RESEARCH

Peter Dorman

Peter Dorman was invited to give a series of lectures at Macquarie University in Sydney in August 2001 as part of a symposium on the reign of Hatshepsut, presented jointly with Gay Robins of Emory University. Similar programs were given at Adelaide and at Monash University in Melbourne, and in all these cities he was able to visit the surprisingly fine and varied Egyptian collections that have been amassed Down Under. In April 2002 he also moderated one of the sessions of the Chicago-Johns Hopkins Theban workshop, held in Baltimore for this its fourth year, the theme of which was devoted to “Thebes in the Late Period.”

An article on a block in the Oriental Institute, entitled “The Biographical Inscription of Ptahshepses from Saqqara: A Newly Identified Fragment,” forthcoming in the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, matches this piece to the mastaba facade of the High Priest of Ptah Ptahshepses at the British Museum and reconsiders the biography of this high official and the chronology of the end of the Fourth Dynasty in light of contemporary documents. Two other contributions were finalized as well: an article on “Family Burial and Commemoration,” to appear later this year in the proceedings of a British Museum symposium on the Theban necropolis; and a chapter entitled “The Early Reign of Thutmose III: an Unorthodox Mantle of Coregency,” to be included in a new volume on the reign of Thutmose III. During the past year he completed his commitments as a reviewer and contributor to the on-line listings on Egyptian history and religion for the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Dorman has now turned to a long-delayed project, the publication of the excavation records of the Metropolitan Museum’s Egyptian Expedition at Sheikh Abd el Qurna in western Thebes. The volume, which is a companion book to his earlier work on the funerary complex of Senenmut, is devoted to the intact burials and hillside deposits discovered on the slopes below Senenmut’s tomb chapel, including the burial chamber of his parents, Ramose and Hatnofer, the objects of which are presently shared between Cairo and New York.

Walter Farber

Walter Farber started the academic year on a very pleasant note. Having been invited to the Netherlands’ Institute of Advanced Studies in Wassenaar, he joined an international group of historians of medicine, classicists, and Assyriologists in a colloquium called “Rationality and Irrationality in Babylonian and Greek Medicine.” He presented a paper on the concept of contagiousness, combining evidence from Old Babylonian letters (mostly from the royal archives of Mari) and later ritual texts. His presentation entitled “How to Marry a Disease: Epidemics, Contagion, and a Magic Ritual Against the Hand of the Ghost” led to a lively discussion of an otherwise often overlooked aspect of “rationality” in Mesopotamian science and is going to be published in the proceedings of the symposium. Otherwise, Wassenaar
proved to be a great place to meet old friends, make new ones, and have as good a time as any scholarly meeting can possibly provide.

From Wassenaar, his wife Gertrud Farber and he traveled directly to the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Helsinki, where they restricted their scholarly activities to listening — one full week of “Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East” was almost more than one could digest, but again the familiar atmosphere of the Rencontre and many new contacts made the trip more than worthwhile. On the way back through Norway, they experienced the midnight sun at the North Cape, did some mountain hiking in ever-changing weather conditions, and on really rainy days indulged in medieval stave churches.

Back home in Chicago, still another invitation was waiting for Farber, this time to the Fourth International Colloquium of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, held in Münster in February 2002. The topic, “Culture of Knowledge in the Ancient Near East: Philosophy of Life, Sciences, Techniques, Technologies,” brought an interesting group of scholars from different subfields together. His contribution on the role Lamaštu incantations played in the Babylonian curriculum and in medical practice elicited some stimulating comments and discussion with colleagues. On the social level, he especially enjoyed the opportunity to meet some German students and younger scholars whom he, as an “expatriate,” had until then known by name only.

Farber’s new tasks as curator of the Oriental Institute’s tablet collection brought another interesting aspect into a never-dull life. One of the first tablets he handled after his appointment proved to be an intriguing Sumerian text with incantations used in the ritual investiture of a novice priest in the temple. An edition of this text that has combined Gertrud Farber’s Sumerological prowess with his own experience in magical texts is now in press.

Finally, he would like to mention — with thanks going to his students — a course he taught in the spring quarter of 2002. Building on the evidence collected for his Wassenaar paper, he and his students read all the Akkadian letters (from Old Akkadian through Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian) dealing with disease and medical procedures. Rarely has he seen a group of students so eager and able to follow a topic that has been close to his heart for a long time. He has every hope that the students enjoyed their work just as much as he did!