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In *The Adventurous Life of Amelia B. Edwards: Egyptologist, Novelist, Activist,* Margaret B. Jones examines multiple aspects of this nineteenth-century cultural icon as well as shedding light on her little-known private existence as one in pursuit of fulfilling same-sex relationships. Jones is a writer of feminist biographies, and her enthusiastic engagement with her remarkable subject shines through every page. Edwards emerges as having been a creative polymath and pioneer: a musician; an artist and illustrator; a weaver of ghost tales; an intrepid explorer; a travel writer; a self-taught linguist and reader of hieroglyphs; a hugely popular lecturer; and a forceful campaigner, not only for the excavation of ancient sites and preservation of Egyptian artefacts, but also for the rights of women.

There are so many strands to Edwards's adventurous life that Jones was faced with the editorial decision of whether to arrange her book chronologically or whether to allow it to unfold along thematic lines. She went for the latter option, which has the advantage of facilitating access to readers wanting to learn about previously under-researched facets of Edwards, such as her domestic arrangements, friendships, and literary career. It also emphasises how Edwards's experience in one field fed into another, so that her fiction writing informed her travel writing and historical narratives and vice versa, and her knowledge of the comparative independence of women in ancient Egypt was linked to her support for female suffrage.

The one downside to Jones's ordering of chapters is that it inevitably leads to some temporal gymnastics, and the comparatively late discussion on Edwards's novelistic successes including *Barbara's History* (1864) and *Half a Million of Money* (1866) somewhat interrupts the Egyptian endeavours. Edwards's very last novel, *Lord Brackenbury* (1880), was published just as she was starting to promote the idea of a fund for exploring Egypt, discussed in the

previous chapter. That literary investigation is immediately followed by her setting sail for an Egypt-focussed American lecture tour almost a decade later in 1889, but this sequencing issue is a very minor niggle, and Jones's Appendix with Edwards's biographical timeline more than compensates.

Jones's opening chapter discusses Edwards's early life as a home-tutored only child of liberal parents with a well-stocked library where she became besotted with adventurous tales by James Fenimore Cooper, Captain Frederick Marryat, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and devoured J. Gardiner Wilkinson's six-volume edition of *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,* which would prove a formative and long-lasting influence. Jones explores the family's move to Islington, the recognition of youthful Amelia's talent at drawing by George Cruikshank, the renowned illustrator of Dickens's novels, and her frustration at her parents' decision to decline his offer to mentor her. Edwards was obliged to develop her artistic ability independently.

Edwards's independence is a thread that runs throughout Jones's book. Edwards broke off a confessedly "ill suited" (7) heterosexual engagement with a Church connection and restricted her interaction with men to the platonic, despite rumours that she had been on the point of marrying her close friend, the engraver and artist Gustave Doré. By remaining single, she kept the freedom to travel, to earn, and to learn. She guaranteed herself financial and intellectual independence, although, as Jones emphasises, she was not emotionally independent, being tethered by powerful attachments to a series of women.

Jones describes Edwards's loves and losses and early travels by mule in the Dolomites where she honed her skills in creating word pictures and illustrative paintings of the landscapes and peoples she encountered. It resulted in the immensely popular *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* of 1873. Jones then moves on to consider the inspiration for what is unquestionably Edwards's most enduring work, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* of 1877, and Jones often cites Edwards's account of her life-changing voyage along Egypt's mighty river, her encounters with the pyramids, tombs and temples, and the archaeological and human legacies she observed in her nineteenth-century present.

Jones depicts Edwards as a time traveller reunited with "old half-forgotten friends" (42), whose images and activities on the tomb paintings were acutely familiar, prompting her to an ethical awareness that the mummies "were once living beings like ourselves" (44). Yet, in her travel memoir Edwards also admits to commoditising them. "We […] learned to rummage among dusty sepulchres with no more compunction that would have befitted a gang of professional body snatchers" (44). She confesses how she kept "fragments of spiced and bituminized humanity to be shown to visitors" (102). Neither Edwards nor Jones balk at acknowledging such contradictions because they never undermine the overriding message that Edwards was prominent in bringing pharaonic Egypt to life for a Western audience, disseminating knowledge of its ancient wide-ranging literary genres, artistic movements, and diverse ethnic groups. She achieved it through her tireless work founding the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society), her travel writing such as *Pharaohs, Fellahs and Explorers,* published in the year before her death, and her establishment of the first UK Chair in Egyptian Archaeology and Philology held by Flinders Petrie at University College London. She selected it as the earliest English university to grant full degrees to women.

Always alert to the feminism in Edwards's actions, Jones points to her foregrounding of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut in her research and public talks as "one of the most magnificent builder-sovereigns of Egypt" (72). Jones dedicates an entire chapter to Edwards's punishing tour of America where she addressed an estimated hundred thousand people, and the press reported her earnest support for "woman suffrage" (147). Jones's penultimate chapter deals with

Edwards's "quiet" campaigning for women's rights, anti-vivisection legislation and protection of birds alongside her exhausting work in the service of Egyptology. Jones concludes that this pioneering archaeologist and successful writer was an "intellectual chameleon" (158), who numbered among her admirers literary giants such as Edward Lear, Robert Browning, and Mark Twain, and stands alongside Florence Nightingale, Christina Rossetti, and Queen Victoria as worthy of the highest recognition. To the epithets of "Egyptologist, Novelist, Activist" in the book's subtitle, might also be added "Celebrity and Feminist". Jones is entirely successful in revivifying the "complex, enigmatic, multitalented woman" (167) that was Amelia Edwards.