

*Reimagining the Egyptian
Travel Narrative:
Amelia Edwards' A Thousand
Miles Up the Nile*

Patricia Murphy

Travel narratives became ubiquitous in the Victorian era, and accounts of Egypt stood among the most highly sought. To an extent, travel books displayed marked similarities, often focusing on manners and customs in their more general form and on discoveries achieved after grueling journeys in explorer versions. Not surprisingly, some volumes related lengthy journeys on Egypt's famed river, ever a source of fascination to European visitors. Yet *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile* by Amelia Edwards, first published in 1877 and updated in an 1888 edition, represents an especially noteworthy approach on multiple fronts. Setting Edwards' book apart from other texts is its massive research on contemporary findings, exhaustive information about sites bolstered by her scholarship, and abundant illustrations suggestive of professional expertise crafted by the author herself.¹ Edwards seemingly adopted the components deemed most beneficial in other travel writings, which she expanded and enhanced to produce an extraordinary volume that became a bestseller. Edwards' work does echo other travel narratives in some respects, such as a deep interest in ruins, compelling background material, and poetic descriptions of impressive scenes, but the text unfortunately also reveals immensely disturbing imperialist presumptions that generalized, derogated, and dehumanized modern Egyptians in comparison to their ancient forbears. On a more positive note, Edwards made a definitive and

influential entry into Egyptology, becoming a pioneer in a field dominated by men, and significantly helped to elevate it into a more rigorous discipline.² Although critics have noted the erudition and talent displayed in Edwards' study, the subject benefits from extensive scrutiny to articulate the highly impressive degree of research and artistry that shapes the tome.

Given the erudition of *A Thousand Miles*, Edwards' lack of formal schooling seems rather startling. Like other girls of the era, Edwards was not accorded the opportunity to become educated as boys could. Instead, Edwards' mother provided instruction to her precocious child, but such aid could not rise to the level of a more structured education.³ The scholarly acumen Edwards displays in the book derived from her own efforts to become knowledgeable in the varied facets of ancient Egypt and become, as archaeologist William Copley Winslow remarked, "many-sided as an Egyptologist."⁴ Her talents as a writer of numerous novels were redirected to write adeptly about the research she had conducted and the perceptive observations of antiquities she had made on the lengthy Nile voyage.⁵ The extensive work necessary to produce such an informed and sophisticated book required two years of dedicated immersion in research upon her return, as she recalls (x)⁶:

[...] the writer who seeks to be accurate, has frequently to go for his facts, if not actually to original sources (which would be the texts themselves), at all events to translations and commentaries locked up in costly folios, or dispersed far and wide among the pages of scientific journals and the transactions of learned societies. A date, a name, a passing reference, may cost hours of seeking. (xi)

A Thousand Miles not only enabled Edwards to demonstrate her intellectual acuity, but the book also provided a vehicle to help position Egyptology on a scientific level in the fledgling field during the nineteenth century.⁷

Five years after the first edition, Edwards cofounded the Egypt Exploration Fund, which sought to promote expeditions and excavations

by astute experts, and their findings would be published to expand the knowledge available to interested individuals.⁸ The organization received support from universities, museums, and other institutions, enabling the Fund to sponsor three expeditions in its early years. In addition to these achievements, Edwards shared her learning about antiquities in numerous essays and lectures, and she received honorary doctorates for her contributions to Egyptology. Edwards also cofounded the Society for the Protection of the Monuments of Ancient Egypt, even though she had collected numerous specimens for herself. Edwards traveled to the United States to give many lectures, which were later compiled into *Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers* (1891). Moreover, Edwards taught herself to read hieroglyphics, no small task, and she attained a high level of competency.⁹ Edwards also funded an Egyptology chair at London's University College, the nation's first such position.¹⁰

As critics have commented, *A Thousand Miles* represents an innovative approach to women's travel accounts, which is undoubtedly the case. As Paul and Janet Starkey put it, *A Thousand Miles* "marked a transition [...] in the history of women's travel writing" because it was not the typical personal story. They add that "Edwards uses the genre to assert her own authority in the field of scientific exploration."¹¹ Yet Edwards not only went beyond the conventional women's accounts, she created a narrative of stunning breadth that stands out among the array of travel volumes about Egypt, whether female- or male-authored.

Like *A Thousand Miles*, two Victorian travel volumes penned by prominent women included information about the ruins that they also encountered on Nile journeys. Lengthy accounts of ancient sites by Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau were carefully detailed and accompanied by important supplemental material, but the ruins did not receive the same degree of intensive, comprehensive attention that Edwards directed toward them through her capacious research and elaborate artwork. Nightingale's 1854 *Letters from Egypt*, printed for private circulation rather than a broad readership, included many lengthy depictions with religious, historical, and biographical information.

Occasionally an authority would be mentioned or a reference given, but only two small illustrations appear. Martineau's 1848 *Eastern Life, Present and Past* also incorporated significant facts about Egyptian history, spiritual heritage, and noteworthy personages, but the text contained no illustrations. A plethora of footnotes cite numerous sources, many found in *A Thousand Miles*, though Martineau's book offers considerably fewer references, most of which address Herodotus' writings. Certainly, Nightingale and Martineau provided valuable and insightful discussions, but the books do not reach the sweeping scope of *A Thousand Miles*, nor can the two authors match Edwards' impressive credentials.

The male archaeological experts and Egyptologists whose work Edwards repeatedly cites customarily maintained a narrow interest on their own discoveries and conclusions, rather than considering their field at large. These books certainly lacked the scholarly approach that characterizes *A Thousand Miles*. For example, Gaston Maspero's 1887 *Egyptian Archaeology*, which Edwards translated from French, concentrates on the specificities of edifices, temples, tombs, and related topics, rather than other professionals' discoveries or conclusions. Though *Egyptian Archaeology* is replete with illustrations, they are generally plain and often just schematics.

Following a different agenda, male explorers tended to direct their attention to the minutiae of their passages through unfamiliar country and the people with whom they engaged, as demonstrated in writings by two famed adventurers seeking the source of the Nile. Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke often favored landscape depictions and their impressions of non-Europeans during their time in Africa. As its title suggests, Speke's 1863 *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* reads like a catalogue of a day's activities, sharing information on such topics as difficulties, conflicts, skirmishes, and escapes. Although numerous illustrations appear, only a few were done by Speke himself, and footnotes are nearly nonexistent. Burton's *The Nile Basin* contains numerous references to perceived authorities and various publications, along with

many footnotes, but the sources were collected primarily to undermine Speke, with whom he became embroiled in a bitter controversy about the Nile's origin. A *Blackwood's* review claimed that Burton published the book "to discredit [...] the memory of a deceased fellow traveller."¹²

Authoritative Foundation

In his review of *A Thousand Miles*, John Addington Symonds spoke highly of Edwards' research endeavors. "That she has consulted the best authorities [...] is obvious," Symonds asserted, and he praised "her erudition [...] communicated with a fullness that implies familiarity with the subject."¹³ Calling the book "a trustworthy account," the *Athenaeum* similarly observed that Edwards "has read the principal recent works of Egyptologists on the subject of the temples and monuments she describes."¹⁴ In the *Saturday Review*, Edwards "succeeded in making herself the prophet of Egyptology."¹⁵ Edwards not only delved into voluminous research materials, she was fully cognizant of the latest developments in Egyptology. Pointing to her perspicacity with both established work and contemporaneous findings, Winslow, who served as the honorary secretary of the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) in the United States, commented that Edwards had "mastered the literature of research and exploration, and caught the freshest news of every discovery." He asked, "was she not born to be an Egyptologist?"¹⁶ Indeed, Winslow recollected that Erasmus Wilson, cofounder of the EEF, said that Edwards "is in the advance of the advanced authorities upon the results of the latest discoveries."¹⁷ Winslow, who authored *The Egypt of the Past* (1881) and received assistance from Edwards, further recalled her statement about her own writing that "I never put anything down as facts without having first gone to every reference on the subject."¹⁸ Designating Edwards as "the queen of Egyptology," Winslow revealed in his praise the gender inflections of Victorian culture in averring that "She was searching, investigating, logical for a woman in her deductions" and "knew the *whole* field of Egyptology better than any man, and no one could approach her word power to describe the field, on the side of history, art and exploration."¹⁹

More than fifty different texts are specified in *A Thousand Miles*, along with many other references to experts. Among the most-cited authorities is Egyptologist John Gardner Wilkinson, whose popular 1837 *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* decisively influenced Edwards in childhood. She recalls with affection in her narrative the well-known book, which held sway for decades and led to Wilkinson's knighthood: "I had read every line of the old six-volume edition over and over again," Edwards said. "I knew every one of the six hundred illustrations by heart" (415). With its range of topics such as monuments, religion, government, and history, the expansive volume gave Edwards a broad understanding of the past. Also periodically noted in *A Thousand Miles* were Wilkinson's *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians* and *The Topography of Thebes and General View of Egypt*. The productive Wilkinson additionally penned the *Hand-Book for Travellers in Egypt*, which highlighted a particular section of the Nile for discussions of cities, pyramids, and related topics.

Three French Egyptologists who were leaders in their field likewise appear frequently in *A Thousand Miles*, especially François Auguste Mariette, an archaeologist and prolific author on monuments. A tireless observer who visited pyramids, temples, necropolises, and other notable locales, Mariette established numerous dig sites around Egypt and made archaeological discoveries on behalf of the Louvre, to which he sent numerous artifacts. He eventually headed a new museum in Cairo, the Bulaq, which was devoted to antiquities, and he was respected to such a degree that he was elevated to the status of "bey." Edwards refers to nine of Mariette's texts, particularly about monuments. Like Mariette, Maspero wrote extensively on Egypt, covering not only its monuments but also its history, and Edwards referenced a half-dozen of his works. Maspero, who succeeded Mariette in his post as an overseer of Egyptian excavations, strove to curb illegal collection of artifacts, among other activities. Viscount Emmanuel de Rougé taught archaeology and Egyptology as a professor, served as curator of the Louvre's Egyptian section, and authored multiple books on such topics as tomb inscriptions, funeral rituals, hieroglyphics, and chrestomathy.

Other Europeans receive attention in Edwards' volume as well. For example, Heinrich Karl Brugsch, a German Egyptologist who had worked on excavations with Mariette and also was honored as a bey, headed the Egyptology department in Cairo. Like several other experts, Brugsch complemented his writings on monuments with other subjects, in his case history, demotic and hieroglyphic grammar, and ancient geography. Prussian Karl Lepsius, an Egyptologist and archaeologist, wrote a dozen volumes on monuments and produced a collection of letters from his travel.

Not surprisingly, considering her role with the Egyptian Exploration Fund, Edwards included in *A Thousand Miles* the work conducted under the organization's auspices. The initial emissary, Édouard Naville, a Swiss Egyptologist and archaeologist who published his memoirs, sought to forge biblical connections to Egypt in his work. He was deemed an "enterprising Egyptologist" in Edwards' book (403). Following Naville, Englishman William Flinders Petrie made numerous vital discoveries with his excavations at Tanis and elsewhere, which he recounted in his books along with his findings about pyramid construction. Edwards observes of his "standard work," *The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh*, that it "has for the first time placed a thoroughly accurate and scientific description of the Great Pyramid at the disposal of students" (15). Flinders Petrie additionally established a dating methodology for ancient pottery. He earned Edwards' fulsome support, and she eventually designated him the Egyptology professor at the chair she established at London's University College. The third exploration included both Naville and Flinders Petrie, along with Francis Llewellyn Griffith of Britain, who learned under the latter at an EEF excavation site. Although author of books on inscriptions, papyri, and religion, Griffith's texts were published after *A Thousand Miles* appeared.²⁰

Edwards' book additionally refers to travel memoirs related to Egyptology, besides those of Naville. Edwards acknowledged historian Jean Jacques Ampère's recollections of travel in Egypt and Nubia, orientalist Jean Louis Burckhardt's reflections on Nubia, and architectural

professional Quatremère de Quincy's discussion of Egyptian structures. Among historical texts garnering coverage in *A Thousand Miles* are antiquary Foster Zincke's recounting of Egypt in the time of the pharaohs and Egyptologist François Chabas' description of ancient history. Prominent officials at the British Museum also are noted in Edwards' volume. Orientalist Wallis Budge traveled extensively in search of Egyptian antiquities for the museum's collection and authored numerous books regarding Egyptology. Samuel Birch, who oversaw the antiquities section from what Edwards deemed "his cheerless official room at the British Museum" (181), produced among his many publications about Egypt a guide to the pertinent areas of the museum, which Edwards referenced along with his work on ancient pottery, Rameses, and hieroglyphics. In fact, Budge and Birch translated a hieroglyphic illustration in the two editions of *A Thousand Miles*, and Edwards communicated frequently with them.

Considering Edwards' own study of hieroglyphics, it is not unexpected that orientalist and pioneering Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion figured in *A Thousand Miles*. The famous translator of hieroglyphics and decipherer of the Rosetta Stone, Champollion described the ancient writing method in his 1824 *Précis*. He discovered many other hieroglyphic inscriptions when journeying in Egypt, and his Egyptian grammar and volume on monuments in Egypt and Nubia were published posthumously. Edwards refers to Champollion's letters from Egypt several times and frequently mentions his contributions to Egyptology.

A close acquaintance and fellow traveler of Champollion, Ippolito Rosellini garnered Edwards' approval for his copious artwork. A pioneer of Egyptology in Italy, Rosellini penned nine volumes on monuments with hundreds of illustrations, and Edwards draws attention to specific plates. Joseph Bonomi, another important illustrator who crafted hundreds of drawings over his career, receives Edwards' praise for "his admirable facsimiles" of sculptures (374), and he advised Edwards about a particular mold at the British Museum. Bonomi, who traveled with Rosellini and Wilkinson, aided Egyptologists by providing artwork for their texts,

including Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*. Cartographer Keith Johnston's maps of Egypt and Nubia gain mention as well. Moreover, Edwards on occasion reveals her knowledge of art in general and imagines how particular sites would be painted. Observing a village procession, for example, Edwards comments that "One longed for Gerome," the contemporary French painter who produced orientalist work, "to paint it on the spot" (205). A scenic river is "covered with ripples more playful and undulating than were ever modelled by" a famed painter of European landscapes (361).

Like Champollion, key figures such as Mariette, Maspero, Wilkinson, Lepsius, and Flinders Petrie surface throughout *A Thousand Miles* in connection with their discoveries, opinions, writings, and analyses. Numerous other experts are cited in passing as well. Among other exploits, Giovanni Battista Belzoni, an Italian archaeologist, sent an elaborate sarcophagus to England, which was "carved from a single block of the finest alabaster" with "hieroglyphic texts and several hundred figures" (445). Egyptologist Arthur Rhoné penned "an excellent and exact account" of "the long and vainly sought Serapeum" (54), a temple honoring the god Serapis. Paul Pierret's archaeological dictionary explains pertinent aspects of Egyptology. References to many other texts are interspersed in Edwards' account, including Emile Soldi's description of Egyptian sculpture, Edmond About's discussion of "le fellah" or Egyptian peasant, and Christian Bunsen's report on Egypt within universal history. Naturalist Richard Owen's suppositions on ethnology are presented, and Owen is elsewhere praised by Edwards because he "could no doubt" identify a mummy held at the Louvre "at a glance" (63). Another luminary, Charles Darwin, is acknowledged for an explanation of Nile rock in *Journal of Researches*. These examples provide only a glimpse of the scope of authoritative texts specified in *A Thousand Miles*. Moreover, multiple sources covering general topics include information relevant to Egypt on such subjects as Greek and Roman biographies (William Smith) and antiquities (Louis Vivien de Saint-Martin), human habitations throughout time (Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc), and architectural

developments (James Fergusson), along with translations of significant works and inscriptions.

Observations on contemporary Egyptians supplement Edwards' tome as well, notably orientalist Edward Lane's well-known *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. In its two volumes the book covered a host of interests, such as industry, music, dancers, serpent-charmers, and festivals. The popular Murray's guidebooks published for the casual tourist attract Edwards' notice, although not necessarily favorably. At the other end of the historical record, Edwards refers to both Herodotus and Plutarch. Herodotus described ancient Egyptians and geography in his multivolume *Histories* of the Western world, while Plutarch shared mythological stories. "We have of course been dipping into Herodotus—every one takes Herodotus up the Nile," Edwards says (64). Brief references to other ancients also appear: biblical scholar Eusebius, historian Diodorus Siculus, and geographer Strabo, along with anonymous writings such as *The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys*. Edwards read abundantly on the trip itself, which was a typical practice of Nile travelers.²¹

Dense Prose

The following discussion provides a sense of the ways in which Edwards constructed her narrative. Although *A Thousand Miles* is sometimes similar to other Victorian accounts in material covered, it is well worth examining the particulars of Edwards' approach. The writer weaves a host of authoritative accounts in tightly packed prose, characterized by its accretion of detail. Terse sentences are fully loaded with information that becomes almost dizzying upon reading with its many vital facts and consequential observations. Historical, architectural, and artistic explanations permeate Edwards' narration of sights encountered. Adding to the scholarly tone are a sophisticated vocabulary, fluent command of French, and scientific nomenclature, which seem appropriate for a highly educated audience, well-schooled in a manner that Edwards herself never enjoyed in an institutional setting. In short, this text is no meandering account.

One indication of the explicit detail comes from the elaborate accounting of measurements and locations as Edwards investigates her environs, as in this account of ruins at Abu Simbel:

Situate at the south-eastern angle of the rock, a little way beyond the façade of the Great Temple, this rock-cut adytum and hall of entrance face S.E. by E. [...] The adytum, or excavated Speos, measures 21 feet 2.5 inches in breadth by 14 feet 8 inches in length. The height from floor to ceiling is about 12 feet. The doorway measures 4 feet 3.5 inches in width; and the outer recess for the door-frame, 5 feet.

It is not very easy to measure the outer hall in its present ruined and encumbered state; but as nearly as we could judge, its dimensions are as follows: Length, 25 feet; width, 22.5 feet; width of principal entrance facing the Nile, 6 feet; width of two side entrances, 4 feet and 6 feet respectively; thickness of crude-brick walls, 3 feet. Engaged in the brickwork on either side of the principal entrance to this hall are two stone door-jambs; and some six or eight feet in front of these, there originally stood two stone hawks on hieroglyphed pedestals. (337)

Even a ground plan of the site is included, done to scale.

Measurements taken, or omitted, by professionals provide an example of the extensive research Edwards undertook. "Sir G. Wilkinson states the total length of the Temple to be 93 paces, or 220 feet; and the width of the portico 50 paces," Edwards recounts of a Dendera ruin. "Murray gives no measurements," she adds, and "neither does Mariette Bey in his delightful little 'Itineraire'; neither does Fergusson, nor Champollion, nor any other writer to whose works I have had access" (120). Elsewhere, Edwards includes a table reflecting the computations of Flinders Petrie in *The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh*, which is preceded by a highly specific recitation of his approach: "Calculating from the rock-cut sockets at the four corners, and from the true level of the pavement,

Mr. Petrie finds that the square of the original base of the structure, in inches, is of these dimensions”; Edwards follows the statement with a table recording minute measurements from all four compass points of length, difference from mean, and azimuth. Edwards’ explanation continues in meticulous fashion, reporting on the thickness of casing stones both extant and assumed, followed by the finding of the pyramid’s mean angle calculated at “a height from base to apex of 5776.0 ± 7.0 inches” (16).

Aside from reporting on measurements throughout her journey, Edwards provides a detailed section on hieroglyphics. In one “profusely hieroglyphed” grouping by a former river, for example, Edwards covers the time span of the inscriptions, the reigns during which they were created, and the extent of the inscriptions, including autographs, lengthy writings, and the figures pictured. An ancient observer’s movement by the inscriptions is recreated and pilgrimages identified with historical allusions. Religious background offers a framework, as in an account of Philae, which Edwards recounts since she says that no contemporary historian has done so. The explanation covers multiple pages, with reference to ancient writings on the subject. Although Edwards admits that some of the material “is mere conjecture,” she validates her opinions in stating that “it is only by help of some such assumption that one can understand how a new site should have suddenly arisen to such a height of holiness” (220). In another historical section, Edwards devotes an entire chapter to Rameses the Great, whom she designates as “The central figure of Egyptian history” (262). Edwards reports on his youth, wives, works, character, genealogy, and other pertinent aspects of his life, which are interspersed with references to commentaries of various Egyptologists, including even a listing of their different dates for the start of the reign of Rameses II. Occasionally, Edwards provides the chronology of an edifice, as when bemoaning the damage done over time by human intervention:

The Persians overthrew the masterpieces of the Pharaohs;
the Copts mutilated the temples of the Ptolemies and Caesars
[and] the Arabs stripped the pyramids and carried Memphis
away piecemeal. Here at Denderah we have an example of

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Graeco-Egyptian work and early Christian fanaticism. Begun by Ptolemy XI, and bearing upon its latest ovals the name and style of Nero, the present building was still comparatively new when, in A.D. 379, the ancient religion was abolished by the edict of Theodosius. It was then the most gorgeous as well as the most recent of all those larger temples built during the prosperous foreign rule of the last seven hundred years. It stood, surrounded by groves of palm and acacia, within the precincts of a vast enclosure, the walls of which, 1000 feet in length, 35 feet in height, and 15 feet thick, are still traceable. A dromos, now buried under twenty feet of debris, led from the pylon to the portico. The pylon is there still, a partial ruin; but the Temple, with its roof, its staircases, and its secret treasure-crypts, is in all essential respects as perfect as on the day when its splendour was given over to the spoilers. (121-22)

A footnote attached to the Ptolemy XI reference gives lengthy information on the names included in the ovals, as well as on older buildings, inscriptions, and Mariette's commentary.

As with measurements and other data, Edwards offers meticulous accounts of many ruins. For instance, the "overwhelming majesty" of a portico derives from its dimensions:

Its breadth, its height, the massiveness of its parts, exceed in grandeur all that one has been anticipating.... The immense girth of the columns, the huge screens which connect them, the ponderous cornice jutting overhead, confuse the imagination [...]. Looking up to the architrave, we see a kind of Egyptian Panathenaic procession of carven priests and warriors, some with standards and some with musical instruments. [...] Hieroglyphs, emblems, strange forms of Kings and Gods, cover every foot of wall-space, frieze, and pillar. (120)

The appraisal continues, elaborating on the decorations and detail.

Adding to the scholarly content, *A Thousand Miles* presents five appendices on such topics as Egyptian deities and chronologies. Most striking, however, the book features not only copious but highly detailed footnotes on a breadth of subjects. Certainly, nonfiction books released in the nineteenth century often included footnotes, as found in Martineau's text, but those in Edwards' narrative are especially abundant, specific, and lengthy, with precise citations where appropriate. Indeed, Edwards includes some two hundred and fifty footnotes in a text considerably less than five hundred pages in the 1888 edition, which averages more than two per page. In contrast, texts by authorities she itemizes throughout the book generally feature only a few footnotes or none at all. They tend to be brief, as do the ones in Mariette's *Upper Egypt*, for instance. Flinders Petrie's *The Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh* rarely presents footnotes, which are also short, and the same holds for Burckhardt's *Travels in Nubia*.

The footnotes in *A Thousand Miles* help attest to Edwards' unusually vast reading and research, which are so carefully demonstrated in the body of the text as well. Many of the footnotes are of great length, with one on the Dendera temple, for example, extending twenty-five lines in a minute font. Numerous footnotes are too long to be contained on a single page and continue for several more pages. The footnotes cover many matters, often providing additional commentary on and explanation of points raised in the main text, such as historical data, ancient religious practices and personages, inscriptions, artistic representations in other texts, locales of sites, European holdings of antiquities, accoutrements and activities, scientific terminology, multiple names of places and persons, identity of translators, and her own conjectures. Where no authorities apparently provide relevant information, Edwards shares her own explanations based on her expertise. She even inserts footnotes to her own footnotes. Some footnotes correct material in the book's 1877 edition based on later findings or report on recent discoveries and textual editions. Citations furnish needed data on sources for easy reference by the readership, including the publication year, edition, volume, chapter, and page as

appropriate. Multiple references occasionally appear to enhance understanding of a particular subject.

One way in which the footnotes attest to Edwards' knowledge is their demonstration of her linguistic acumen. In many cases, a footnote provides a translation of an Arabic word into English or the reverse sequence. Sometimes a word is not translated, as if a subtle indication that the reader should know the term or an indirect way to convey her own learning. An especially common practice is the quotation of French authorities in their original language. No translation is provided, which suggests not only Edwards' command of the language but also an assumption of a sophisticated readership and a sense of superiority over those unfamiliar with the foreign tongue. The French footnotes are often quite protracted and may spill over to additional pages. *A Thousand Miles* further includes footnotes in Latin, Italian, and Greek, and Edwards reveals that "I now know that Egyptian can be read, for the simple reason that I find myself able to read an Egyptian sentence" (xv).

Edwards even situates herself as more informed in some respects than the authorities she references. She corrects Wilkinson's identification of the color of porcelain tiles in a sepulchral chamber, reports an error in *Murray's Handbook for Egypt* about an attribution to Rameses II rather than Rameses III, corrects Mariette's assumption about an early Rameses title, disputes the identification of the culprit who disfigured a colossus, revises the location of a place on a map by cartographer Johnston, and explains the mystery of a queen's burial wrapping. Edwards considers a bishop "for the most part right" about the Coptic language before claiming he was wholly in error about its relationship to Greek (463-64). Sometimes a rather caustic tone underlies a correction. She criticizes Colonel Howard Vyse's work on tumuli for "not carry[ing] his excavation low enough." She sniffs, "As it is difficult to suppose the tumuli made for nothing, I cannot help believing that they would repay a more systematic investigation" (322). Edwards expresses surprise that the geological aspects of a particular area are not contained in books by Murray, Wilkinson, and others. "None seem to have observed their obvious volcanic origin," she scolds (242).

Moreover, Edwards strives to distinguish herself from casual tourists in presenting herself as a professional voice. Preceding her chapter on Rameses the Great, for instance, she scorns visitors who depend solely on popular guidebooks for information, since

the traveler is ill equipped who goes through Egypt without something more than a mere guide-book knowledge of Rameses II. [...] In the desolation of Memphis, in the shattered splendour of Thebes, he sees only the ordinary pathos of ordinary ruins. As for Abou Simbel, the most stupendous historical record ever transmitted from the past to the present, it tells him a but half-intelligible story. Holding to the merest thread of explanation, he wanders from hall to hall, lacking altogether that potent charm of foregone association which no Murray can furnish. (263)

Such sentiments accord with James Buzard's dichotomy of the anti-tourist and the tourist, which identifies the latter's "distinct negative connotation" developed generations earlier. A tourist, Buzard explains, was considered "the dupe of fashion, following blindly where authentic travellers have gone with open eyes and free spirits" (1). Tourists depended on guidebooks to navigate "the intimidating array of details that need to be co-ordinated for a successful tour" (48), Buzard asserts, which reveals "the extraordinary authority" attributed to handbooks published by Murray and Baedeker (65).²² The traveler's disdain of the mere tourist "was in most cases only a special kind of snobbery," notes John Pemble, which "implied revulsion from the British masses" (265). As the 1880s progressed, more and more excursionists flooded Egypt, and tourism reached dramatic heights. The trip from Europe to Egypt had been reduced to six days (25), Pemble reports, and "the establishment of the British protectorate over Egypt caused a big increase in the number of tourists," with as many as six thousand flocking to the Thomas Cook travel agency's Cairo site (47).²³

Besides criticizing guidebook-wielding tourists, Edwards establishes her superiority over casual visitors in claiming that they cannot appreciate

the beauty of their environs as she does. Discussing "the great view" at the Second Cataract, for instance, Edwards remarks that it "has not that kind of beauty which attracts the general tourist" (319-20). Similarly, upon leaving Abu Simbel she contrasts her fascination with temples and other ancient attractions to the general public:

As a rule, people begin to get tired of Temples about this time, and vote them too plentiful. Meek travellers go through them as a duty; but the greater number rebel. [...]

For myself, I was never bored by them. Though they had been twice as many, I should not have wished them fewer. [...] My appetite for them was insatiable, and grew with what it fed upon. I went over them all. I took notes of them all. I sketched them every one. (354)

In an early stage of her Nile voyage, Edwards indicates her preference for serious travelers like herself in dahabeeyahs, or large houseboats, claiming that these individuals "despise Cook's tourists" and "look down with lofty compassion" upon visitors who retreat after the First Cataract. The dahabeeyah riders "hold their heads a trifle higher" since their trip could extend according to their wishes and therefore they "could afford to be magnanimous" (36). Commenting on sepulchral discoveries, Edwards combines her scorn for tourists who ignore the tombs with her chastisement of professionals who fail to appreciate the excavations. "No modern travellers seem to visit these tombs," she avers, "while those of the old school, as Wilkinson, Champollion, etc., dismiss them with a few observations." In Edwards' estimation, however, "there is not, I believe, any spot in Egypt [with one exception] which contains such a multitude of sepulchral excavations" (94).

Writer and Artist

One strategy that Edwards employs to establish an authoritative voice is the tendency to refer to herself as "the Writer." Although she also occasionally adopts the first-person pronouns, the third-person perspective is favored. As the Writer, Edwards aims to convey a detached, objective stance for her reporting of sites and events. The term enables Edwards to

situate her text not as simply a memoir directed primarily toward herself as a quasi-autobiography but as more of a journalistic kind of narrative in which she is merely one participant in a comprehensive discussion. Additionally, the designation of *Writer* evokes her professional background as a prolific novelist with a sophisticated command of language. In his 1920 *By Nile and Tigris*, Budge highly praised Edwards' writing, stating that "I never met anyone who had so thoroughly absorbed the mystic and magical influences of Egypt past and present, and who could clothe the impressions which they make upon the mind in such well-fitting and expressive words."²⁴ Even though various other accounts of Egypt contained well-crafted portrayals of scenery and other sights, Edwards' long experience as a writer gave her a definite advantage in producing an intriguing narrative.

Periodically, descriptions carry the poetic tinge seen in some other travel books. For example, Edwards characterizes the river as "glimmering like a coiled snake in the shade" (237). Recollecting the movement of torches during a festival, Edwards states that "The lights flit and leap as if they were alive; circling, clustering, dispersing, bobbing, poussetting, pursuing each other at a gallop, and whirling every now and then through the air, like rockets" (370). Elsewhere, "weird rocks stand like sentinels [...] and take strange shapes as of obelisks and sphinxes"; entering the locale "is like riding into the mouth of a furnace" (440). After an arduous ascent of a cliff, Edwards asserts that "the beauty of the sand more than repays the fatigue of climbing it" and contemplates its allure.

Smooth, sheeny, satiny; fine as diamond-dust; supple, undulating, luminous, it lies in the most exquisite curves and wreaths, like a snow-drift turned to gold. Remodelled by every breath that blows, its ever-varying surface presents an endless play of delicate lights and shadows. There lives not the sculptor who could render those curves; and I doubt whether Turner himself, in his tenderest and subtlest mood, could have done justice to those complex greys and ambers. (236)

No doubt Edwards' proficiency as an artist contributed to her ability of portraying interesting scenes, and many descriptions seem like literal paintings. A captivating mountain, for example, "looks like a framed picture," and Edwards proceeds to delineate the view using such terminology as foreground and middle distance before assuming increasingly distant vantage points (104-5). Another mountain hosted a part of a temple, with "The façade, sunk in the mountain-side like a huge picture in a mighty frame" (260). An attentiveness to color emerges in various depictions, which not only reflects Edwards' artistic eye but also leads to arresting accounts. Discussing the appearance of cliffs at dusk, for example, Edwards employs an array of hues to bring the scene to life.

By and by comes the sunset, when every cast shadow in the recesses of the cliffs turns to pure violet; and the face of the rock glows with a ruddier gold; and the palms on the western bank stand up in solid bronze against a crimson horizon. Then the sun dips, and instantly the whole range of cliffs turns to a dead, greenish grey, while the sky about and behind them is as suddenly suffused with pink. [...] [A] vast arch of deep blue shade, about as large in diameter as a rainbow, creeps slowly up the eastern horizon, and remains distinctly visible as long as the pink, flush against which it is defined yet lingers in the sky. Finally the flush fades out; the blue becomes uniform; the stars begin to show; and only a broad glow in the west marks which way the sun went down. (81)

Such vivid and lengthy portrayals appear frequently in *A Thousand Miles*, as if Edwards is poised with a brush as well as a pen. At another locale, Edwards speaks of "the difficulty of colour," where much of the view is "yellow-yellow," but she draws distinctions in this "Symphony in Yellow": the color "rang[es] through every gradation of orange, maize, apricot, gold, and buff" (310). Short explanations often include artistic turns of phrase, as in the following example. At sunset, "mountains are yet clothed in an atmosphere of tender half-light," while "mysterious shadows

are fast creeping over the plain.” Ancient mounds appear “confused and tumbled, like the waves of a dark sea” (130).

A Thousand Miles holds an advantage over other travel accounts with its copious illustrations of professional complexity that were painted by the author during her voyage. The “pocket sketch-book [...] is the sketcher’s constant companion,” Edwards relates of her favored activity (xi). More than eighty illustrations, most of which are intricately rendered, capture monuments and other compelling sites throughout the trip with photographic particularity. These illustrations provide a level of detail that enhances the written text, apprising the reader of the complexity and beauty of the ruins and landscapes encountered. Furthermore, a few uncomplicated line drawings complement some explanations of cartouches, hieroglyphics, and additional objects to clarify specific elements that might otherwise be obscured. Edwards’ other artwork generally situates ruins in the close foreground so that inscriptions, column designs, statuary, fallen pieces, and other elements can be readily absorbed. Illustrations were revised for inclusion in the book and transformed into engravings.

Edwards repeatedly alludes to her sketching during the journey, which may involve several hours at one sitting or multiple sessions. In Philae, for example, Edwards comments—using her appellation as “the Writer” in a reminder of her dual artistic talents—that she spent three days scrutinizing the corner of a particular portico, “patiently matching those subtle variations of tint, and endeavouring to master the secret of their combination” (215). Sketching occasionally presented challenges, as when drawing a cornice by candlelight or scrambling to find a good angle for observation. Even though Edwards attests that sketching is “the most delightful occupation in life,” she remarks upon the obstacles that can be faced (309). In Abu Simbel, the major problem becomes finding an adequate position sufficiently distant from a pair of temples that proves unattainable. Rendering a site in the perfect color also poses difficulty, as do the interfering elements such as sand, flies, and heat, and she elaborates on the resulting problems. Sand permeates the body and the paint, flies

invade water colors, and heat causes her sketching tent to give "a foretaste of cremation" (310). The content of Edwards' *Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers* attests to her interest in art, with several sections devoted to ancient creations.

Disturbing Assumptions

Although *A Thousand Miles* reimagines travel narratives in notable ways, its early chapters resemble conventional travel narratives, including the disturbing bigotry and imperial arrogance they generally display, although derogatory commentary periodically surfaces throughout the volume. Before proceeding to the Nile voyage itself, the book recalls days spent in Cairo and its environs. In this section *A Thousand Miles* resembles a manners and customs description, with few footnotes. The city and its inhabitants are presented like a theatrical performance devised for the amusement of Europeans. Indeed, Edwards avers that the streets are "peopled with figures that come and go like the actors in some Christmas piece of Oriental pageantry" (10). Egyptians are also reduced to living artwork to be gazed upon by their foreign visitors. At a bazaar, "every turbaned group is a ready-made picture," Edwards relates before enumerating the figures in the foreground: an elderly man, a donkey-boy, and a veiled woman in the scene, who "all look as if they had been put there expressly to be painted." The background, Edwards asserts, is no "less picturesque than the figures" (3), and merchants of various nationalities become "the most picturesque personages in all this busy scene" (6). On the Nile, "turbaned Arabs" at a bankside celebration, with "their swarthy faces and their glittering teeth" (46), provide additional examples of "picturesque" people.

"Picturesque" likely represents the most ubiquitous adjective in *A Thousand Miles*, and it brings troubling connotations. Although generally conferred upon landscapes, the adjective carries an orientalist cast in those portrayals as well as in its application to people. In all cases, "picturesque" suggests a distancing between observer and observed, with the former displaying a sense of power in appropriating property and individuals. As

George P. Landow indicates in discussing “The lesser mode of the picturesque” in Ruskinian theory, it compels an artist “to ignore the emotional—human—implications of his subject.” Noting that “Ruskin had become increasingly aware of the social and moral implications of the picturesque” and remarked upon them, Landow asserts that merely visualizing human presence in aesthetic terms converts individuals into objects.²⁵ Commenting on a Scottish scene, John Ruskin itemizes the varied elements of the landscape before mentioning fishermen there, “a picturesque and pretty group enough certainly, if they had not been there all day starving.”²⁶

At least to some extent, Edwards recognized the disturbing aspects of the picturesque as she observes “wild figures of half-naked athletes—of dusky women decked with barbaric ornaments, [...] and little naked children like live bronzes” (200-201).

It is all so picturesque, indeed, so biblical, so poetical, that one is almost in danger of forgetting that the places are something more than beautiful backgrounds, and that the people are not merely appropriate figures placed there for the delight of sketchers, but are made of living flesh and blood, and moved by hopes, and fears and sorrows, like our own. (201)

Despite this realization, Edwards does not cease using the adjective. Neither does she avoid adopting other unsettling aspects of conventional travel writings.

As in contemporary accounts, Egyptians are generalized, with appearances and character homogenized. When searching for a dahabeeyah, Edwards says that “to a person who has been only a few days in Egypt, one black or copper-coloured man is exactly like every other black or copper coloured man” (11). Speaking of Bedouins near the Great Pyramid, Edwards presumes that “They are naturally vivacious and very talkative” (17). Later in the journey, Edwards shares her offensive judgment of “the Fellaḥ,” who “is half a savage” and “the most brilliant liar under heaven” (166). One Nubian revealed “Oriental insincerity”

(332), but "gravity is by no means an Oriental characteristic" (24). The assumption of indolence emerges as Edwards watches efforts to develop a public square and says that "some half dozen workmen were lazily loading as many camels with rubble"; she expects that "the ground will perhaps get cleared in eight or ten years' time" (19). The common imperialist trope that Egypt is unchanging also surfaces, effectually demarcating the modern era as static, passive, and backward; as the *Saturday Review* observed, "Edwards is of opinion that in Egypt things have, after all, not changed very much in the course of centuries."²⁷ Edwards herself makes the point in her preface.

[...] I brought home with me an impression that things and people are much less changed in Egypt than we of the present day are wont to suppose. I believe that the physique and life of the modern Fellah is almost identical with the physique and life of that ancient Egyptian labourer whom we know so well in the wall-paintings of the tombs. [...]

The household life and social ways of even the provincial gentry are little changed. (xii)

Nevertheless, the impression that the current period is inferior to ancient times as "a rude and barbarous present" also appears in the book (175). The stunning beauty, complexity, and artisanship of the many ruins Edwards observes provide a sharp contrast to her depiction of contemporary locales as dismal and unsavory.

Although Edwards admits that her generalizations "may seem like presumption on the part of a passing stranger," she rationalizes her claims saying that "it is more excusable as regards Egypt than it would be of any other equally accessible country" (166). Edwards considers her crew as a microcosm of Egypt, "with but little variation wherever the Nile flows and the Khedive rules. The characters are the same; the incidents are the same. It is only the *mise en scène* which varies" (167). Nubians also come in for harsh treatment. They supposedly "belong to a lower ethnological type" than Egyptians and are "sulky-looking, half-naked, muscular savages" (199).

The familiar imperialist tendencies to infantilize and to objectify occur repeatedly. A religious man is “Like a child,” for “he loves noise and movement for the mere sake of noise and movement” (24). Egyptians dehumanized as the members of the crew hired for the voyage—cooks, waiters, sailors—“completed our equipment,” Edwards opines, and they were “Simple and trustful as children” (41). One person allowed to board the boat looked like a “shivering, streaming object” with “a face expressive of such ignorance, timidity and half-savage watchfulness” (80). Near Siut, people who received health care assistance from one of the boat passengers “showed their gratitude in all kinds of pretty, child-like ways” (108). At Abu Simbel, crewmen were “delighted as children at play” (308).

People are compared to animals in another common form of marginalization. A group encountered in a village, with “their brown arms and legs in frantic movement, [...] looked like a troop of mad monkeys let loose” (47). As the boat approached Dendera, workers “swarmed over the mounds like ants,” and their voices resembled “the humming of innumerable bees” (115). At a market elsewhere, “children swarmed like flies” (158). An escort at Esna related an “artless tale with childlike simplicity” (164), and Edwards later remarks that “you could as easily keep a monkey from chattering as an Arab” (168). In Aswan, Abyssinians looked “like slender-legged baboons” (184). At an Abu Simbel ruin, crew members were “chattering and skipping about the scaffolding like monkeys” (309).

Despite her adoption of dismaying orientalist conventions, Edwards does redeem herself slightly in departing occasionally from dehumanizing generalizations. A number of Egyptians, especially crew members, are mentioned by their actual names, rather than European or objectifying appellations, and considered as individuals. Additionally, Edwards speaks of the admirable aspects of people she encounters, although she does lapse into generalizations upon occasion in her praise. As Joan Rees says of Edwards’ views of Egyptians, “there is a tension in attitude which is never resolved.”²⁸

In another disturbing imperialist aspect, Edwards reveals a sense of entitlement to plunder ancient Egyptian treasures for European museums and other entities. Although she faintly criticizes museums for being "rich in spoils" (353) when deploring the damage caused to Egyptian monuments by tourists, collectors, and others, Edwards nevertheless repeatedly identifies the antiquities taken for museums with no negative commentary throughout the book. The items Edwards mentions form a lengthy list, especially in regard to the British Museum. The institution holds papyri, a tableau, casts, vases, baskets, and the head of a colossus, among other items, and the British government claimed ownership of a Rameses colossus still in Egypt. Sarcophagi of Seti I and Rameses III were transferred to England. Mariette sent nearly five hundred tombs to the Louvre, which also acquired mummy artifacts and a bas-relief fragment. Lepsius grabbed a pyramid door, a Thebes statue resided in Munich, a vase appeared in Berlin, and papyri found their way to Leyden. Egypt's own Boulak Museum in Cairo, however, could not match European museums in its holdings of colossal statuary, Edwards notes.

Moreover, Edwards' criticism of tourists and collectors apparently did not apply to herself. On one occasion, she and members of her party inscribed their names and the date on a monument in Abu Simbel, but she seemingly minimizes its importance in stating that "this was the only occasion upon which any of us left our names upon an Egyptian monument" (353). Edwards later mentions her personal collection of Egyptian material, which included a funeral papyrus, without expressing regret. Among "her 'treasured collection of Egyptian antiquities' were 'mummified hands and other gruesome fragments,'" observes Patricia O'Neill.²⁹

It is not surprising that *A Thousand Miles* would reflect the biases of European explorers and embrace imperialist convictions, considering the state of the world in the late nineteenth century.³⁰ Although Edwards makes clear that she will not comment on political matters arising between the first and second editions of her book, England had in fact started to occupy Egypt in 1882 and maintained control well into the twentieth century. Edwards advises her readers to consult Murray and Baedeker for altered travel conditions, since she declines to discuss them.

Despite the presence of repulsive imperialist presumptions in the narrative that characterize many other contemporary accounts, *A Thousand Miles* nevertheless provides significant innovations in the Victorian travel genre. With the volume's concentration on the expertise of important Egyptologists, archaeologists, and other specialists, as well as its artistic sensibilities shaping the narrative and the elaborate detail of and research on remarkable sites, *A Thousand Miles* enhances the travel narrative of the country for its avid English readers. In sum, the book is an extraordinary document well worthy of intense study.

Patricia Murphy

Missouri Southern State University, Emeritus

Notes

¹ Although other travel volumes sometimes featured drawings, they often were provided by outside illustrators and were considerably less abundant and detailed than Edwards' artwork.

² Identifying Edwards as "The first professional female Egyptologist in England" (111), Daniela Corona comments that Edwards "create[d] a space for herself in what was a totally male-dominated scientific environment" ("Imperial Complicity and Gender Ambiguities in the Egyptian Archaeological Travelogues of Amelia Edwards," *Textus*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2012), 113.

³ Joan Rees notes that Edwards' mother "took charge of the greater part of Amelia's education through a governess and later, masters were also employed." Edwards was "Always an independent student" who had "free rein to read anything that came her way," and she "read abundantly" (*Amelia Edwards: Traveller, Novelist & Egyptologist* [London: Rubicon, 1998], 34).

⁴ William Copley Winslow, "The Queen of Egyptology," *American Antiquarian*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (November 1892), 305.

⁵ "The style of the whole book is marked by precision and sustained vigour, which is more than can be said for that of either the ordinary traveller or the ordinary novelist," said J.A. Symonds. The book displays "a high level of excellence in composition that is very remarkable when

we consider the extremely various topics which she treats," Symonds added ("Literature," *Academy*, 27 January 1877, 65).

⁶ Amelia B. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile* (London: Parkway, 1993). Subsequent citations are parenthetically cited.

⁷ As Billie Melman asserts, "the very ambiguity of status of the new oriental sciences of archaeology, Biblical topography and Egyptology [...] made them relatively open and particularly appealing to self-educated, self-made orientalisks." Edwards' "move into a specialist career took place at the very same period when field archaeology and Egyptology were developing into disciplines" (*Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918* [Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press], 255).

⁸ The other founders were Reginald Poole, who oversaw the coins section at the British Museum, and Sir Erasmus Wilson, author of texts about Egypt.

⁹ Amanda Adams reports that Edwards' "skills in reading hieroglyphics were so highly regarded that experts sent samples of potsherds and papyrus for her translation" (*Ladies of the Field: Early Women Archaeologists and their Search for Adventure* [Vancouver: Greystone, 2010], 36).

¹⁰ For biographical information, see Rees and Melman as well as Patricia O'Neill's "Amelia Anne Blandford Edwards" (*British Travel Writers 1876-1909, Dictionary of Literary Biography* 174 [Detroit: Gale, 1997]) and Brenda Moon's *More Usefully Employed: Amelia B. Edwards, Writer, Traveller and Campaigner for Ancient Egypt* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2006).

¹¹ Paul and Janet Starkey, *Interpreting the Orient* (Reading: Garnet, 2001), 165.

¹² "Nile Basin and Nile Explorers," *Blackwood's* (January 1865), 101.

¹³ Symonds, "Literature," 65.

¹⁴ Review, *Athenaeum* (17 February 1877), 219.

¹⁵ "Amelia Blandford Edwards," *Saturday Review* (23 April 1892), 473.

¹⁶ Winslow, "The Queen of Egyptology," 306.

¹⁷ Qtd Winslow, 306.

¹⁸ Winslow, 311.

¹⁹ Winslow, 312.

²⁰ Edwards does note that Griffith, under the auspices of the Egypt Exploration Fund, had translated inscriptions of a well-known tomb and determined its correct date.

²¹ Derek Gregory reports that typical volumes brought on Nile voyages included those by Herodotus, Wilkinson, Lane, and Murray ("Scripting Egypt: Orientalism and the Cultures of Travel," in *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, ed. James Duncan and Derek Gregory [London: Routledge, 1999], 117-18). Often, travelers would be advised to bring some forty books with them (117). A 1908 text by traveler Douglas Sladen commented that "All the best books on Egypt are in the ship's library" (qtd Gregory 117).

²² James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.

²³ John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987.

²⁴ E.A. Wallis Budge, *By Nile and Tigris* (London: John Murray, 1920), 101.

²⁵ George P. Landow, "The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin: The Modes of the Picturesque," Victorian Web 25 July 2005, www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/3.2.html.

²⁶ Qtd Landow.

²⁷ "Minor Notices," *Saturday Review* (13 January 1877), 59.

²⁸ Rees, *Amelia Edwards*, 41.

²⁹ O'Neill, "Amelia Anne Blandford Edwards," 128.

³⁰ As Corona observes, Edwards' "discourse on archaeology and Egyptology, aligned as it is with the dominant male colonial perspective and normalising regimes of power [...] is not free from racist implications or gender and class ambiguities. Edwards's travelogues represent a conflicting intersection of dominant discourses," including "the discourse of archaeological Egyptology. [...] Edwards' Egyptian archaeological writings are [...] ideologically multilayered" ("Imperial Complicity," 111).

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