



UNWRAPPING THE MUMMY

HOLLYWOOD FANTASIES, EGYPTIAN REALITIES

Stuart Tyson Smith

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Ancient Egypt is one of the most popular archaeological film genres. From epic blockbusters to Grade B thrillers to soft porn, Egypt provides an exotic setting for a wide range of stories. This Hollywood Egyptomania draws heavily on the popularity of ancient Egypt in the fine and decorative arts, a phenomenon that goes back to the fascination of a future emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, for past glories. The first multidisciplinary team of scholars accompanied his 1798 military expedition to Egypt. The magnificent publications of 1802–1828 sparked a timeless interest in all things ancient Egyptian. Newly opened national museums and wealthy collectors *had* to have something from Egypt. Architects built in pharaonic style, and Wedgwood made tea sets with Egyptian themes (Humbert et al. 1994).

No trip to a museum or Egypt was complete without a close encounter with a mummy. Mummies were so popular by 1833 that

Egyptian ruler Mohamed Ali's advisor, Father Géramb, could say: "It would be hardly respectable, on one's return from Egypt, to present oneself in Europe without a mummy in one hand and a crocodile in the other" (Ikram and Dodson 1998:67). Tickets were issued to mummy unwrapping parties, which became all the rage in affluent society. When a new popular media, motion pictures, entered the scene around the turn of the last century, films with Egyptian themes were among the first produced, including 1899's *Cléopâtre*, which involved the revival of Cleopatra's mummy by a villain with diabolical plans.

The ancient Egyptian mummy in film, by far the most popular Egypt-themed genre, recently burst into theaters again with Universal Studios special effects-driven remake and sequel, *The Mummy* (1999) and *The Mummy Returns* (2001). A comparison of the portrayal of ancient Egypt in these and selected other films with the insights gained through archaeology and Egyptology will illuminate the differences between Hollywood's mummies, popular imaginings about Egyptian beliefs and practices, and the reality of death and burial in ancient Egypt, where mummies did take a central, if generally less mobile role.

Reel Mummies—Ancient Egypt in Film

Egypt, 4000 years ago, a land of strange rituals and savage cruelty ...

—trailer for *The Mummy* (1999)

Ancient Egypt-themed films fall into three basic genres that often overlap: (1) biblical/costume epics, (2) Cleopatra, and (3) mummies. Cecil B. DeMille's two productions of *The Ten Commandments* (1923 and 1956) created lavish sets that emphasized the epic quality of the biblical narrative, setting the benchmark for this genre. A huge success at the box office, the later version was shot on location in Egypt and boasted a stellar cast of academic advisors, including Egyptologists William C. Hayes and Labib Habachi. Unfortunately, this did not prevent significant inaccuracies in

costume, props, and sets, the most notable of which are the garish costumes. Egyptians did not have access to color-fast dyes, therefore they mainly wore white linen and never, ever gold lamé! Although set in 1936, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) sought to revive the grand epic qualities of these films, using a surprisingly plausible biblical archaeology premise connected with Pharaoh Sheshonk's sack of Jerusalem in 925 BCE, but otherwise with little historical accuracy. The recent science fiction epic *Stargate* (1994) also played off of the lavish sets, costumes, and "cast-of-thousands" scale of the biblical tradition, again using ancient Egypt as an exotic and especially sensual backdrop (Figure 2.1). This film is surprisingly accurate aside from its clever Erich von Däniken-inspired space aliens premise.¹ *Stargate* also drew on films centered on the life of Cleopatra, which accentuate these qualities in Egypt's last queen, only rarely recognizing that as a descendant of Egypt's Macedonian conquerors, she was more Hellenistic than Egyptian. This image of the exotic East goes back to antiquity in the Roman view of Cleopatra and eastern Mediterranean civilizations in general, but was also recognized in Said's (1978) characterization of Orientalism. This Western view of the Eastern Other colors most Egypt-themed films, as the tag-line quoted above illustrates.

Mummy films combine elements of the other genres—the sensual, mysterious East with exotic settings and costumes. They also set the pattern for the archaeologist as adventurer encountering the unknown and macabre. The emergence of the genre is often credited to the notoriety surrounding Tutankhamen's tomb, especially rumors of a curse that supposedly killed people associated with the archaeological project (Cowie and Johnson 2002). The literary trope of revived mummies, however, goes back over a hundred years before Howard Carter's astonishing discovery in 1922 and the production of the iconic Universal film *The Mummy* in 1932.

Most mummy films draw inspiration from tales that emphasize the mysterious and horrific, like French Orientalist Théophile Gautier's (1840) "The Mummy's Foot." Two stories written in 1890 by Arthur Conan Doyle, who was fascinated by the occult, have

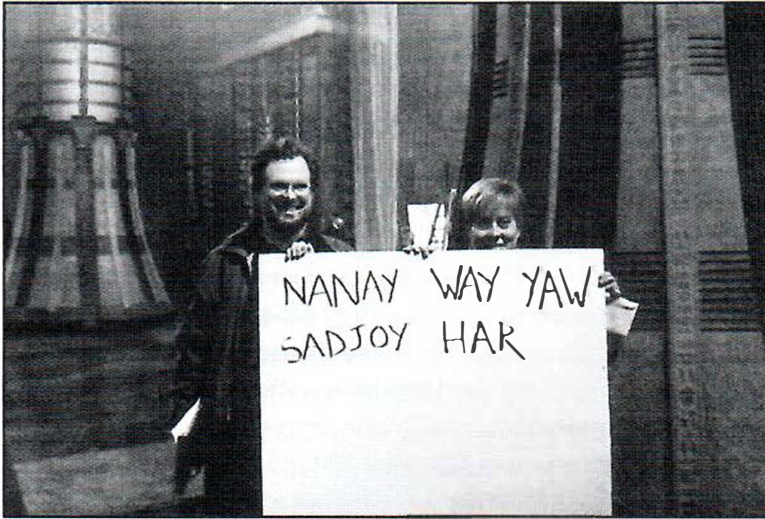


Figure 2.1. The author on the set of *Stargate*. Cue cards like this one, which translates “I am not amused,” helped Jaye Davidson remember his lines.

Photo courtesy of Stuart Tyson Smith.

contributed the most to the mummy genre. “Lot 249” involves an Oxford Egyptology student who uses spells from a papyrus to revive and control a mummy with deadly consequences. In the end, the hero forces the evil genius to burn both the mummy and the papyrus scroll. An Egyptologist stumbles on an ageless Egyptian who unwraps a mummy in the Louvre in “The Ring of Thoth.” He is not actually a mummy, but has stayed alive for 3,000 years through a special elixir. The mummy is that of his long, lost love, who he wants to rejoin in death, not revive. The former was clearly the inspiration for the shambling, horror film mummy *Kharis*, and the latter for Boris Karloff’s masterful portrayal of the cursed Egyptian priest Imhotep, but Conan Doyle’s contribution to the mummy genre went uncredited (Lupton 2003).

After *Cléopâtre* (1899), no less than two dozen mummy films came out *before* the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb, but the understated creepiness of Karl Freund’s Universal production *The Mummy* (1932), starring Boris Karloff, sets the basic plot elements as well as supplying a benchmark for later films. In the film, archaeologists find the tomb of Egyptian prince

Imhotep, who was cursed and buried alive for stealing the Scroll of Thoth in order to resurrect Princess Anckesenamun. Heedless of the curse, one of the archaeologists reads the scroll aloud and revives the mummy, who searches for his lost love, finally finding her reincarnated in the half Egyptian heroine, Helen Grosvenor. Eventually, Imhotep is defeated and crumbles into dust when the goddess Isis burns the Scroll of Thoth.

The idea of mobile mummies was not entirely alien to ancient Egypt. The papyrus relating “The Story of Setna Khaemwas and the Mummies” was bought for the Boulaq Museum (now the Egyptian Museum in Cairo) on the then legal antiquities market around 1865. This remarkably complex tale shares a number of plot elements with *The Mummy* (Simpson 2003:453–469), and very likely served as an inspiration for screenwriter John Balderston, who as a journalist had covered the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb and was well versed in Egyptology (Lupton 2003). Paleographic analysis dates it to the early Ptolomaic period (ca. 300–200 BCE), but the story may go back as far as the New Kingdom, when the protagonist lived (ca. 1250 BCE). In it, Setna tries to steal the cursed Book of Thoth from a tomb and is opposed by the mummy of Naneferkaptah and the spirits of his wife and child. Setna fails to heed their tale of the disastrous consequences of their sacrilege in possessing the scroll, which was placed in their tomb to keep it away from mortals. Later, Setna realizes his mistake and returns the scroll, agreeing as a penance to reunite Naneferkaptah’s mummy with those of his wife and son, who were buried far away. In an episode strikingly similar to the scene with Karloff’s mummy, Naneferkaptah appears as an old man and leads Setna to the tomb of his loved ones.

In *The Mummy*, Imhotep uses magic to attack, paralyze, and bend people to his will. These actions and Imhotep’s fate share some similarities with real events in New Kingdom Egypt. Administrative documents discovered at Thebes relate how conspirators were caught and convicted of stealing a sacred book of spells and using them for similar purposes in the plot to assassinate New Kingdom Pharaoh Ramses III (ca. 1151 BCE). The papyrus trial transcripts reveal both the offense and

“great punishments of death” proscribed for the criminals by the gods (Redford 2002). At least one of the conspirators, probably Ramses III’s son Pentawere, may have been buried alive in an unmarked coffin found in the Deir el Bahri royal cache of thirty-seven mummies. Bound and tightly wrapped, “Unknown Man E” suffered the further indignity of being sewn up in a ritually unclean sheepskin (Brier 2006). This archaeological discovery clearly influenced Balderston’s screenplay and had a major impact on the mummy genre.

Universal’s later Kharis series of Grade B mummy movies, starting with *The Mummy’s Hand*, differ from the 1932 classic in that Kharis appears always as a mummy—a kind of vengeful automaton directed by the high priest of a secret priesthood of Karnak, a plot line remarkably similar to Conan Doyle’s “Lot 249” (1890b). In each film, the archaeologists who desecrate Egypt’s tombs pay the ultimate price at Kharis’s mummified hands. This avenging, shambling horror became the prevailing popular image of the mummy in film, including Hammer Studios 1959 revival *The Mummy*.

The fourth Hammer mummy offering, *Blood from the Mummy’s Tomb* (1972), drew on Bram Stoker’s novel *Jewel of the Seven Stars* (1903). This story also involves a cursed tomb, that of the immortality-seeking sorceress-queen Tera. Ignoring warnings, the archaeologists enter the tomb, releasing Tera’s spirit, who possesses the Egyptologist’s daughter at birth. When the heroine reaches adulthood, the queen becomes increasingly assertive, so the archaeologists try to return her soul to her mummy with disastrous consequences. In spite of a tendency to emphasize the mystical and occult, Stoker’s novel contains many correct historical and archaeological details. The idea that an evil spirit could possess an infant is something that was actually guarded against in Egyptian magic (Pinch 1994:147–160)—the one exception to the absence of any idea of reincarnation in Egyptian theology. This is actually pointed out in the 1980 remake, *The Awakening*, arguably the most archaeologically accurate mummy movie.

Universal’s recent blockbuster remake and sequel *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns* merged all of these elements, creating a

mummy that was revived by a spell from the Book of the Dead, starts out as a horror, but ends up as a powerful magician intent on reviving his lost love Anckesenamon. Added to the basic mummy plot is a strong infusion of Indiana Jones archaeology adventure combined with a dash of biblical content—a kind of apocalyptic Exodus.

Real Mummies— The Archaeology of Life after Death in Ancient Egypt

Ya-HEY TIY-soo (Oho! Rise Up!)
SISH-poo en-ak TA-pak (Receive your head!)
YIN-qoo en-ak qes-AW-ak (Collect your bones!)
SIA-qoo en-ak 'ey-OOT-ak (Gather your limbs!)
WIKH-ao en-ak TAA ya-RA ya-WEF-ek
 (Shake the earth from your flesh!)²

Hollywood's focus on forbidden magic, marauding mummies, and curses, although not entirely without Egyptological foundation, obscures the complex and nuanced realities of ancient Egyptian religious beliefs in the afterlife. To be fair, Hollywood's concentration on the sensational was influenced by Egyptology's early quest for spectacular finds and resulting focus on tombs of the elite, which filled European and U.S. museums. Ironically, Balderston's script for *The Mummy* has Sir Joseph Whemple, the leader of the British Museum's expedition, assert that "more has been learned from studying bits of broken pottery than from all the sensational finds—and our job is to increase the sum of human knowledge of the past, not to satisfy our own curiosity" (Riley 1989:A-3).

The spell above from the pyramid texts does give the appearance of being meant to revive a corpse, but in reality it was meant to revive the dead in the afterlife, not this life. Nevertheless, the

deceased did not leave the earth permanently for a remote heaven. Instead, the ancient Egyptians believed that the dead remained tied to both worlds, traveling between them. They made mummies as a vessel for their souls to occupy in the tomb (Ikram and Dodson 1998). There they could receive offerings and appeals from the living. Around 3,000 years ago, the scribe Butehamun left a touching letter by the mummy of his wife, asking her “How do you fare? How are you? ... Woe you beautiful one, who has no equal ... you have been taken away from me. ... Oh Akhtay, you gracious one as woman” (Romer 1984:187).

More than that, archaeologists have found papyri, amulets, and *ex-votos* offerings to the dead in tombs, temples, and houses, reflecting a belief that the spirits of the dead could intervene in life in both negative and positive ways. They could assist people by helping expel demons that might attack them, but they could also inflict disease and bad luck on the living (Pinch 1994). In a plot that Hollywood should love, Naneferkaptah’s spirit torments Setna Khaemwas with horrific-erotic dreams to get him to return the Book of Thoth (Simpson 2003:453–469). A spirit could also physically attack the living, particularly those who might violate their tombs. In an inscription placed prominently in his tomb, Ankhmahor threatens: “As for any person who will enter into this tomb of mine in their impurity ... I shall seize him like a goose (wring his neck), placing fear in him at seeing ghosts upon earth, that they might be fearful of an excellent Spirit” (Silverman 1997:146). A number of tombs had such curses placed on them. The most famous curse of all, however, is bogus. Novelist Marie Corelli invented a curse for Tutankhamen’s tomb, plagiarizing an older Arabic account of an ancient curse that “they who enter this sacred tomb shall swift be visited by wings of death” (Silverman 1997:146).

The ancient Egyptians themselves were far more concerned with ensuring the soul’s passage through the afterlife, conceived as a series of trials and obstacles that led up to a divine judgment. The Pyramid Texts (ca. 2300 BCE), which evolve into the Coffin Texts (ca. 2000 BCE), which in turn become the Book of the Dead

(ca. 1500 BCE), were constantly evolving guidebooks and aids for the afterlife (Hornung 1999). Egyptian priests expended a huge amount of effort and creativity to provide the dead with better and better means of achieving this goal. Earlier generations of scholars were disappointed that the Egyptians expended so much energy on this activity rather than engaging in philosophical and scientific study. This cleverness and trouble the ancient Egyptians took for their dead can also be seen as a reflection of a touching love of life and family.

An increasing array of amulets helped to protect the body and soul of the deceased (Andrews 1994). Scarabs are particularly common, often found on the third finger of the left hand. They represent Khepri, the manifestation of the sun god Re who appears as the rejuvenated rising sun. As a result, the scarab was a potent symbol of rebirth in the afterlife, alluded to by Karloff as Ardeth Bey in *The Mummy* (1932) when he says that Helen “shall dawn anew in the East as the first rays of Amon-Ra dispel the shadows” (Riley 1989:L-57). The Egyptians believed that the soul resided in the heart, which, unlike in the recent *Mummy*, was left within the body.³ As the seat of morality, the heart was placed on a scale against the feather of *Maat*, truth and righteousness. If they balanced, then the soul was judged “true of voice” and became immortal. If the heart failed to balance with the feather, then the fearsome, crocodile-headed demoness Ammut, literally “the gobbler,” ate the soul. For those feeling a bit guilty, a spell from the Book of the Dead (Faulkner 1994:no. 30b) was written on heart scarabs, compelling the heart not to testify against the deceased before the divine tribunal or tip the scales during the divine judgment. Just to hedge their bets, Egyptian priests—who invented the notion of back-up systems—came up with the “Negative Confession,” a list of crimes and sacrilegious acts that the deceased did not commit, including nibbling on the divine food offerings, something that must have been quite common!

Once justified, the deceased entered into the Fields of Reeds and Offerings, where they lived with the gods in a kind of bucolic paradise. This afterlife lifestyle was not all fun and games. The gods regularly called on the deceased to work in the fields and

orchards of these divine lands. The ancient Egyptian priests were, however, up to the challenge, inventing Ushabtis. Literally “the Answerer,” these mummy-shaped figurines were activated by another spell from the Book of the Dead (Faulkner 1994:no. 6), which caused the statuette to leap up and answer for the deceased “Here I am!” whenever the gods called on them to work. During the New Kingdom (ca. 1500 BCE), their numbers start to multiply, eventually resulting in a standard set of 365, one for each day of the year. The priests were always thinking, and decided that an overseer Ushabti, complete with little starched scribal kilt, was required to keep each ten normal ones in line, for a total of 401. By



Figure 2.2. Mummy recovered from an excavation in the Theban necropolis. The exceptional preservation is typical of mummification’s highest development from the Late Period (ca. 600 bc) onward.

Photo by Stuart Tyson Smith.

the Late Period (ca. 600 BCE), sets were mass produced in molds for those on a budget (Ikram and Dodson 1998).

One unexpected and interesting result of a systematic study of intact 17th- and 18th-Dynasty (ca. 1650–1300 BCE) burials from the Theban necropolis, including the Valley of the Kings (Smith 1991, 1992), was that some practices and items that Egyptologists typically regard as a standard component of a burial were, in fact, restricted to the elite (Figure 2.2). For example, in *The Mummy* Dr. Muller exclaims in surprise (Riley 1989:A-3) that the “viscera were not removed—the usual scar made by the embalmer’s knife is not there!” Muller should not have been astonished. In contrast to conventional wisdom, only those of the highest status had the procedure done. Even among these privileged few, the practice was not ubiquitous. X-rays show that the mummies of Kha and Merit show no evidence of evisceration, even though their burials are among the richest ever found (Curto and Mancini 1968). The same applies to heart scarabs, Ushabtis, and the Book of the Dead. Film and Egyptology share a common emphasis on elite culture and the spectacular that neglects the lives of ordinary Egyptians. The non-elite focused on the basics, simple mummification (drying with the desiccant natron and wrapping), the magical and physical protection offered by a coffin, along with a scarab or two, a few items from daily life, and food offerings to sustain the soul of the deceased.

An unusual burial was discovered next to an elite pyramid tomb in the New Kingdom colonial cemetery at Tombos in Sudanese Nubia that paints a more prosaic picture of mummies (Figure 2.3). The body of a child had a string of small amulets around his or her neck, including Bes, a popular protective dwarf god, and the hippo goddess Taweret, patroness of women and children. They were just simple things made of glass, but one can imagine distraught parents sending their beloved child into the Afterlife with the best protection that they could afford—mummification, a coffin, and a string of amulets. As excavation continued, it became apparent that the child was buried face down, an unusual treatment that also

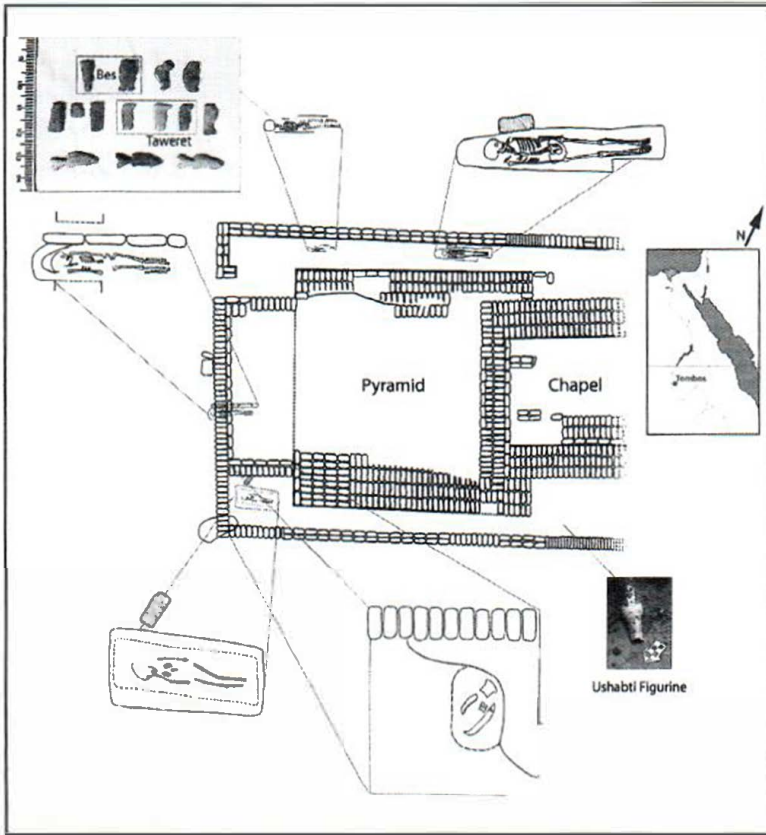


Figure 2.3. Burials of an adult and three children, one upside-down, around the pyramid of Siamun and Weren at Tombos in Sudanese Nubia, ca. 1400 BCE. Although their wrappings have decayed, they were all originally mummified.

occurs in Egypt (Smith 2003). The mummy of an elite man from Thebes named Boki shows that this was not deliberate but rather reflects human error. Boki appeared to be wrapped normally with obvious feet and a nose (Hayes 1935), but when the wrappings were removed Boki was lying on his face. The embalmers had clearly lost track of which side was up and picked the wrong side, adding padding to create artificial feet and a face!

It's a Wrap! Hollywood and Modern Mummy Mythology

The whole keystone of our old life in Egypt was not the inscriptions or monuments of which you make so much, but was our hermetic philosophy and mystic knowledge of which you say little or nothing.

—*Sosra to the Egyptologist* (Conan Doyle 1890a)

The recent success of the Universal remake and its sequel shows that the mummy genre still fascinates the public. To give an authentic feel to both movies, the Universal Studios production team hired me to re-create spoken Egyptian. The notion that no one knows how ancient Egyptian was spoken is a common myth going back to Roman misinterpretations of hieroglyphs as a symbolic system; in spite of their appearance, hieroglyphs do spell out words and thus represent the world's first phonetic script.⁴ Vowels, which are not written, and accents must be reconstructed through a comparison between Coptic and transcriptions of Egyptian names into cuneiform and Greek (Loprieno 1995).

Coptic is a very late stage of Egyptian that is still used as a liturgical language in the Coptic Christian Church. It was written with vowels in a modified Greek alphabet starting around 200 CE. Some Egyptian words and grammar, usually embedded in names like Ramesses (literally, Ra-bore-him), appear in diplomatic correspondence written in Akkadian cuneiform (a syllabary), the diplomatic lingua franca of the era, in particular the Amarna Letters and Hittite Royal Archives (ca. 1400–1200 BC, contemporary with the ancient setting for the films). For example, Ramesses would originally have been pronounced something like REE-ah-ma-SAY-soo—quite different from the standard Egyptological pronunciation, which for convenience ignores both vowels and syllabic structure.⁵

Steven Sommers, the writer and director, kept my archaeological suggestions right next to his script during the shoot, using some of the information. For example, the heroine correctly calls the embalming place the *Sah-Netjer*. Sommers also avoided gemstones in the treasure and used bronze, not iron, for weapons. Finally, he adopted the use of the term *Medjay* for pharaoh's bodyguard—the subtlest Egyptological reference in the film. These Nubian nomads formed an elite police force during the New Kingdom, surviving appropriately in the film as a band of desert warriors who protect Hamunaptra.

Some plot elements, although appearing improbable, are consistent with archaeological discoveries. For example, although normal scarabs (dung beetles) eat dung and not flesh, a spell from the Book of the Dead does ward off the fearsome Apshei beetles that threatened to consume the deceased on their harrowing journey toward immortality in the Afterlife (Faulkner 1994). The scene where the villainess Ancksunamun battles the heroine Nefertiri (real queen to Ramesses II, Seti I's successor) combines Hollywood sensuality with the common New Kingdom court entertainment of bouts between soldiers and foreigners (but *never* scantily clad princesses!).

In other cases, accuracy is sacrificed. For example, I informed Sommers that the Book of Dead is the most common papyrus to survive from ancient Egypt with copies in museums all around the world; yet for effect, the film presents it as a legendary, unique hinged book and not the familiar scroll. Perhaps the most glaring mistake is in the scenes of mummification, where in spite of advice to the contrary, five, not four, canopic jars are used. Canopic jars held the separately mummified internal organs (Ikram and Dodson 1998), which never included the heart—the fifth canopic jar in the film was an idea likely inspired by the 1959 Hammer remake. Although in rare cases the heart was temporarily extracted during the embalming process, it was always replaced into the chest cavity.

Sommers' films were drawn from his imagination, inspired by dozens of mummy movies. The original films were informed by popular writers like Bram Stoker and Arthur Conan Doyle.

The fashionable spiritualist movement of the day and the notion of Egypt's "hidden wisdom" influenced both authors, leading to the idea of reincarnation and the physical revival of mummies. It would be easy to rail against Hollywood for planting misconceptions in moviegoers' heads, but these ideas extend back into antiquity. To the Hellenistic world, Egypt was a place of mystery, magic, and sensuality. As Jan Assmann (2003) points out, although misguided, this view of Egypt should not be dismissed out of hand. Hellenes observed and misunderstood the Egyptian culture of that time, blending it with their own to create hybrid philosophies and generate new mystery cults. Hermeticism comes from this milieu (Pinch 1994:161–177) and includes the concept of reincarnation.

Adherents of the occult insist that the beliefs reflected in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (ca. 100–200 CE) have deep roots in Egyptian religion. Conan Doyle (1890a:74) expresses this popular belief through Sosra's comment. This is a telling remark that reflects a fundamental break between the popular imagined Egypt and our archaeological and historical knowledge of Egyptian civilization. It goes back to the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822 by Champollion, whose genius lay in recognizing that the signs were not symbolic and allegorical, in line with hermetic philosophy, but primarily phonetic, spelling out words. Since that time, there have been two intellectual tracks dealing with ancient Egypt: the occult, emphasizing mysteries and reincarnation, and the academic, informed by translations of often mundane inscriptions and the potsherds that Sir Joseph praises in 1932's *The Mummy*.

Films haven't really created mummy myths, but instead reflect deeply and long-held notions about the nature of ancient Egyptian civilization. Ancient Egypt provides rich textual, art historical, and archaeological records that, when integrated together, yield insights into not only the male elite, who speak to us directly through writing and representations, but also the ordinary men and women, often neglected by Egyptologists as well as filmmakers, who made up the bulk of Egypt's population. Archaeology can reveal the actions and beliefs of individuals who lived in the distant past but left no historical record for us to follow. Archaeology

can give these people a voice, make them live again, and replace misconceptions of Egypt's mystical past in film and popular culture with an appreciation of their complex desires and beliefs.

Notes

1. Director Roland Emmerich, producer and writer Dean Devlin, and stars of *Stargate* were keen to get the ancient Egyptian language and background right, so I was brought into every stage of the production. Along with a genuine interest in Egyptology, they wanted to enhance the suspension of disbelief given the outlandish space aliens premise.
2. Pyramid Text Spell 373, ca. 2300 BCE (Faulkner 1969), pronunciation reconstructed by me for *The Mummy Returns* (2001). Capitals indicate accent—do not recite anywhere near mummies!
3. This was done despite my pointing out this error in comments on the script.
4. Sumerian is earlier but composed of logograms.
5. This fact provides a solid basis for the main conceit of *Stargate* (1994), that the protagonist could not initially understand the otherworldly language, but quickly learned how to communicate—as Egyptologist Daniel Jackson, played by James Spader, explains in dialog I wrote. Note that several films feature ancient Egyptian with Egyptological pronunciation, including *The Mummy* (1932), although Ardeth Bey only recites ancient Egyptian royal names instead of actual spells (Riley 1989).

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