



# Ancient Egypt in the Popular Imagination: Building a Fantasy in Film, Literature, Music and Art

David Huckvale

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Ancient Egypt has long been a source of fascination in Western popular culture. Movies such as The Mummy (1932, 1959), Biblical epics like The Ten Commandments (1923, 1956), and pharaonic films like Cleopatra (1934, 1963) and The Egyptian (1954) have all recreated the glamour and allure of Egyptian art and civilization for Western audiences. This work traces how these and other films were inspired by writers like Bram Stoker and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and by the art of Victorian painters. Similarly, it shows how the soundtracks to such films belong to a Romantic musical tradition stretching back beyond Verdi and Mozart. Exploring these artistic endeavors addresses the question of whether the fantasy of ancient Egypt represents racist misunderstandings of a far more significant reality, or a way for Western culture to understand itself.



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