

The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-Speaking World.

By Jasmine Day

Although this book is not newly released I thought I would review it as I felt it was an important addition to the Egyptological book shelf. This book covers a popular subject, that of mummymania through the ages, in a very new and refreshing way, putting a different spin on this well-reported phenomena.

There are six chapters all focusing on different elements of mummymania from an anthropological point of view. Beginning as one would expect in the early years Day investigates the approach to mummies for medicinal purposes, travel souvenirs, scientific acquisitions and serious museum displays. She investigates the systematic objectification of mummies, explain how we think if they are considered as objects then any atrocious behaviour towards them is almost acceptable. We are then introduced to mummies in movies and animation with a comprehensive discussion of a plethora of show and movies. It was not long before I found myself looking up Banana Man nad Tutmania on You Tube! However, although she discussed her argument well, I found her theory of *Vagina Dentate* a little hard to swallow. It presents the tomb as a vagina, the archaeologist as a penis and the mummy as "teeth" or a "tongue", in the vagina's mouth that repels the "penis". She argues consequently that all mummy movies are about rape or incest. Another theory she presented is the *Dragon Principle* which I found easier to take on board, where the mummy is considered as a dragon hoarding treasure they could never use.

The other chapters discussed predictably the curse of the mummy, where it came from, how it is presented, and how it has changed. It was refreshing that she didn't try to debunk it, just explain its structure from an anthropological point of view as well as investigating how this has changed the public's approach to Museums, exhibitions and mummies in general. Her museum studies are supported by a number of surveys carried out all over the English-Speaking world. The changing depiction of mummies I found particularly interesting as it's something I hadn't really thought about. They have evolved from victims, to evil protagonists, to comical entities which also changed the audience's reaction to them; from sympathy to fear and to ridicule. Initially mummies appealed to adults only and now have regular appearances in children's programmes. The mummy has changed a lot in 150 years, and this is all documented by Day.

Although this book is thin, with less than 200 pages of text, it is remarkably deceptive. There is so much information in this volume, presenting ideas which are new and refreshing. Even though you may not agree with all the theories they are presented so well you do consider them carefully first. This was a fantastic book with interesting images, which has me intrigued about what Jasmin Day's house looks like! There could have been a few more illustrations to really improve the production but that aside, this is a must read for any Egyptophile.