

MPM

a bulletin on the doings and undoings of
Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels
Issue 37
Summer/Fall 2001
Kristen Whitbread, Editor

The Amelia Peabody Books

By Elizabeth Peters

In chronological order:
Crocodile on the Sandbank
Curse of the Pharaohs
The Mummy Case
Lion in the Valley
Deeds of the Disturber
The Last Camel Died at Noon
The Snake, the Crocodile, and the Dog
The Hippopotamus Pool
Seeing a Large Cat
The Ape Who Guards the Balance
The Falcon at the Portal
He Shall Thunder in the Sky
Lord of the Silent

also look for:

mpmbooks.com

MPM: Mertz ● Peters ● Michaels

The official Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels website

by Margie Knauff & Lisa Speckhardt

APPEARANCES

Saturday, March 23	Virginia Festival of the Book Charlottesville, VA	Keynote Luncheon Speaker for "Mystery Day"
Sunday, April 14	Hershey Public Library National Library Week	2pm - Talk, discussion, and booksigning If you are interested in attending, please contact the library as they have a 200 seat auditorium and anticipate a full house

INTERVIEWS/ARTICLES

Tavernier-Courbin, Jacqueline. "Sleuthing and Excavating in Egypt: Elizabeth Peters's Humor." Thalia: Studies in Literary Humor. Canada: University of Ottawa, 2000, Volume 20, Nos. 1&2.

PUBLISHING

THE GOLDEN ONE	April 2002	Hardcover	Avon Mystery
Lord of the Silent	April 2002	paperback	Avon Mystery

other Elizabeth Peters paperbacks recently released by Avon:

The Copenhagen Connection
Devil May Care
The Dead Sea Cipher
Summer of the Dragon
Camelot Caper
The Love Talker
Ape Who Guards the Balance
He Shall Thunder in the Sky

MPM

Another holiday season--and this one overshadowed by tragedy and war. I've written about a number of villains in my time, and I am tolerably well acquainted with the checkered history of the human race; but I never hear or read about events like those of September 11 without a sense of incredulity. "How can anyone do such a thing?" I'll never understand it. Of one thing I am certain, however: ill-will and cruelty are found in all nations, all ethnic groups and all periods of history. The world's great religions have inspired kindness and self-sacrifice in millions, but each of them has also spawned a few fanatics. To exemplify groups of people as featureless enemies is the surest way to bigotry. That state of mind led to the attacks on New York and Washington, and it is one we must continue to fight, in ourselves as well as in others.

Okay, enough sermonizing. The good news--I am vain enough to assume it is good news--is that The Golden One will be available a month ahead of schedule--April 2, 2002, to be precise. I've finished several sets of revisions, and the manuscript is now at the printer's. I have one last chance to change things, when I get the page proofs, and I will probably continue to nitpick--I always do--but essentially the book is DONE. My English publishers, Constable-Robinson, plan to publish at the same time, I believe. The paperback of *Lord of the Silent* will also appear on April 2. I must warn you, you're in for a shock when you see the cover art. Somebody at the publisher's decided the older covers were too....something...and that this would appeal to a wider audience. I will be interested in your opinions, and will withhold my own so as not to prejudice you. Avon continues to reprint a number of the older Peters titles. See the list above.

We are still working on the Amelia compendium, a process complicated by various computer problems. So what else is new? It's coming along. Maybe next fall? I am also revising *Red Land Black Land*. It's coming along. Maybe...

We have been somewhat distracted by Harry Potter of late. I've seen the film and I loved it. The complaints of some critics that it stuck too closely to the book was precisely why I and millions of kids did love it. If I could ever find a producer who would do as much for the Amelia books I would lower my ban on film options. I've seen too many hideous screen travesties of good books (no false modesty here) to trust Hollywood.

There have been a few other HP distractions, but I am somewhat embarrassed to mention them. I will only say that to Kristen's job description, which includes a lot of bizarre activities, must now be added Helping Barbara Make Lego. Incidentally, if your children and grandchildren don't own the Harry Potter books, they are "must" presents in my opinion. The film is super, but it is no substitute for the books.

So enjoy your holiday, whatever it may be: Christmas, Hannukah, Eid, Kwanzaa or the winter solstice--anything that celebrates the brighter side of the human spirit, kindness, tolerance, and peace.

Peace is not won by those who fiercely guard their differences but by those who with open minds and hearts seek out connections.

Katherine Paterson, *The Spying Heart*

If I read a book that impresses me, I have to take myself firmly in hand before I mix with other people; otherwise they would think my mind rather queer.

Renate Ogilvie: My grand aunt Lena Eckenstein was one of Prof. Petrie's 'young ladies' who was part of his excavations in Palestine, and in particular, Egypt, around the turn of the century.

One of my treasured heirlooms is her private photo album of Egypt with my favourite photograph of her wearing - not Turkish trousers like Amelia - but a long-sleeved muslin shift and knee length workmen's boots. Family history has it that she worked occasionally disguised as a man to avoid offending the locals.

There is also a photo of Prof. Petrie's young son, suggesting that she was on close personal terms with Petrie and the dreaded Hilda, but when, years prior, she had mentioned over dinner at home in London that Hilda was pregnant she was sent from table by my great grandmother. Too shocking.

Later she became a feminist icon when she wrote her magnificent study of monastic women. Her main point was that, once the monasteries had been destroyed by Cromwell, there was no refuge for women of talent left and women disappeared in the households of men. Like Amelia, she had high hopes for this to change in the 20th century.

MPM Fascinating! I love hearing from readers who have stories like this to tell!

Walt Socha: I have read all the Amelia books.... One thing I have been having trouble with is the ages of the characters and the calendar year. Is there a published timeline giving the ages, book title, and year? I am never sure of Ramses' age!

KDW: The compendium MPM mentioned will include a more detailed timeline. In the meantime...

- 1884-85 Crocodile on the Sandbank [Ramses was born in 1887 at the end of their third season at Amarna]
- 1892-93 Curse of the Pharaohs
- 1894-95 Mummy Case
- 1895-96 Lion in the Valley
- 1896 (summer) Deeds of the Disturber
- 1897-98 The Last Camel Died at Noon
- 1898-99 The Snake, the Crocodile, and the Dog
- 1899-1900 The Hippopotamus Pool
- 1903-04 Seeing a Large Cat
- 1906-07 The Ape Who Guards the Balance
- 1911-12 The Falcon at the Portal
- 1914-15 He Shall Thunder in the Sky
- 1915-16 Lord of the Silent

Andre Jackson [Regarding He Shall Thunder in the Sky]: In 1914 the Lancashire Regiment was No. 47. No. 42 was, still is, and had long been the famous Black Watch.

MPM Despite the fact that I had two reliable sources for my information, this just proves the truth of my famous saying: "Somewhere out there is somebody who knows more about any given subject than I do."

Megan Stoner: In chapter four of Deeds of the Disturber you present a snatch of a particularly poetic version of the "Hymn to Osiris":

His Sister was his protector,
She who drives off the foe
Who foils the deeds of the disturber
By the power of her utterance.
The clever-tongued, whose speech fails not.
Admirable in the words of command
Mighty Isis, who protected...

I would dearly love to know who translated this..., if the whole hymn was translated and rendered thus, and if so, where I can procure a copy for myself. It is sublime.

MPM The translation is by Miriam Lichtheim (with a few alterations of my own.) Vol. II of her Ancient Egyptian Literature published by the University of California.

Karen Downing: [Having noticed "too many coincidences" in the use of the name Ed Whitbread in a number of MPM's books, she writes...] I am consumed with 'satiabile curiosity. Is Ed Whitbread the no-good teenage son of Kristen? Possibly her bastard of a husband (hopefully ex-), who makes a bad enemy? Or (for her sake, I hope it's neither of the above) maybe just a relative of your assistant...one whom it's fun to tease by putting him in your stories as a bad guy (or at least a pompous ass) so he can see his name in print?

KDW Will the real Ed Whitbread please stand up?

MPM It would take too long to explain the origins of Ed. If you are a dedicated mystery reader you will encounter him again in the books of some of my friends.

Lauren Navarro: My mom was reading A Thousand Miles up the Nile..., a journal of Amelia Edwards' travels along the Nile. She had a dahabeeyah called the Philae like the one that Amelia Peabody had in Crocodile on the Sandbank and the two captains even shared the same name: Hassan. I was wondering if this was purely coincidence or if you actually base your novels on the "adventures" of Amelia Edwards.

MPM A Thousand Miles up the Nile is a classic and one of my favorite books. I did borrow Amelia's first name and the name of her dahabeeyah, but Amelia Edwards' subsequent career was quite unlike Amelia's.

Monelle Malkine Richmond: It was with great excitement that I recently read your account of Roukhomovsky and the Tiara of Saitaphernes in Street of Five Moons. I grew up hearing this fascinating story as my grandfather, who was from Odessa, was responsible for bringing

Roukhomovsky to Paris to claim authorship of the Tiara. In my family's version, Roukhomovsky was a hero (and so, of course, was my grandfather). It never occurred to me that he was ever considered a forger! From what I have read, Roukhomovsky must have been an extraordinarily talented goldsmith. It seems a shame that one hundred years later, virtually no one has ever heard of him....

MPM I found the [Roukhomovsky] story fascinating - and to hear it from someone who was personally involved (if at second-remove!) was wonderful. No one really believed he set out to deceive anyone. He was indeed a talented craftsman.

KDW We occasionally mention *KMT: A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt* because it always includes a number of interesting articles for Egyptology buffs. The current volume, Volume 12, No. 4 "The 12th Anniversary Issue", includes the article: "An Accurate Description of What Has Never Occurred: A Select Annotated Bibliography of Contemporary Egyptology-Themed Fiction" by John M. Adams. If you are perpetually looking for good fiction based on Ancient Egypt - Adams does a very thorough job of listing and reviewing the current fiction in this genre.

K. Kemp sent a few lines which included her vision of MPM at work: Barbara Mertz stared at her computer monitor..... She wore a comfortable Egyptian robe that had colorful embroidery down the centre and a pair of matching, heel strapped sandals. She often wore this costume to place herself in Egypt.

KDW Since I am the "Johnny on the spot", as it were - I felt it my professional duty to share a candid picture of the writer at work. In addition, during the widespread angst over Falcon at the Portal, MPM received the following suggestion from a reader: Stop interfering in the characters' lives - stand back like a proud mother, and let them get on with their own thing. Little did that reader know...

Discussing Nefret's



"I really think you ought to MPM hard at work on

get moving on the book, Night Train to Memphis Ramses, the deadline is just (She carefully selects each

plans for the next



book.



around

the corner."

costume to serve as an inspiration for the cats.)

"There is no denying the fact that writers should be read but not seen. Rarely are they a win-some sight."

Edna Ferber, *A Kind of Magic* (1963)

MPM is clearly the exception to this....

As for butter versus margarine, I trust cows more than chemists.

Joan Gussow, in *New York Times* (1986)

There is something dishonest about a sweetless holiday. In our time-honored tradition of avoiding such an eventuality, I offer you "The Cookie Recipe". (In our other time-honored tradition of trying to get out of doing too much complicated work, I offer you the "box-cake cookie") We are actually quite picky when it comes to chocolate so we were surprised at how good this was - not to mention fast and easy!

Chocolate Chocolate-Chip

1 Box Duncan Hines Devil's Food Cake Mix

(want it richer? add 1 tab. instant coffee OR 3 tab. cocoa powder)

2 large eggs

1 stick butter melted (1/2 c.)

1/4 c. brown sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

Semisweet Chocolate Bits - about 1 cup

Chopped Pecans - about 1 cup

(I am also told this is just as good with toffee bits but we haven't tried that yet.)

Mix everything together (it will be thick) and drop by spoonfuls onto baking sheets - don't grease insulated sheets. Bake for 10 minutes at 350 until it begins to wrinkle like a chocolate chip cookie.

Adjust the time as necessary (for crispier cookies leave in longer). Ours never last longer than the day we bake them. However, if you find yourself with some left after the first day, they will stay chewy if they are stored with a piece of bread in a closed container.

MPM

From time to time some of you send me nice little presents. While I greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness, I would much rather you instead send a contribution to a charity. Three of the ones that I have supported for some time are Oxfam, the Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association (RAWA), and Amnesty International.

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