

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, September 8 Festival of the Book Library of Congress
(check the webpage for more details - we haven't received a schedule as of yet)

INTERVIEWS/ARTICLES

Sunday, June 17 article by MPM

Washington Post BookWorld
"Summer Reading" pg3
"The Writing Life"

Sunday, July 22 interview and photos

The Baltimore Sun
"Home & Family: Focus on Gardening"
"Plotting with Nature"

5N

PUBLISHING

The Copenhagen Connection November 2001 paperback A v o n

Mystery

Devil May Care September 2001 paperback A v o n

Mystery

The Dead Sea Cipher July 2001 paperback A v o n

Mystery

other Elizabeth Peters paperbacks recently released by Avon:

Summer of the Dragon

Camelot Caper

The Love Talker

Ape Who Guards the Balance

He Shall Thunder in the Sky

Cold! If the thermometer had been an inch longer we'd all have frozen to death.

Mark Twain quoted in *Mark Twain and I*, Opie Read

MPM

By the time you read this, if all goes as expected, the new Amelia will be in the hands of my editor. That's not the end of it. Trish will send the manuscript back to me with her suggestions and criticisms; I will rewrite and rework and return the manuscript, which will then pass on to the copy editor, whose job it is to mark punctuation, correct my grammar, and check for consistency--not only of spelling, which is no small feat with the Amelia saga, but of internal references--no blue eyes on one page and

green later on. This hard working individual also catches errors that may have slipped past Trish and me, brilliant as we are. Erika has been my copy-editor for years, so she is familiar with my eccentricities. You have no idea how infuriating it is to receive a manuscript back from a new copy-editor who takes it upon herself to change punctuation and even vocabulary!

By the time Erika finishes it will be early December. I will deal with her corrections and send the (now dog-eared) manuscript back to Trish. We should have printed galleys by January, and then, guess what? I go over them with a fine-tooth comb. If you think I will be sitting idle all those months, you are mistaken. Red Land Black Land is in process of revision and Kristen and I are still working on the compendium. And I hope to sneak off to Egypt for a few weeks.

We've changed the title of the new "Amelia". It will be The Golden One, not The Place of Truth. Sorry about that. We all liked the original title, but I've an old-fashioned notion that the title should have something to do with the plot, and I simply couldn't work the Valley of the Kings (the Place of Truth, to the ancient Egyptians) into it. The Golden One is the goddess Hathor, as some of you know, and she does come into it. There's a tantalizing hint....

Thanks to Tim and Kristen and their energetic son, "the Weeder," the garden is doing all right, though it's been very hot and dry lately. Those of you on the net may want to check the Baltimore Sun homepage. They did a very nice story about the garden, with some elegant photographs.

I've been in touch with many of my fellow travellers from last year's "Amelia Peabody Expedition," to my great pleasure. All your letters are appreciated and enjoyed. The worst way of reaching me, I am sorry to say, is through my publishers. Despite the best efforts of many people, letters sent to me via Avon Morrow-Harper Collins often don't get forwarded. Pass the word - write me via the Post Office Box, given here and on my website. And many thanks to all of you who send me things. I love getting packages, and I always respond. If you don't get a proper thank you it is because I never received the parcel.

Hope you have had a good summer. Keep cool.



Oh, it's 40 below in the winter,
And it's 20 below in the fall,
It rises to zero in springtime,
And we ain't got no summer at all.

Ditty about the Canadian seasons, *The Globe and Mail*, 10 Nov. 1979.

Elizabeth Edwards: America B.C. by Barry Fell speaks of hieratic Egyptian hieroglyphs in the Micmac Indian writings. It says, in part, "these hieroglyphs retain, in Micmac, their original Egyptian meanings and may still be read by any competent Egyptologist." -Any comments??

MPM: Barry Fell? I guess I don't know any competent Egyptologists, because nobody has been

able to find those hieroglyphs in Micmac. Fell's theories are lunatic fringe.

Brooke Kelly: I was on e-bay looking at Amelia Peabody books and I saw one with a foreword by you describing how you came up with the character of Ramses and the game/trick you played/are playing on your readers. Which book and edition was this?

KDW Crocodile on the Sandbank and Curse of the Pharaohs were published in a limited edition by The Armchair Detective Library with an introduction by Elizabeth Peters in 1990. They were bound volumes which included a gold signature engraved in the cover and a "portrait" of the author. They are out of print.

Meagan Healy: I noted the Emerson family does meet various historical personages. Amelia portrays them, in her way, without any fanfare or glorious propaganda. Her descriptions seem to be almost how they really were. For example, Mr. Lawrence is "short Mr. Lawrence" who "would bore Ramses with his chatter"....

Have the Emersons ever met Gertrude Bell? Apparently this British Victorian woman, self-made archaeologist and frequent visitor to Arabia, was working in the Cairo Intelligence office with Lawrence approximately the same time that the Emersons were in Egypt. My opinion of Bell is mixed. She was a Victorian woman, and yet was quite outspoken, quite learned...the first woman to have received the kind of degree she did at Oxford. But she carries the overbearingly strong belief of the "British superiority at home and in other parts of the world", and also assisted in the Anti-Suffragist movement in Britain, especially against the Pankhursts. I find those sentiments difficult to reconcile with her otherwise seemingly progressive attitudes. However, to be fair, no one's life is completely black and white. One tends to be comfortable with what one grows up with, including patriotism and living in a man's world.

MPM I refer to Gertrude Bell in a forthcoming book, but I don't know that she will appear in person. Amelia wouldn't care for her - not only was she (as you observed) anti-feminist but she was one of the intellectual imperialists all the Emersons detested.

Kayla Beach: What is your favorite book, and who is your favorite author?

MPM I don't have one favorite author, I have dozens. Jane Austen, Terry Pratchett, Loren Eiseley, Charles Dickens, J.K. Rowling..

Henri Hartman: I too love kerkedah. I've found that brewing Stash Ruby Mist tea really strong and adding lots of sugar produces a similar, if not identical, beverage. Give it a try and let me know what you think - I haven't been to Egypt since 1989, and maybe I've forgotten what it really tastes like!

MPM Thanks for the tip, which we hereby pass on. I'll try it when I run out of kerkedah, which I won't for a while, since all my friends have brought me back bags of the dried hibiscus blossoms!

Suzanne Ward requests: the source of the following lines from Be Buried in the Rain: Down, down in the darkness of the grave/Gently they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave./I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

MPM “Dirge without Music” by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Alex Lynch: How long have you been planning Sethos’ relationship with the Emersons? Did you know Ramses was the subject of Nefret’s nightmares from the beginning? Can you proffer an estimate of when Recorded Books will release Lord of the Silent?

KDW Sethos’ relationship to the Emersons was determined prior to the trilogy in Lion in the Valley. Yes, Ramses was the subject of Nefret’s nightmares from the beginning. (Hang around with MPM long enough and she’ll give away the entire plot of the next book - or in this case, the next four books - before she even puts it down on paper. I used to run into another room with my hands over my ears yelling, “Don’t tell me! I want to be surprised!” It didn’t actually work because she simply waited until I was hanging upside down rummaging through files, or driving her to a destination four hours away. I wouldn’t want to claim she waited until I was trapped, however....) As for Lord of the Silent and Recorded Books - it is available right now!

Felicity Danielle: I was curious as to what happened with Kevin O’Connell and Miss Minton. Did they get married? Are they living happily ever after?

While I’m on the subject of Irish journalists, there are two words that Kevin uses I have not been able to discover the meaning of: Begorrah...and Spalpeen.... Could you kindly direct me to the meaning of these words? That way, when I call my brothers spalpeens, I’ll know exactly what I’m referring to.

KDW Kevin O’Connell is married; he and his wife attended David and Lia’s wedding. However, you will have to read Lord of the Silent to find out what happened to Margaret Minton. Begorrah means “by God!”. Spalpeen, in this case, means “worthless person”. Both are derived from Gaelic.

Harriet Kelley: I notice [the reader on a recording of Crocodile] pronounces it “PEE BAH di” whereas my sister is quite sure it should be “PEE bdi” rather like “puberty”. I prefer the printed page, I take things in through my eye better than my ear, but then we run the risk of not knowing how something is to be pronounced (a young nephew was reading a book about Taliesin, calling it “ta LYE sin”, and when I pointed out it should be “tolly A zin” he politely told me he had started reading it his way and if I didn’t mind too much he’d keep on pronouncing it thusly.) On the other hand, the ear deceives, without a script. My husband asked me who is this “my sparrow” she keeps talking about, and I showed him the text, “Maspero”.

MPM I don’t know which recording of Crocodile you heard; the only ones I will listen to are by

Barbara Rosenblat, for Recorded Books. I think she's superb and so do most of my readers. Pronunciations differ from period to period and nationality to nationality.

Marilyn J. Gambill: Was there really a Professor Junker that was an Egyptologist? My maiden name was Junker, which is not that common. My not too far distant ancestors came from Germany in the 1800's.

KDW Junker was a distinguished Egyptologist active from the early 1900's until his death in 1962. His most famous accomplishment was the systematic excavation/recording of the Giza Mastaba field from which we derive much of our understanding of the Old Kingdom.

MPM Wouldn't it be fun if you were related to Herr Dr. Junker?

Suzanne Boulos: I have just finished reading He Shall Thunder in the Sky and found a few discrepancies: gooseberry jam in Egypt? They don't grow here. Usual jams - date, fig, strawberry, apricot, or marmalade.

MPM I appreciate your "discrepancies" Many of them are typographical errors, some are well-taken - but in my own defense, may I say that gooseberry jam was imported, in tins. The British had to have their own delicacies.

Lindy Schwartz: I read an interview on the internet that mentioned t-shirts with the saying "Another Shirt Ruined" on them. I would love to purchase one if any are available.

MPM The t-shirts were done by my publisher for people in the business; I'm afraid they are all gone.

Jill Bisker: I've been reading John Wilson's book, The Culture of Ancient Egypt. In this book he ascertains that there were blond Egyptians. You seem to disagree. From his text I quote, "One assumes that such a blond strain was introduced into Egypt from the Tjemeh-Libyans." (pg 97-98) It's such a little thing but I really like to know facts. It's probably one of those things scholars disagree on....

In Be Buried in the Rain I am a little mystified. I kept picturing the bones dressed in the calico dress, but of course they wouldn't be connected. So, whoever dug up the body must have jumbled all the bones up in the dress to move it. How could they get all the pieces and would they have taken the trouble to set them in the proper order?

MPM Blond Egyptians are still questionable, in my opinion. The Libyan connection - maybe. But every question in Egyptology is a subject for debate.

P. S. I've always believed the bones got into the road by themselves!

"I am told that the Inuit have some sixty words for snow...for different kinds of snow. That doesn't surprise me; they see a lot of it. I live

considerably south of the tree line, but even I have seventeen words for snow — none of them usable in public."

Arthur Black, broadcaster, *Basic Black: The Wit and Whimsy of Arthur Black*, 1981.

KDW

I will not discuss the weather though it is probably on most of your minds, not to mention blanketing your bodies, your houses, your gardens.... It is certainly blanketing mine since my brain has ceased to function beyond instinctive habits such as breathing, the fans have worked overtime in the evening to the point that flames actually shot out from the motor of one, the cats have become disgruntled panting heaps, exhibiting their anger in a fragrant territorial manner, and the garden, whose parched throat is beyond screaming, has whimpered into brittle submission. I don't want air-conditioning, you understand; I want rain. So, I am not going to discuss the weather; I am going to do a rain dance in the hope that one of the weather gods will take notice that the only ones satisfied with current conditions are the butterflies. I have seen them everywhere this year - possibly because even the nectar is drying up and they have to go far afield to find anything resembling moisture. However, it is a pleasure to watch them dance and sail upon the morning air (one cannot call it "breeze") in a frenzied journey from flower to flower. At least one kingdom is making the most of this unrelenting heat. With any luck, after my rain dance, we will all be able to dance and sail upon morning breezes in the garden. (Yes, nosy neighbors will take notice, but hey, I'm the one doing the rain dance; seems to me, the least you can do is celebrate with a bit of panache.) Barring that, perhaps we can simply reenter the garden and pull the weeds...and the brown stalks that used to be flowers. In the meantime, I hope you appreciate all the quotations I have sprinkled upon you for your cooling pleasure.

It's raining fish-hooks and hammer handles!

Laura Ingalls Wilder, *On the Banks of Plum Creek*

I may have forgotten to specify - Not all the rain at once, please.
(*These mortals - can they never be satisfied?*)