There are so few good historical novels written about Ancient Egypt that this is a very welcome book indeed. Jamie Buxton has managed, within an adventure story, to give a real feel of life in Ancient Egypt, in particular how the gods ruled every aspect of life, and has chosen the period when Nefertiti was Queen. The boy, hero of the story whose real name we never know, is living with the people who plucked him out of the River Nile as a baby and set him to work in the inn they now run. He has a particular gift for modelling clay which is crucial to the part he will play in the story. Their own little daughter, Imi, is the favourite but the boy adores her. Sent to collect her after a new guest comes to the inn, he overhears a threatening conversation. The Quiet Gentleman, as the new guest comes to be known, involves the boy in the plot he is hatching. Holding Imi hostage the man takes her and the boy on a river voyage to the new city the King is building. King Akenaten has changed the gods the Egyptians worship and is building new palaces and a large pyramid for his burial. Thutmose the court modeller has begun a bust of the Queen and the boy is brought into the court by the Quiet Gentleman to use his gift to finish it and thereby get into the palace. But first the boy needs to see the Queen. The plot thickens and the story ends with the Quiet Gentleman, Imi and the boy being walled up in the King’s new tomb in the Valley of the Kings!

Jamie Buxton does not try to imagine how the Egyptians might speak and thus avoids the pitfall this can cause. He has developed his own quirky style which suits the story so well. There are twists and turns in the adventure with plenty of historical detail which gives a splendid picture of life at the time. The superstition and god-like reverence for the King come through very clearly, and the desert, the pyramids and the River Nile make a fascinating backdrop. The boy is a strong character with a human love for Imi, and real fear in the situations he finds himself in, but also shows great courage.

This is a very good novel indeed, fun to read, and great care has been taken with the design too: small silhouettes at the beginning of each chapter and different fonts for the chapter heading. There is also a very good cover by Robert M. Ball with the head of Queen Nefertiti on the back.