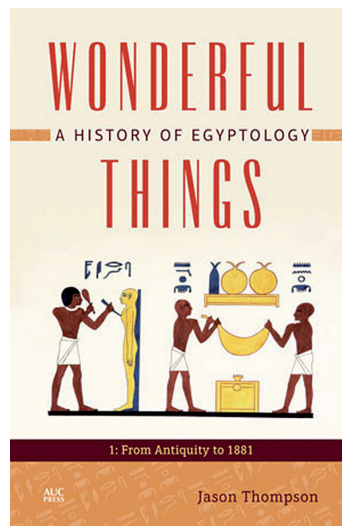




BOOK REVIEWS

Thompson, J. 2015. *Wonderful Things. A History of Egyptology. 1: From Antiquity to 1881*

André J. Veldmeijer



A good number of well-established colleagues, such as Brian Fagan, Kara Cooney and Kent Weeks, have written book reviews of “Wonderful Things” (see <http://www.aucpress.com/p-4927-wonderful-things.aspx>) and I can only confirm their enthusiasm and opinions. ‘Wonderful Things’ “follows the fascination [of men] with ancient Egypt from antiquity until 1881, tracing the recovery of ancient Egypt and its impact on the human imagination in a saga filled with intriguing mysteries, great discoveries, and scholarly creativity” (flap text). It is a book that the Egyptological world and, surely, the world at large was waiting for for a long time. It fills a gap that was getting bigger as

time passed by. For the first time, the history of the pioneers of Egyptology and their work has been assembled and written down in easy and pleasant to read prose, giving us insight into bygone days which, I am sure, a lot of present day scientists would do much for to be part of, if only briefly. These were the days of major discoveries, with the science we now call ‘Egyptology’ being established and developed. The author not only discusses the well-known pioneers but also those that, accidentally or not, are less well-known. Moreover, Thompson is honest and does not ignore the less pleasant sides of characters and their activities in these early days. Finally, this comprehensive book is very

well written and easy to read.... once started, it is difficult to put down. Perhaps a bit more attention could have been paid to one aspect of, especially, the formative period of Egyptology, namely the importance of dealers in antiquities, such as the Tano family. Possibly more about this aspect will be included in the second volume. Not dealt with here, since the book tells the story of the development of the science called 'Egyptology', are the "Outsiders [who] have long attributed to the Middle East, and especially to ancient Egypt, meanings that go way beyond the rational and observable" (flap text). Such alternative views have been, and perhaps remain, of little influence on Egyptology as science. They are, nonetheless, of great importance as factors contributing to the increasing popularity of Egyptology with a wider audience and are, therefore, still connected to the primary discourse. Fortunately, Derricourt published his "exploration of how its [Egypt's] past has been creatively interpreted by later ages" in his "Antiquity Imagined", which would be a nice addition to "Wonderful Things". Perhaps it is still possible to read it before the second part of "Wonderful Things" appears. In all, the first volume of the "Wonderful Things" trilogy is a very good buy and a perfect Christmas gift!

Thompson, J. 2015. *Wonderful Things. A History of Egyptology. 1: From Antiquity to 1881.* - Cairo, AUC Press. 352 pp. Hardbound. ISBN 9789774165993. \$39.95. <http://www.aucpress.com/p-4927-wonderful-things.aspx>

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