

**<Title>From Caftan King to Peacock Pasha: Demis Roussos and Orientalist Decadence
in Men's Fashion and European Popular Culture, 1968–1980**

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Abstract

Abstract text here. The Greek-Egyptian singer Artemios Ventouris (Demis) Roussos (1946–2015) was a global superstar in the 1970s, selling more than 60 million albums worldwide. Roussos's success was built on his hard work, talent and ability to craft a sensual, comforting, caftan-clad performance persona that tapped into the Zeitgeist of the 1970s. Scholarship to date has considered the decadence of Orientalism and caftans in fashion over the twentieth century, including their importance in the so-called 'Peacock Revolution' of menswear. It has also considered how Roussos used a nostalgia linked to package holidays to warm, sunny destinations – a new phenomenon in Europe in the 1970s – within his songs to great commercial success. Less attention, however, has been paid to how Roussos used the materialism and Orientalist symbolism of his luxurious caftans with his voice, hirsuteness, and embonpoint to create the seductive, sensual atmosphere that was central to his fame and offered his fans an alternative to dominant images of 1970s masculine popstars. This article

also examines how wearing caftans allowed Roussos to create his 'Pasha' persona, a hypermasculine figure associated with decadent Orientalist stereotypes of the harems and palaces of the mythical East. Roussos's 'Pasha' image extended beyond the stage and his gargantuan appetites for food and the trappings of luxury were also central to recreating the atmosphere of decadence he remembered from his childhood in Egypt. This article thus traces how, as Roussos's fame and girth expanded, he made caftans his trademark, blending an Orientalist, libertine style of living and dress that seduced his fans and expressed the era's, and his own, desires for excesses that transgressed bourgeois notions of restrained, good taste.

Keywords: caftans, Europe, fashion, masculinity, atmosphere, Orientalism, Pasha, Demis Roussos

<ch hd>From Caftan King to Peacock Pasha: Demis Roussos and Orientalist Decadence in Fashion and European Popular Culture, 1968–1980

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For ten years I enjoyed to the full everything that life has been kind enough to give me [...] Since I am a [...] diehard sensualist [...] I systematically undertook to fulfil any and all of my wishes however grand as far as decency would permit [...] I lived in palaces and four-star hotels, I offered Gargantuan feasts of food and fun (Roussos cited in Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 7).

The Greek-Egyptian singer Artemios Ventouris (Demis) Roussos (1946–2015) was a global superstar in the 1970s, selling more than 60 million albums worldwide. Roussos's rise to fame in Paris and Saint Tropez in 1968 with the band Aphrodite's Child coincided with the rise of European package holidays, his songs capturing and expressing the nostalgia of the uncomplicated sun-drenched romances that many northern Europeans experienced on the beaches of the Mediterranean. Scholarship to date has considered how Roussos's caftans, beard, light tenor voice, hirsuteness and embonpoint destabilized masculinity and signified 'his lack of fit within dominant constructions of male popstars' (Gardner and Jennings 2020: 129). This article, however, argues that Roussos harnessed the Orientalist symbolism associated with luxurious caftans on stage in the 1970s not to destabilize masculinity, but to offer his fans a non-threatening yet sexually potent alternative to the dominant images of masculinity associated with the era's male rock stars. Roussos extended this image to his home and private life by preferring to wear expensive caftans in his self-styled role as a 'pasha'; a hypermasculine, decadent, sensual figure that his public associated with the Arab world and the historical Ottoman Empire of Turkey.

Roussos's popularity and extravagance peaked between 1972 and 1979, coinciding with the popularity of caftans in men's fashion, the height of the glam-rock era and the period

in men's fashion that Hill (2018) has described as the 'Thermidor of the Peacock Revolution'. This article demonstrates how Roussos embodied this Zeitgeist, establishing himself as seductive bohemian 'peacock' libertine figure by wearing bejewelled and embroidered caftans and expensive custom-made platform boots amid the mass wave of Orientalist revivalism that Geczy (2013) has noted swept through Western fashion and popular culture between 1960 and 1980. Furthermore, by considering the how Roussos, a pan-European celebrity, created his uniquely decadent persona on and off the stage via his caftans, this article connects to scholarship on how costume and fashion 'was instrumental in configuring ideas of gender binaries' in Europe in the 1970s (Cronin 2022) and scholarship around how costume and scenographics create atmospheric 'worlding envelopes' wherein performers explore expressions of sexuality and gender (Hann 2019). It is argued, therefore, that Roussos's use of decadent, Orientalist self-presentation positioned him as a hypermasculine, sexually potent figure in the 1970s, rather than exclusively 'feminising' him as his detractors attempted to assert towards the end of the decade. This article also examines photographs, album covers, performances, and media reports to demonstrate how the material, spatial, bodily and affective dimensions of Roussos's caftans on and off the stage created an atmospheric envelope around his fans and cemented his pasha persona in the public imagination, as his 1973 hit song notes, 'Forever and Ever'.

<Insert Figure 1 near here>

<Caption>Figure 1: Greek singer Demis Roussos is seen during a concert in Stockholm, 1973. Photograph by Bernt Claesson. © Alamy Stock Photo.

<hd A>Roussos and His Pasha Roots

Roussos's love of extravagance and exposure to the figure of the mythical Orientalist pasha can be traced to his childhood in Egypt in the 1940s and 1950s, during which time the Greek community of Alexandria was very large, rich and well-organised. Founded in the 1860s, the community grew to include wealthy philanthropic industrialists, merchants, bankers, artists and musicians. Roussos admits to having had 'quite a decadent way of life' as a child growing up in Alexandria (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 21). His early memories were of the warmth, colours, sounds, delicious foods and smells of his community, where 'to be big meant being rich and in good health. The pachas of legend were offered their own weight in precious stones and metals, if not gold' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 18). These sensual elements fostered an 'affective atmosphere' that orientated Roussos's attention towards the distinct presence of a nostalgic, blissful childhood, creating a 'worlding feeling' of life in an ancient Orientalist paradise (Hann 2019: 93). This image of the Orient, as Koda and Richard (2004: n.pag.) explain, 'represents longing, option, and faraway perfection. It is, like Utopia, a picture everywhere and nowhere, save in the imagination'. The figure of the Greek pasha in Egypt can be traced to the rule of Alexander the Great between 332 and 323 BCE. The capital city of Alexandria in Egypt at this time became a centre of international trade, science and art. Important Greek communities continued to thrive in Egypt during the Roman and Byzantine empires and into the medieval Islamic and Ottoman eras. Many legendary sultans and pashas of the Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt was a part, were of Greek ancestry, including the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire and two-time governor of Egypt, Moralı Damat Hasan Pasha (1658–1713), and Isma'il Ragheb Pasha (1819–1884), who served as a prime minister of Egypt and held several other high-ranking government positions.

The decadence of Egyptian royalty and the elite classes continued during Roussos's childhood. For example, during his reign (1936–1952), King Faruq I 'lavished favoured senior officers with high salaries and prestigious titles such as *Bey* or *Pasha* – the ultimate

signs of social distinction in pre-1952 Egypt' (Nassif 2021: 99). The King himself 'mortified his subjects by his womanizing, gambling, and gluttony' (Goldschmidt Jr. 2018: 94). His lavish lifestyle included a movie-star mistress, shopping sprees in Europe, fine dining (he at one point ate 600 oysters per week), and owning a dazzling collection of jewels (Day 2018: n.pag.; Morrow 1986: n.pag.). As a child, Roussos 'often went to listen to the Arabs playing, dancing and singing. [...] During that period I was not aware of the magic of this oriental atmosphere (though it left its mark on me forever) but I was aware that I'd developed a taste for interesting sounds, all types of costumes and large displays of riches' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 22). The clothes Roussos observed likely included the traditional, ankle-length, loose-fitting Egyptian caftan called the 'galabeya' and its variation, known as the 'kamis' or 'gamis', a wide garment with very wide sleeves, while riches likely included luxurious textiles and extravagant jewellery.

The Roussos family left their belongings and fled to Athens in January 1961 as part of the Greek exodus from Egypt caused by highly restrictive laws that placed 'bureaucratic and financial obstacles to the employment of Greeks and huge taxes on urban properties [...] belonging to the community of Alexandria' and on Greek businesses (Hatzivassiliou 2020: 117, 119). The Roussos family faced tough economic times in Greece and from the age of 18, Roussos worked as a gig musician in nightclubs. In 1966, Roussos met Vangelis Papathanassiou and Loukas Sideras and the three decided to move to London in March 1968 to pursue a career in music but were denied entry to the United Kingdom because they did not have valid work permits (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 25). The trio moved to Paris instead and formed the group Aphrodite's Child, recording their first hit, 'Rain and Tears', in May 1968. That month, they performed at the Psychedelic, a club off the Champs-Élysées, where they met the fashion and costume designer Jean Bouquin (1936–), whose designs 'captured the bohemian spirit of St Tropez's jet-set society at the end of the 1960s' and whose

clients included the actresses and models ‘Brigitte Bardot, Natalie Wood and Jean Shrimpton’ (FMD n.d.). Bouquin, described by *Vogue* as a ‘designer we think is so great’ (Anon. 1970: 172), had a boutique in Paris called Mayfair, ‘where the *Tout-Paris* bought their hippy uniforms’ (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 27). In addition to his famous clientele, Bouquin influenced mainstream fashion by dressing the era’s rising pop stars.

Like other high-end designers and stylists of the hippie era, including the French-Algerian designer Yves Saint Laurent (1936–2008) who released his Ballets Russes-inspired collection in 1969, Bouquin raided the ‘dressing-up boxes of the past’ and ‘combed other cultures for inspiration: Caftans, Afghan coats, and floral tattoos’ and embroidered and printed silks, velvets and cottons in jewel tones (Bruzzi and Church Gibson 2010: 517). They were an integral part of the so-called ethnic-dress styles of the era, which ‘broke with gendered dress codes, representing men in frock-like kaftans, jewellery, sensual fabrics and flowered patterns’ (Ashmore 2006: 212). Roussos and his fellow band members overhauled their image at Mayfair, their outfits including ‘shirts with ruffles, and puffed sleeves, brocade or embroidered satin costumes, long Indian scarves, felt hats with plumes’ and, for Roussos, a purple velvet jacket with gold sequined embroidery (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 27). One photograph of Roussos taken at a discotheque in Paris in 1968 shows him in bare feet, wearing white flared trousers paired with a pale-blue Indian-style shirt featuring a block-print pattern in red and dark blue, and a large length of bronze, chocolate and tan paisley silk wrapped around him like a pashmina.

Bouquin’s boutique styles exemplified the high end of the ‘Peacock Revolution’ in menswear of the late 1960s, in which the so called ‘hippies’ of the baby boomer generation embraced the playful, sensual side of fashion, experimenting with unisex dressing, wild colours, chunky accessories, bold prints, sensual fabrics, long hair, and flowing clothes, including caftans. The countercultural atmosphere of the age was a totality that tinged ‘the

whole of the world' (Böhme 2013: 2) to the extent that by 1968, as Hill (2018) and Geczy (2013) have documented, these features of aesthetic Orientalism in dress were seen in conservative circles as undermining masculinity and promoting homosexuality. Nevertheless, young straight men whose sexual preferences and masculinity were not in question, including Roussos and his band members and the rock stars Mick Jagger, Robert Plant, and Jimi Hendrix, increasingly sought looks which expressed their desire for a readily identifiable image that embraced the mood of the age.

<hd A> French Orientalism, Decadence and the Caftan's Rise in Twentieth-Century

Fashion

Men's use of ethnic dress styles to express a playful, decadent sensuality during the Peacock Revolution can be traced to the early nineteenth century where unisex features of Orientalist dress were favoured among French artists and intellectuals and later adopted by the dandy (Geczy and Karaminas 2020: 5), as depicted by Charles Baudelaire in his 1863 essay 'The Painter of Modern Life'. The combination of motifs of Eastern exoticism and sensuality with Western motifs of urban dandyism saw the arrival of a peculiarly Baudelairean decadent dandyism that powerfully influenced all who followed. This included descriptions of painter Constantine Guys's 'femmes galantes' who wore 'embroidered vests ... flowing scarves, wide pants ... [and] striped or gilded gauzes' (Baudelaire cited in Garelick 1998: 30) and represented 'a melding of East and West' as 'pastiche of Oriental and Parisian types' (Garelick 1998: 30). The association of Orientalist dress with decadence and luxury in the popular imagination continued into the *fin de siècle* when images of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia (1868 – 1918) and his wife, Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna (1872–1918) in their masquerade costumes worn to their costume ball held in 1903 in honour of the 290th

anniversary of the House of the Romanovs at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg were distributed worldwide.

<Insert Figure 2 near here>

<Caption>**Figure 2: Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna in costume at the Winter Palace Costume Ball, 13 February 1903. Photograph, Author's Own.**

The Tsar and Tsarina's costumes were authentic, 17th-century style Russian court dress, made from designs by artist Sergey Solomko, in collaboration with historical experts. The Tsarina's costume included a loose caftan of gold brocade trimmed with emeralds and silver thread, while the Tsar wore a dazzling gold upper caftan made of Damask, brocade, embroidery and braid, and a caftan underneath of raspberry gilded velvet, trimmed with gold work embroidery and jewelled collar and cuffs. In the 1910s, the French couturier Paul Poiret (1879 – 1944), perhaps inspired by such photographs of Russian decadence and images of famous dancers such as Anna Pavlova (1881 – 1912) costumed in traditional Russian-style dress, and Léon Bakst's costumes for the Ballets Russes (Troy 2001), exploited the theatrical potential of fashion through his Orientalist designs. Poiret 'popularized a looser silhouette that explored non-Western garment forms. His designs [... mixed] historicism with folkloric elements, and he frequently used a T-shape construction inspired in part by the djellaba and Turkish coat' (McNeil 2010: 131). Poiret's Spring 1911 collection included dresses with names like 'Byzance' and 'Bakou', references to the historically extravagant, luxurious textiles of these regions, both of which had ties to the Russian Empire, and to his dreams of a decadent Orient.

<Insert Figure 3 near here>

<Caption>Figure 3: Anna Pavlova and Michael Mordkin performing the Russian Dance by Foulsham & Banfield, published by Rotary Photographic Co Ltd, bromide postcard print, 1909, NPG Ax160387. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

On 24 June 1911, Poiret required his 300 guests to ‘dress up in “Oriental” costumes’ at his now famous *The Thousand and Second Night* party, based on a fantasy of the tales of the *Arabian Nights*, which had recently been republished in a new French translation (Troy 2001: 13). Poiret’s innovations and the Ballets Russes’s 1910 production of *Schéhérézade*, with its dazzling sets and costumes by Bakst, ‘helped to revitalize what was ... a very long tradition of French interest in the Orient, which included the fantasy image of an exotic East that French writers and artists’ – including Guys, Baudelaire and the Viennese-born, Paris-based artist Ludwig Deutsch (1855–1985) – had developed since the eighteenth century (Troy 2001: 14). Poiret dominated the extravagant party and in one scene, ‘commanding the attention of his supporting cast, [...] played [...] a [...] despotic sultan, holding an ivory-handled whip in one hand and a scimitar in the other, while his concubines supposedly cowered at his feet’ (Troy 2001: 18). Poiret’s favourite, played by his wife, Denise, and her maids of honour were released from their harem in the form of a gilded cage and the event established his reputation as *Le Magnifique*, after Suleiman the Magnificent (Wollen 1987: 12). Poiret’s experimental Orientalist designs in fashion continued in the 1920s while other couture houses, such as Callot Soeurs, continued to work with Orientalist influences in embroidery, drape and textiles (Mears 2010: 547). The caftan finally emerged in couture in 1930 when Mariano Fortuny (1871–1949) produced a maroon caftan, or djellaba, based on traditional Asian and North African forms as part of his womenswear collection.

Fortuny’s clothes were a type of ‘antifashion, being based on Coptic, Greek, and Byzantine dress and the textiles of the early Renaissance, Turkey, and Persia, as well as the

burnoose from Morocco, kimono from Japan, and Chinese and Persian jackets' (McNeil 2010: 131). Fortuny himself was from Granada, Spain, while the Fortuny design house was located in Venice; both locations had important historical ties to the Islamic Mediterranean between 700 and 1600 CE. Fortuny's designs, like traditional Eastern dress and Poiret's draping, gave primacy to the textile, emphasizing the flat terrain of cloth, the looping, pleating and wrapping of the garment, and the 'integrity of the untailed textile' (Koda and Martin 2004: n.pag.). These values, which rarely appeared in Western fashion after the medieval era, have nonetheless been sporadically influential, as documented by Charlotte Jirousek (2005), and surfaced again in the 1960s and 1970s with the widespread popularity of the caftan.

<hd A>1960s and the Fashionable, Decadent Caftan in *Vogue*

Yves Saint Laurent (1936 – 2008) featured Orientalism in fashion and costume from his first 1962 Spring–Summer collection and designed Sophia Loren's bold, Mughal-style, jewelled turbans in the American spy film *Arabesque* (1966). The film also featured luxurious caftan-like garments designed by Marc Bohan (1926–) for Dior. Saint Laurent, like Roussos, was sartorially inspired by the atmosphere of the streets and souks of his childhood in Northern Africa and his designs featured rich embroidery, bold colours and silhouettes inspired by caftans. Caftans also graced the pages of *Vogue* from 1964 under the editorship of Diana Vreeland (1903–1989), whose tenure at the magazine ran from 1962 to 1971 and whose love of caftans was well-known. The photoshoots and details of the caftans, and their wearers, evoked the wealthy, Orientalist bohemian and libertine circles of the nineteenth century, the opulence of the last Russian court and Poiret's decadence. A *Vogue* photoshoot in 1964, for example, featured a Caucasian model wearing a metallic golden caftan by Court Jester photographed at the tomb of Sheikh Salim Chisti in India (Anon. 1964: 287). The next year,

American actress and model Marisa Berenson (1947–) was photographed by Helmut Newton as a reimagined Scheherazade in an eight-page *Vogue* feature wearing custom turbans of white mink and golden lamé by Halston and mink caftans ‘plunging straight from the shoulders with a [...] barbaric splendour’ (Anon. 1965: 187).

In 1966, leading fashion photographers, including Cecil Beaton, Henry Clarke and Horst, photographed ‘The Beautiful People in Caftans’ for *Vogue*, featuring women of the international jet set at their homes in London, Rome, France, Palm Beach and Tunisia, wearing ‘the classic robes of the Near East [that are] now, suddenly, all over the contemporary map’ (Anon. 1966: 67). Vreeland also commissioned Beaton to photograph the American socialite Lee Radizwill (1933–2015) and her daughter, Anna Christina for *Vogue*, in 1966 at their London home wearing caftans and posed in their ‘Turquerie’ room decorated by the Italian interior and stage designer Lorenzo Mongiardino (1916–1998). The commissioning letter Vreeland sent to Beaton stated, ‘as [Radizwill] is often in Morocco, I am sure she has got lovely kaftans and djebellas [*sic*]’ (Vreeland 2013: 112). Caucasian men first appeared in *Vogue* in 1967 wearing caftans with the Spanish antiquarian and couturier Adolfo de Velasco and French novelist Jacques Gall in Moroccan caftans described as ‘clothes for a certain kind of life, the life of privacy – a life lived in New York, Paris, and London as well as in settings appropriate to *The Desert Song*’ (Anon. 1967: 45). The article also provided details of de Velasco’s shop in Morocco where readers could order the caftans. Saint Laurent himself was also photographed wearing a white caftan while relaxing in Marrakesh in the late 1960s.

Caftans from the 1960s, therefore, were not just androgynous garments favoured by long-haired, scruffy hippies to symbolize their ‘simultaneous return to nature and movement away from Western materialism’ (Muggleton and Brill 2010: 473); they were also loved by the global, wealthy elite and tastemakers who played sultan in their stately pleasure domes,

revelling in decadent Orientalist materialism. For example, (Lord) Patrick Litchfield photographed Dutch fashion model Talitha (1940 – 1971) and her magnate husband, John Paul Getty Jr. (1932 – 2003), on the top of their pleasure palace in Marrakesh, in Morocco in 1969, both wearing caftans. The photograph ‘represented the last age of romanticism in 1970’s ‘Age of Aquarius’, in which men and women of Europe and America joined hands in a mass wave of Eastern revivalism’ (Geczy 2013: 154, 155). The global love of caftans continued into the 1970s, with *Vogue* releasing caftan sewing patterns throughout the decade that were also popular among hippies and the middle classes as part of the ‘anti-consumerist tendencies of the 1970s [that] led to a revival of needlework and craft techniques’ (Rasch 2010: 164). The rich and famous also continued to love caftans, with Emilio Pucci, Pierre Balmain, Rudi Gernreich, Zandra Rhodes, Halston, and Madam Gres creating couture caftans into the 1970s, while the British designer Thea Porter’s (1927–2000) luxurious caftans, worn by Bianca Jagger, Princess Margaret, Elizabeth Taylor and Demis Roussos, exemplified the era’s opulent Orientalism.

<hd A>Costuming the Caftan King

Roussos embarked on a solo career in 1971 and began to use caftans to differentiate his stage and media images from those of other pop stars: ‘One day I had an instinct to put on a kaftan and go out and sing. People liked it out of the blue’ (cited in Brooks 2002: n.pag.). Roussos’s instinct had tapped into the Zeitgeist that embraced Orientalism in dress across all sections of Western society. Caftans also moved into mainstream men’s fashions in 1971 and *Vogue* Easy Sewing patterns published caftan patterns for men from 1972. Ankle-length caftans became a favourite of ‘peacock men’, some of whom used it to represent ‘their peace-and-love harmony with the world or as a reflection of an interest in Eastern mysticisms, still others chose the dress-like garment as a rejection of traditional Western masculine identities

based on trousers' (Hills 2018: 147). Adopting the caftan allowed Roussos to create a non-threatening, soft, gentle, yet hypermasculine identity that appealed to his fans. Initially, Roussos bought his caftans off-the-rack during trips to Eastern countries (Skawinska and Roussos 1982). Roussos's second wife, Dominique, whom he met in 1972, designed all his stage costumes as his fame grew, and his 'flowing colourful caftans which, along with his shoulder-length hair and generous beard, [gave] him the look of a musical guru' and often incorporated Orientalist motifs (Kaye 1976: 8). In December 1974, for example, Roussos played the Royal Albert Hall in London, resplendent in a white, ankle-length, satin caftan with jewelled sleeves and a large, jewelled border around the collar and down the front. The back featured a sparkling, medieval Byzantine double-headed eagle with a golden crown, orb and staff with a large golden sun motif (Roussos 2023). His band also wore caftans.

By the late 1970s, caftans were as important as Roussos's songs to the Orientalist atmosphere his concerts, which were 'conditioned by light; light is informed by sound; sound is responsive to a physical environment. The methods of theatrical design are assemblies through a system of scenography into an affective atmosphere' (Hann 2019: 73). Heidegger's 'notion of mood [*Stimmung*] also has a sonic connotation to it, i.e., to be attuned [*gestimmt*] like an instrument. Moods do not refer to this or that psychological stage of mind but to an *atmospherical* attunement' (Wilde 2020: 372). The sonic connotation to the notion of *Stimmung* further stems from the derivation of the term from the root *Stimme*, meaning voice. Listening to a beautiful voice can also impact our mood and create an atmosphere which, when combined with the visual and material affects of spectacular costume and lighting, envelops and immerses us in sensations of pleasure and nostalgia as an ontological condition. In 1978 at the London Palladium, for example, Roussos appeared on stage 'with smoke rising from a lavish set resembling a Greek temple, complete with giant urns and images of the gods projected onto hessian' wearing a flowing white caftan and 'gold boots' (Myerson 1978: 6).

His eight-piece backing band again wore caftans. At his concert in Utrecht on 23 November 1977, Roussos wore a royal blue satin caftan embroidered with a bejewelled Byzantine eagle on the front and silver platformed boots.

Roussos created his stage image by meshing his voice with the dazzling materiality of his caftans and 'images of excess and sexual transgression with exaggerated posing, elaborate costuming and theatrical hair' associated with the visual decadence of 1970s glam rock and the history of bohemian Orientalism in fashion and dress (Geczy and Karaminas 2020: 150). His caftans positioned him in his fans' imaginations as an Ottoman pasha who ruled over a harem by indicating a 'line of continuity in libertine fashion, namely a tendency toward theatrical or exaggerated contrivance, into which sexuality is inevitably built in, but largely unconventionally' (Geczy and Karaminas 2020: 6). Roussos's fan base was mostly women whom, he opined, were seduced by his 'beastly Mediterranean romanticism' (including his hirsuteness) and 'natural, physical, wild sensuality' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 62). Roussos famously declared he did not wear undergarments and often 'noticed women in the audience who sit nearest the stage, peeking under my caftan' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 58). Roussos also stated that his 'high, delicate, nearly feminine voice [...] reassures and touches. It is this contrast, I believe, which moves women. [...] my belly was the sign I was a lover of sex who found his pleasure in physical pursuits' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 63). Such physical pursuits entailed eating, including one feast of 144 oysters, 7.5 pounds of lobster, three ducks, side dishes, wines and dessert, prepared by celebrity chef Seán Kinsella at Dublin's Mirabeau restaurant in the late 1970s, which Roussos ate with a bedsheet tucked around his neck (Moore 1982: 11). Roussos deliberately presented himself in this decadent, unthreatening, yet hypermasculine manner to offer women an alternative fantasy figure to the era's snake-hipped rock gods like Robert Plant and Mick Jagger, and the razor-thin androgyny of David Bowie.

Roussos's caftans, combined with his songs about love and romance, also fuelled his fans' nostalgia for travel and 'encounters' with Mediterranean sunshine and beaches, which had grown due to the rise of package holidays that offered them bodily pleasures of moving through hot weather and warm water (Gardner and Jennings 2020: 120). Roussos's accessible corporeality perhaps evoked for fans a remembered or imagined holiday sensation that could be brought into ordinary everyday life. As Jennie Small suggests, the physical experience of the holiday event may serve to 'illuminate the everyday experiences of the body at home' (2007: 88). For women in particular, summer holidays may offer opportunities to take a different attitude to the sexual body and its display, occupation of space and desires. Wearing caftans on holiday likely allowed Roussos's fans to enjoy the garments' sensual aspects because they were 'cool and loose allowing whatever breezes are available to swirl around all parts of the body', while wearing caftans at home allowed them to recall the sensuality of a holiday (Smith 2015: 91). Roussos's caftans, therefore, encapsulated both a hippie and a jet-set provenance and pointed to his Orientalist decadence and Greek origins, while his 'dreamy eyes' and 'soaring voice' transported his listeners back to their holidays on 'sun-soaked' Mediterranean beaches (Gardner and Jennings 2020: 125). The seductive atmosphere created by Roussos's voice and his caftan-clad image that was transmitted via his albums and their covers, was in itself a caftan-like worlding envelope with one British journalist noting Roussos radiated, 'a gentleness and a kindness so warm that you feel it wrapping round you like a blanket, even when you're over on the other side of the room' (Kaye 1976: 8).

<hd A>Roussos, the Peacock Pasha

Roussos's popularity and extravagance peaked between 1972 and 1979, roughly around the same period in fashion that Hill has described as the 'Thermidor of the Peacock Revolution' (2018). During this time, 'peacock shock dress – men's high heel platforms [... and] glam

rock glitter fashions – overlapped with a resurrection of pre-sixties masculine dress identities’ (Hill 2018: 163). Soon after meeting Dominique, Roussos blended his onstage identity of caftan king with an offstage identity of a postmodern ‘pasha’, a figure crafted from his childhood in Alexandria and by his and Dominique’s consumption of Orientalist revivalism in Western fashion. Dominique introduced Roussos to ‘the best tailors, jewelers and shoemakers in Paris’ (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 32, 33) and Roussos fashioned himself as a libertine whose caftans symbolized his ‘efforts at non-conformity’ and his ‘celebration of desire’, which was ‘redescribed and remembered in [his] garments, deportment, and style’ (Geczy and Karaminas 2020: 7). By the end of the 1970s, Roussos’s extravagant purchases included custom boots from ‘Capobianco’ on the Rue du Faubourg St Honoré in Paris that cost more than 6,000 francs per pair; a huge mansion in the affluent outer-Parisian suburb of Maisons-Laffitte, complete with marble and gold bathroom fittings, racehorses in the garden and priceless paintings on the walls; and a 2.5 m x 2.4 m mink-lined bed worth £30,000.

As Geczy suggests, there is a dramatic otherworldly quality to Orientalist fashion, which is ‘worn, assumed, adopted and suggested as *something once inscribed with a dream*’ (2013: 157). Caftans, with their long historical associations in European fashion with decadence, wealth and power, were perfect for Roussos who played his dream roles of ‘the millionaire, the king, the pacha, Gargantua, the ogre, the tamer, [...] the maharadjah, the Lord, the star, the diva, the Pope, God, anyone who could be rich, powerful, great and radiate security’ (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 65, 66). Caftans were also Roussos’s preferred garment off the stage because they were extremely comfortable and accommodating (Brooks 2002: n. pag.). Photographs of Roussos taken in the mid-1970s show him posed proudly in his bathroom wearing a mi-parti caftan in deep and pale purple. In the leadlight bathroom windows are images of ancient Greek water bearers, while the mirror frames over the sinks resemble an ancient Greek temple, complete with columns. Roussos noted his caftans were

custom-made, often ‘in wonderful brocades enriched with gold and rare stones. The Empress of Iran gave me a splendid one’ (Brooks 2002: n.pag.), a practice tied to the ancient custom of textiles and costume being ‘part of royal exchanges of gifts’ in the Middle East (Jirousek 2005: n.pag.). Roussos, therefore, lived his personal Orientalist dream – a Greek-Egyptian as decadent as Cleopatra and Dionysus, who rules over his palace in Maisons-Laffitte.

Throughout the 1970s, Roussos and Dominique indulged in campy Orientalist scenarios which had an ‘over-acted quality [that pointed] to the way in which nonconformist sexual identity must perform itself into existence, [...] through the transformation of originally conservative models’ (Apter 1996: 34). Much like Poiret’s scenarios of Suleiman the Magnificent, Roussos called his time at Maisons-Laffitte his ‘Arabian Nights’ (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 33) and described his decadence during the 1970s as his ‘pacha years’ (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 37). Roussos and Dominique transformed the conservative model of marriage into a 24/7 fantasy role play, having ‘fun playing the pacha and his wife, with our feasts, our attendants, and our riches’ (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 38, 39). A photograph taken by Tony Frank in 1977 at Roussos’s mansion, which appeared on the album cover ‘Demis Roussos, Universum’ released in 1979, for example, shows Roussos seated in a golden chair wearing a white caftan against a glittering black curtain. Slender, tanned Dominique lies on the floor in front of Roussos, propped on one arm on a pile of metallic Ottoman cushions. Her naked body is covered only by some sheer black-and-gold fabric, her ankles are adorned with chunky golden ‘slave’ bracelets and her bare feet rest on a leopard skin rug. A large silver bowl of exotic fruit is situated in the foreground to her left.

Wearing caftans enabled Roussos to self-fashion his identities of the gently sensual popstar and the hypermasculine pasha to embody ‘a kind of portmanteau Orientalism’ that crossed bicultural identifications and used a ‘theatrical, erotic cipher of masculinity’ (Apter 1996: 30). Or, as Roussos himself put it: ‘I am a unique kind of personage and voice! No one

else is like me! I am a meeting between the Occident and the Orient' (Gage 1979: 16). It was this, therefore, combined with the popularity of caftans in menswear in the 1970s and the long history of decadent Orientalism in fashion that allowed Roussos to reconfigure and portray an alternative, transgressive, yet desirable masculinity that was highly palatable in the mainstream.

<hd A>Conclusion and Caftan Considerations

Roussos was a hedonist and, like the figure of the libertine, elicited 'fascination for the lengths he would go for his own self-gratification', becoming towards the end of the 1970s, 'a figure of scorn and envy in equal measure' as the bohemian Orientalism of the decade fell from fashion (Geczy and Karaminas 2020: 2). Even Roussos himself was aware that he had to curb his appetites. In 1979, Roussos moved to Hollywood to break into the American market but soon realised his 'image had, at last, replaced the original. I ended more "pacha" than real musician, I was more renowned for the size of my tummy [...] than for my voice' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 7). In 1980, following his divorce from Dominique and after a regime of diet and exercise, Roussos's friends were concerned that his fans might not embrace the physical transformation. 'Vangelis even suggested that I could put a cushion under my caftan [...] to shield my fans from any possible trauma which they might experience from so great a change in my appearance' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 8). Roussos continued to perform throughout his life but left his caftans in the 1970s. 'I no longer want to sell cheap dreams on black plastic [...] As for those who respected only my large weight and my caftan, I will soon learn to live without them' (Skawinska and Roussos 1982: 65). With a new decade and new approach to health and fitness, Roussos crafted a new image, which included clothing more aligned with conventional Western notions of

masculinity, such as tailored suits and Hawaiian shirts that nonetheless evoked the nostalgia of sun-drenched holidays.

There is scope to consider Roussos's influence on other male performers in the 1970s who used caftans to fashion masculine identities as exotic, flamboyant figures. For example, the Malaysian-born Australian singer Kandiah 'Kamahl' Kamalesvaran (1934–), one of Australia's best-known, successful entertainers in the 1960s and 1970s, started wearing luxurious caftans in 1973 after seeing Roussos win an international song contest in Rio de Janeiro. Kamahl purchased three new kaftans every year between 1973 and 1983, many of which were designed and made by Sydney-based costume designers Bob Lloyd and Roger Goss, who became Kamahl's costumiers, while others were made in Savile Row by the British Australian costume and fashion designer Christopher Essex (1945–2006) (Cox 2015). Like Roussos, Kamahl was not attempting to undermine masculinity by wearing caftans while performing; rather, he used them with his Malaysian background, Tamil heritage, deep, velvety voice and dark skin to position himself as a gently seductive 'Oriental' other and to cement his exoticism within the Australian popular imagination. Another consideration is how caftans formed part of the camp style worn by the American pianist Liberace (1919–1987) as loungewear in the 1970s while relaxing at his lavish homes, including Liberace House in Palm Springs, which featured a Persian tent room by the side of the pool. There is also room for research into how, and why, the late fashion editor André Leon Talley (1948–2022) – whose career spanned *Vogue*, *W*, *Women's Wear Daily*, *Interview* and *Vanity Fair* between 1975 and 2013 – made couture caftans designed by Balenciaga, Gucci, and Diane von Furstenberg part of his signature look.

This article has examined how the symbolic, spatial, bodily and affective dimensions of Roussos's caftan, when combined with Roussos's voice, created a fanciful Orientalist atmosphere that enveloped his fans via his photographs, album covers and television and

stage performances. This was because, in part, the caftan is an exploration of ‘the space that flows between the body and clothes, a concept that is indebted to non-Western aesthetics’ (McNeil 2010: 132). Roussos’s caftans also refused dominant Western, culturally accepted masculine silhouettes and combined with his clothing, high voice, dark hirsuteness, and embonpoint, made his performance of masculinity seductively exotic in Western Europe and the Anglophone world. Throughout the 1970s, Roussos’s caftans became more than performance costumes, extending to his daily wear which cemented his pasha persona in the public imagination. Roussos’s hypermasculine, hypersexual persona emerged in a period in which fashion, as McNeil has argued, was more transitive than it had ever been, in its capacity to move ‘beyond three dimensions and into the fourth dimension, time’ (McNeil 2010: 135). The caftan, therefore, enabled Roussos and his fans to be, in the words of Led Zeppelin’s Orientalist song ‘Kashmir’, ‘a traveller of both time and space’, transporting him and his listeners to the past, to decadent, sensual Ottoman harems, to sun-drenched Mediterranean holidays and to a Shangri-La where everything was going to be fine.

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