generally worn."<sup>75</sup> The Suez Canal, completed in 1868, provides a later example; it was a major technological feat whose progress was reported in the press throughout the 1860s. A textile named "Taffeta de Suez," a mix of cotton and wool resulting in a thin fabric also referred to as wool grenadine, appeared as early as 1862,<sup>76</sup> followed by a plain silk called "Gros de Suez" in 1863.<sup>77</sup>

Assiut cloth, still produced in a city in middle Egypt from which it derives its name, caught many travelers' eyes in the nineteenth century and prior to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. It consists of short strips of silver metal clamped onto coarse cotton netting, usually white or black, in intricate geometric patterns. Assiut cloth is often associated with 1920s fashion to the point where many museums date their examples to that decade. But it was a prized memento long before, as several stoles in the collection of the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University illustrate; they were souvenirs of local resident Sara Rees Hogan Boher's (ca. 1852–1917) world tour in 1910.<sup>78</sup> As an example found on 1914 sheet music illustrates (FIGURE 15), the metallic fabric was used for luxury dresses well before the 1920s.<sup>79</sup> Its stiffness and weight made a tailored dress impossible to execute without destroying the design, making the end result a straight A-line sheath that in retrospect constitutes a very modest precursor to flapper styles of the 1920s.

This study has presented many examples as evidence for Egyptomania in fashion before the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. The



FIGURE 15 Mademoiselle Moné in Assiut cloth dance dress. De tail from cover of "Dites moi [sic] Waltzes" by Estelle B. Stillman (New York: Detroit: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1914). Collection of Dr. B. Bohleke.



80 Jeffrey, "Two Hundred Years of Ancient Egypt," 14.

81 Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism*, 81.

references to ancient Egypt, both written and pictorial, reflect fashion's never-ending dialogue with its own past as well as its constant seeking out of the new, novel and exotic in other cultures and time periods. Egyptianizing styles were one aspect of a larger picture in which historic and world fashions were integrated into Western wardrobes and art forms in a systematic consumption that cannot be dismissed as mere eclecticism or pastiche. But the question of why ancient Egypt in particular (as opposed to ancient Assyria or Babylon, for example) received such attention, and why it continues to exert such an influence, remains unanswered. Jeffrey provides one explanation that Egyptian forms and styles, strongly colored by Romanticism, evoke an "aesthetic reaction" and thus "any further explanation seems to be merely rationalization."<sup>80</sup> More convincingly, art

theorist Adam Geczy maintains that in the context of nineteenth-century political and colonial rivalries, particularly between France and England, cultural assimilation, including clothing, was one means of "staking one's claim to a global empire" and that Egypt in particular was an important place for self-reinvention and for the creation of a "different identity." Furthermore, Egyptian Revival decorative objects and items of dress were an affordable way of "asserting provisional ownership" over the ancient civilization and its legacy in a manner that transfers its greatness to the latest generation of sophisticated consumers.<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, in the fashion world, ancient Egypt may not always be at the forefront of style, but it is now thoroughly integrated into Western consciousness and remains a rich source of continuing inspiration in creative hands. ■ DRESS

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