

E.M. Forster and The Questionable Modernity of Greece

30. ZAROUKHLA

KHANI



Frédéric Boissonnas
Zaroukhla. Khani, 1910
Heliogravure / Photolithograph
The J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles
<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/108MQC>

LUNA PARK HOTEL

KAMEL STREET

OPPOSITE COOK'S OFFICES

CAIRO, EGYPT

TELEPHONE NO. 15-92 MEDINA

TELEGRAMS: "LUNAHOTEL"

Cairo, 14-9-1924

My dear Cavafy.

All goes well, and if it continues
to go so, please expect me on your
door steps Tuesday at 9.0. I
got your letter at Mombasa. Thank
you so much for it.

Yours

E. M. Forster.

LUNA PARK HOTEL

KAMEL STREET

CAIRO



بureau de l'Imam مكتب كوك

مصر



C. P. Cavafy

10 Rue Lepsius

Alexandria

SEP 9 2

IN *Byron's* SHADOW

*Modern Greece in the English
and American Imagination*



DAVID ROESSEL

the Ottoman Empire. "Cnidus" and "Gemistus Pletho" both offer an implicit if indirect challenge to that abiding part of the political consciousness by denying a connection between the ancient and modern Greeks.³³ It was an understated and subtle approach, much less direct than the French Romantic Orientalist Pierre Loti produced in *Turquie Agonisante* (1913), but one that Forster perhaps thought would be more effective with a public still attracted to the magic force of Byronic legend.

Before the Great War, in the politicized environment of modern Greece, those who wrote reveries set on Greek ground, as Forster did in "The Road from Colonus," were not always simply ignoring the puzzle of the modern Greek but often intentionally avoiding it. They tried to read Sophocles without noticing the contemporary world around them, as did certain Hellenists during the Greek War of Independence.³⁴ One wonders whether the destruction of the sacred site at the end of "The Road from Colonus," like the transfer of the statue of Demeter from Cnidus, suggested that the Greek spirit can no longer be found in the land where it originated.

In the autumn of 1912, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece joined forces and nearly drove the Turks from Europe. Just three weeks after hostilities commenced, Greek troops entered Thessaloniki. By the time the Turks signed an armistice with the Balkan allies, the Greek flag flew over Ioannina in Epirus, and the Greek navy had taken possession of almost all of the Turkish-held islands in the Aegean. Greece had nearly doubled in size and population. It was a startling triumph for all of the Balkan nations, but for the Greeks, who had suffered a humiliating defeat in 1897, it was especially sweet.

With the Turkish bear badly wounded if not slain, the Balkan allies almost immediately fell to fighting over the bear's skin. The Second Balkan War began on June 29, 1913, when the Bulgarians, who felt that their territorial acquisitions were not commensurate with their burden on the battlefield, attacked the Serbs and Greeks in Macedonia. The offensive went badly, and both the Turks and the Romanians took advantage of the concentration of Bulgarian forces on its western border to advance on other fronts. The result was a disaster for Bulgaria. It gained no ground in Macedonia, lost more territory on the Aegean coast, ceded fertile land in the Danube basin to Romania, and, perhaps most galling of all, gave the city of Adrianople and other arcas won in the First Balkan War back to Turkey.

For the Greeks, the Second Balkan War was another triumph. They extended their reach another hundred miles eastward from Thessaloniki. Constantinople was now only two hundred miles away from troops serving under the Greek flag.³⁵ But if it were a new day for the Greek armed forces, it was also another opportunity for old rhetoric.

A comparison of 1897 with 1912–1913 reveals an odd inverse proportion between the number of Greeks freed from Turkish rule and the amount of

“Do I know Greece well? I should hope so. I was there in 1903 and have not been there since. I got tuned[?] up [boarding school slang] by a modern Greek who stole another archaeologist’s coat before we landed, and said I had given it to him [...] ‘restless, shifty, liars...’ Which is an answer to your question.”
(*Selected Letters* II. 118).

* * *

16-7-33

West Hackhurst,
Abinger Hammer,
Dorking.

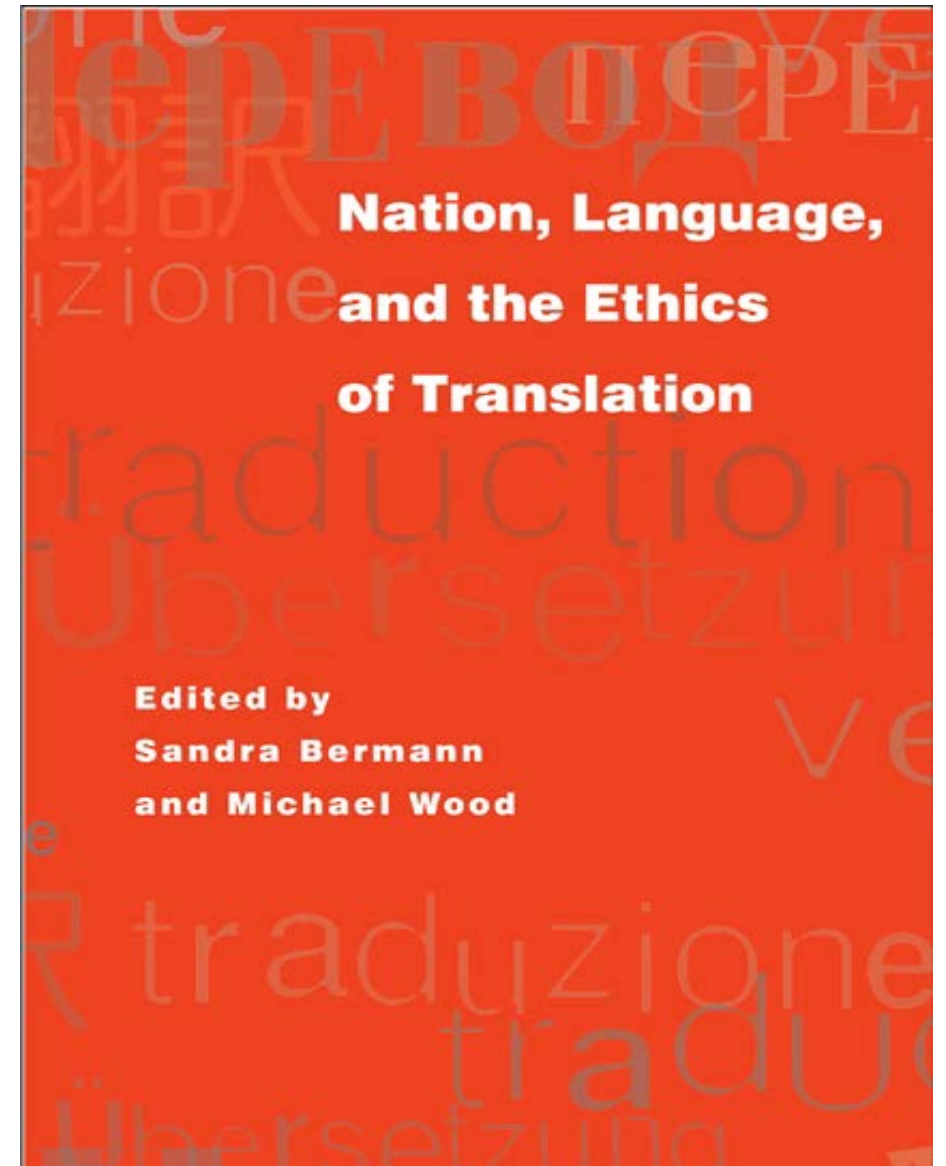
Dear Isherwood

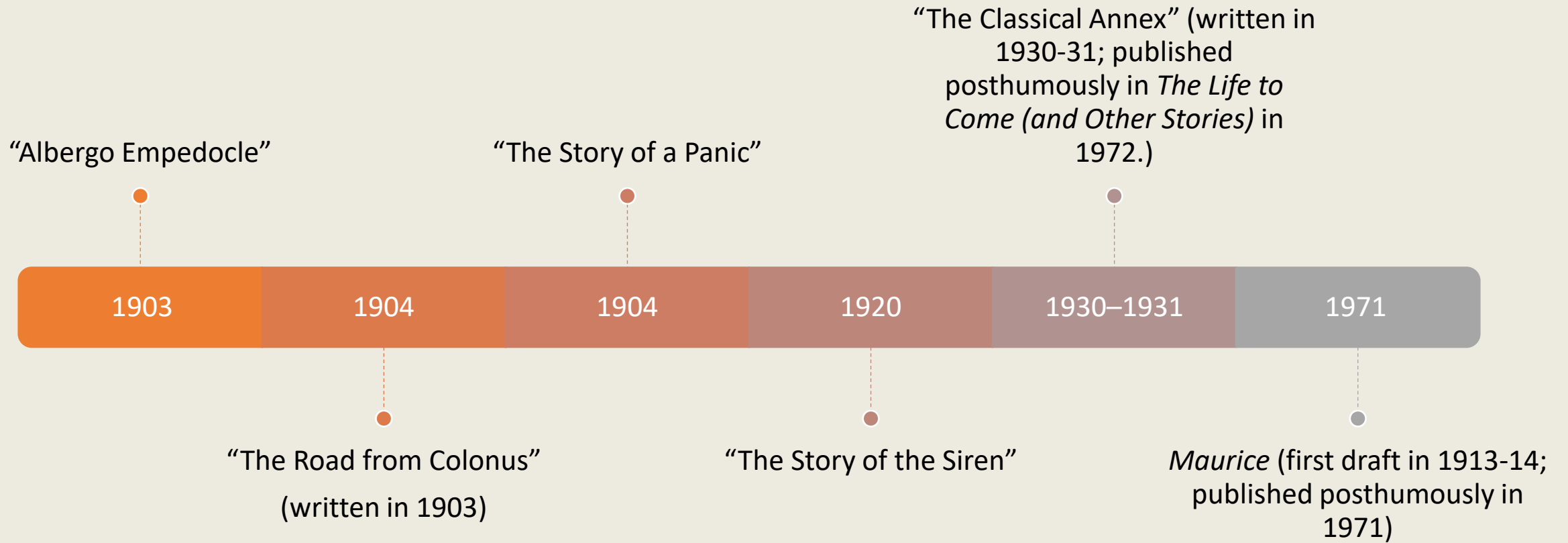
I am so very pleased to get your letter and reply at once. I did reply at once to your post-card too, as you will see from the enclosed, but you will also see why it was never finished. And perhaps this letter will be as dull. Yet I have a feeling to the contrary and will at all events not wait until tomorrow to make sure.

Do I know Greece well? I should hope so. I was there in 1903 and have not been there since. I got tuned[?] up [boarding school slang] by a modern Greek who stole another archeologist’s coat before we landed and said I had given it to him. For I was an archeologist in 1903, just as I was a surgeon from 1915–19 in Egypt, and a physiologist in 1924 at Stockholm and an ethnologist for 1927 in Africa. What remains, however, to our present purpose is a remark made to the surgeon by Cavafy, who was himself an official in the Third Irrigation Circle and a great poet. Cavafy said “Never forget about the Greeks that we are bankrupt. That is the difference between us and the ancient Greeks and, my dear Forster, between us and yourselves. Pray, my dear Forster, that you—you English with your capacity for adventure—never lose your capital, otherwise you will resemble us, restless, shifty, liars . . .” Which is an answer of a sort to your question. And I think that both the cruelty and the exaltation of cunning could be paralleled in the 5th century B.C.

“From Chateaubriand’s necrophilic gaze to the antiquarian chastity in the philological and archaeological laboratory to the latter-day tourist invasion, it has always been a matter of a sun-drenched, clear-cut, postcard Greece.”

Stathis Gourgouris, “DeLillo in Greece Eluding the Name,” Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (eds.), *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*. (Princeton 2005: Princeton UP) p. 291.







THE DEMETER FROM CNIDUS. (BRITISH MUSEUM.)

so-called Nereid monument from Xanthus. Often they attained colossal size, like the celebrated mausoleum of Halicarnassus, and called into play for years the activity of distinguished sculptors like Scopas. In Greece, the tomb-monument appears much less pretentious, but even there great variety in form prevailed, the fierce lion of Chæronea towering above the warriors of the unhappy battle-field being in strong contrast with the humbler monuments of private persons.

The opportunity offered to the Greek sculptors in their sacred monuments was far more limited, as far as space was con-

cerned, than that enjoyed by the Egyptian sculptor, but they learned to improve that opportunity, and came in the fourth century, B. C., to perpetuate with their chisel that which was beautiful and sacred in life. Glancing over the vast array of intensely interesting relics, we find that, while sculptured tombstones from the olden time were numerous in Attica, it is a remarkable fact that almost none are preserved from the fifth century, B. C.—that great age of triumph over the Persians, when temples were built, and colossal chryselephantine statues were erected to the gods. About 400 B. C., sculptured tomb-

But I did see the home of the Goddess who has made Cnidus famous to us . . . that Demeter of Cnidus, whom we hold in the British museum now. She was there at that moment, warm and comfortable in the little access room of hers between the Ephesian room and the Archaic room. . . .

I am not going to turn sentimental, and pity the exiled Demeter and declare her sorrowful eyes are straining for the scarped rock, and the twin harbours, and Triopia, and the sea. She is doing nothing of the sort. . . . And if, as I believe, she is alive, she must know that she has come among people who love her, for all they are so weak-chested and anaemic and feeble-kneed, and who pay such prosaic homage as they can. (*Abinger Harvest* 175–76)

“Greece is just a spirit which can appear, not only at any time, but also in any land.”

E. M. Forster, “Gemistus Pletho,” *Abinger Harvest* pp. 86-87

“I haven’t been to Greece myself, and don’t mean to go, and I can’t imagine any of my friends going. It is altogether too big for our little lot. Don’t you think so? Italy is just about as much as we can manage. Italy is heroic, but Greece is godlike or devilish - I am not sure which, and in either case absolutely out of our suburban focus.”

E. M. Forster, *A Room with a View* p. 197

“In the evening she looked again. They were crossing a golden sea, in which lay many small islands and one peninsula. She repeated, ‘No ideas here,’ and hid Greece behind a metal blind.”

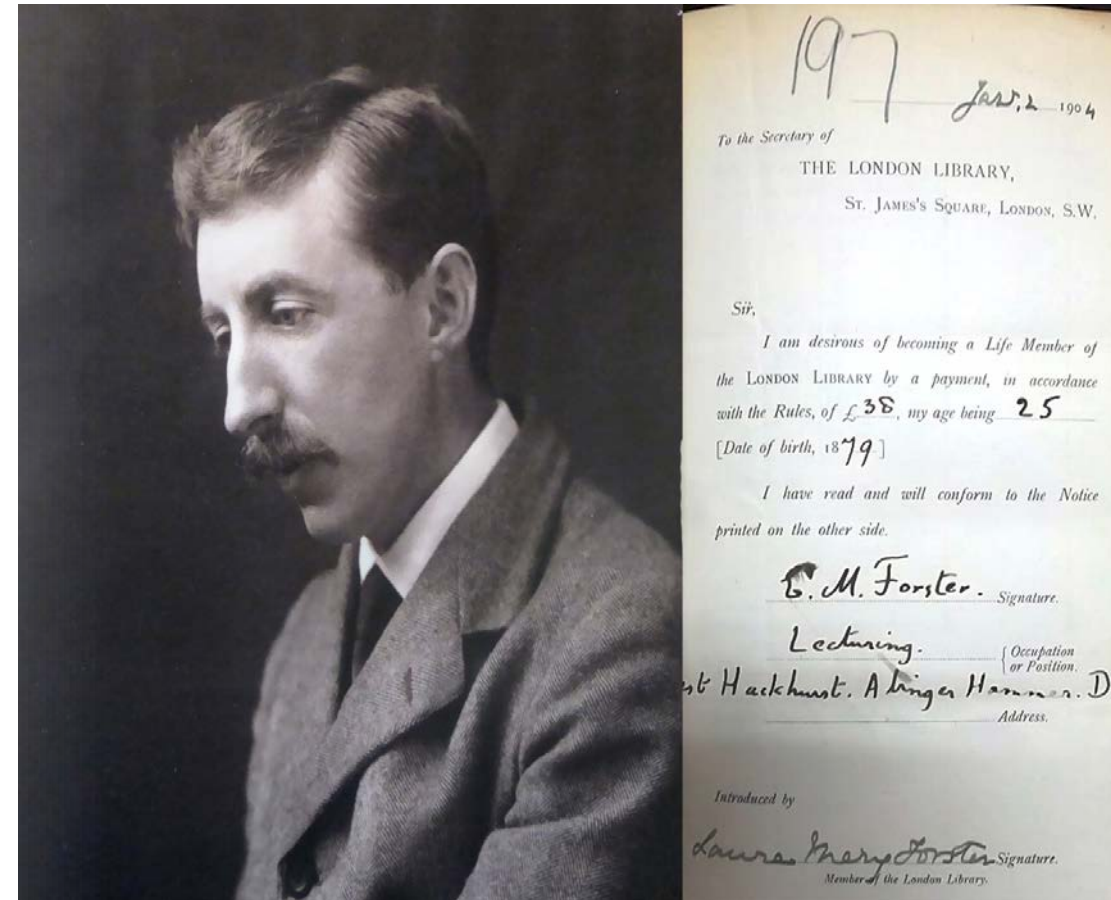
E. M. Forster, “The Machine Stops” p. 103

“[H]e saw only dying light and a dead land.”

E. M. Forster, *Maurice* p. 101

“Maurice had no use for Greece. His interest in the classics had been slight and obscene, and had vanished when he loved Clive. [...] Italy had been very jolly – as much as one wants in the way of sight-seeing surely – but in these latter days Greece had cropped up again. Maurice hated the very word, and by a curious inversion connected it with morbidity and death. Whenever he wanted to plan, to play tennis, to talk nonsense, Greece intervened.”

E. M. Forster, *Maurice* pp. 96-97



A
SHORT VISIT
TO
THE IONIAN ISLANDS,
ATHENS, AND THE MOREA.

BY
EDWARD GIFFARD, Esq.,
OF PEMB. COLL. OXON.



The Khan of Vourlia

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
MDCCCXXXVII.

“Forty years ago he had caught the fever of Hellenism, and all his life he had felt that could he but visit that land, he would not have lived in vain. But Athens had been dusty, Delphi wet, Thermopylae flat, and he had listened with amazement and cynicism to the rapturous exclamations of his companions.”

E. M. Forster, “The Road from Colonus” p. 80

“Forster visited Greece and wrote the story in 1903. It was published in June 1904. The action takes place on Tuesday, 18 April. If this conjunction of day and date is accurate, the year must be 1899.”

Thomson, George H., “Where was the Road from Colonus?”, In G.K. Das and John Beer (eds.), *E.M. Forster: A Human Exploration*, London 1979: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 28, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-04359-0_4.

The Khan of Vourlia, Peloponnese

Giffard, Edward, Esq. *A short Visit to the Ionian Islands, Athens, and the Morea*. London, John Murray, MDCCCXXXVII [1837].

Title page: The author and his companions prepare their dinner at Vourlias, a famous inn on the route from Tripolis to Sparta, close to Mystras.

Characters

The British:

Mr. Lucas

Ethel

Mr. Graham

Mrs. Forman

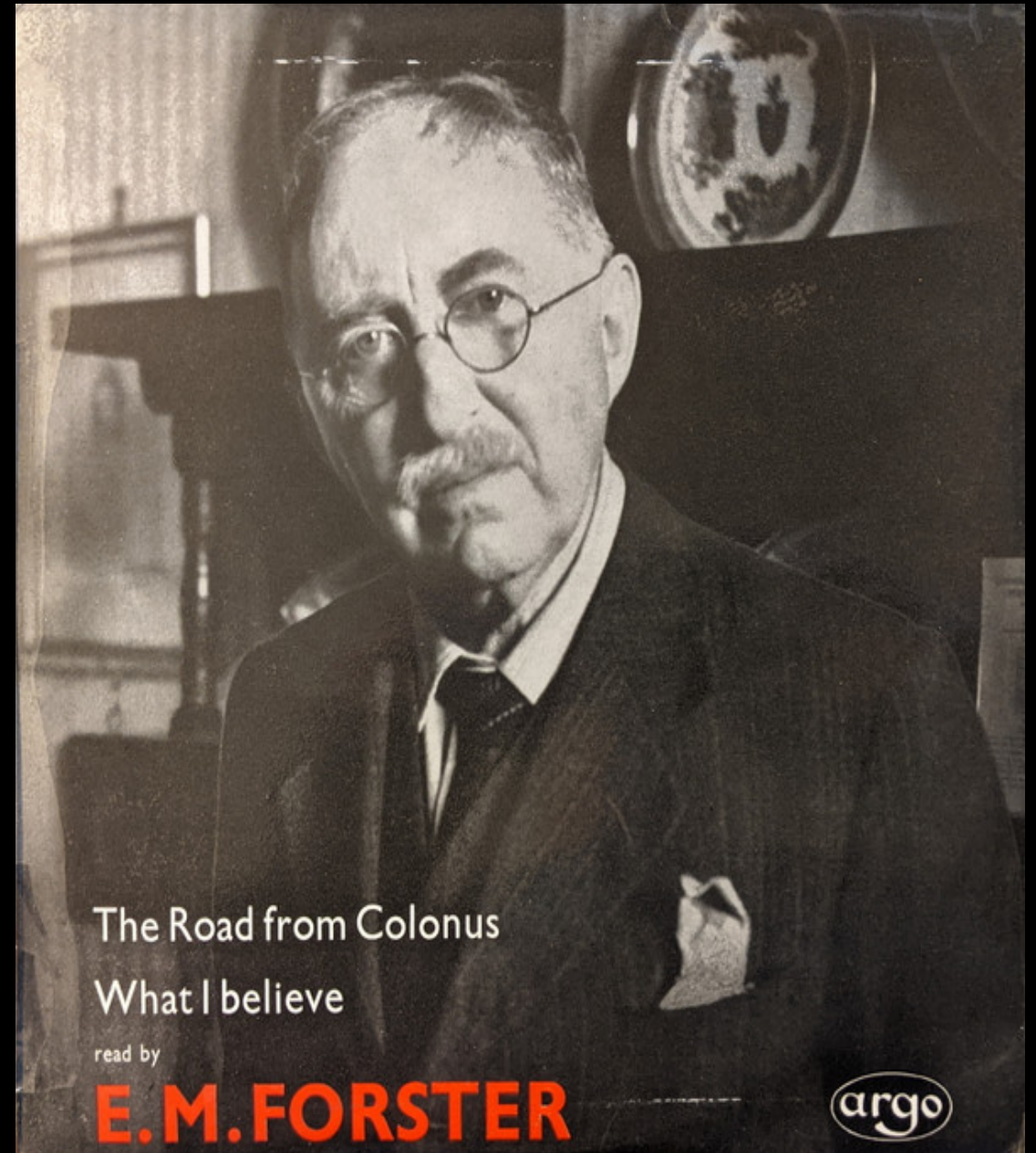
The Greeks:

The Dragoman

An old woman (Maria Rhomaides)

A middle-aged woman (daughter of Rhomaides)

A young man and two children (grandchildren of Rhomaides).



“For the enormous
plane that leant
towards the Khan was
hollow—it had been
burnt out for
charcoal—”

E. M. Forster, “The Road from
Colonus” p. 80



“In their midst was hidden a tiny Khan or country inn, a frail mud building with a broad wooden balcony in which sat an old woman spinning, while a small brown pig, eating orange peel, stood beside her. On the wet earth below squatted two children, playing some primaeval game with their fingers; and their mother, none too clean either, was messing with some rice inside. As Mrs. Forman would have said, it was all very Greek [...].”

E. M. Forster, “The Road from Colonus” pp. 79-80



(62) Kahn of Bachouni, a rest station on the mountainous Sparta Road (looking north), Greece. Copyright 1903 by Underwood & Underwood.



Underwood & Underwood, Publishers,
New York, London, Toronto, Canada, Omaha, Kansas,

Worles and Underwood, Publishers,
Washington, D.C.

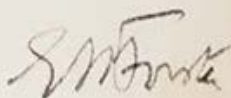
(62) Kahn of Bachouni, a rest station on the mountainous Sparta Road
(looking north), Greece.
Copyright 1903 by Underwood & Underwood.

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

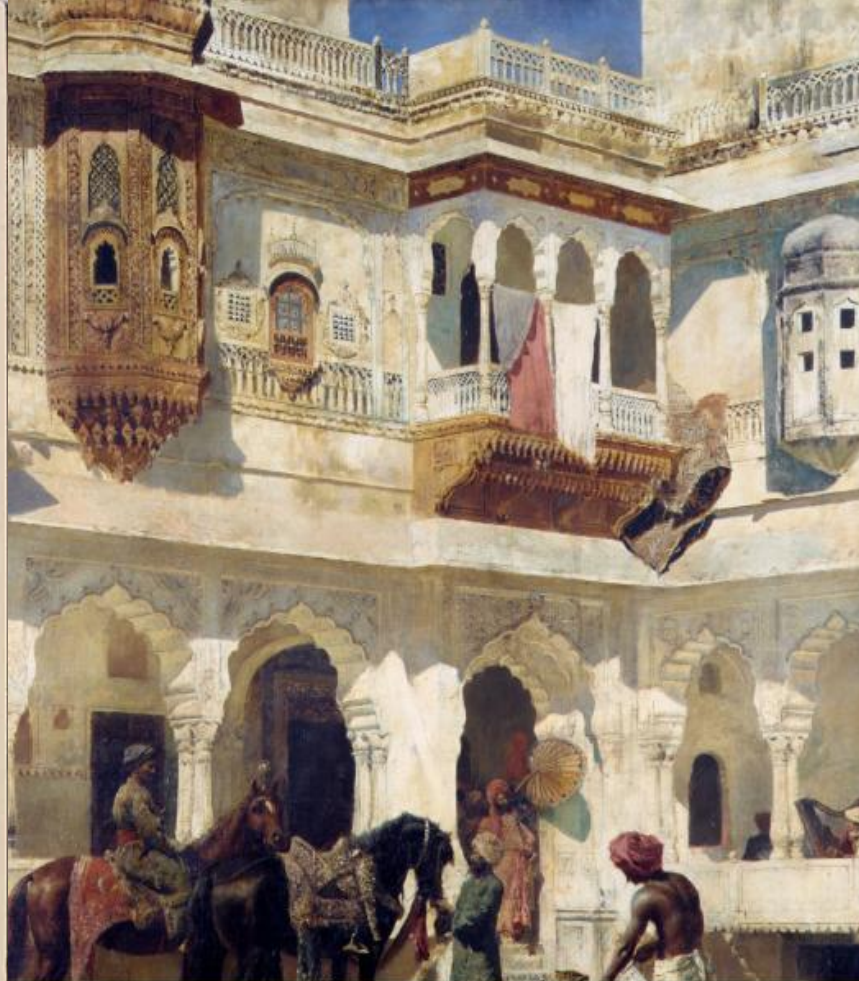
BY

E. M. FORSTER

Author of "Howards End," "A Room
with a View," etc.



LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.
1924
[All rights reserved]



M O D E R N

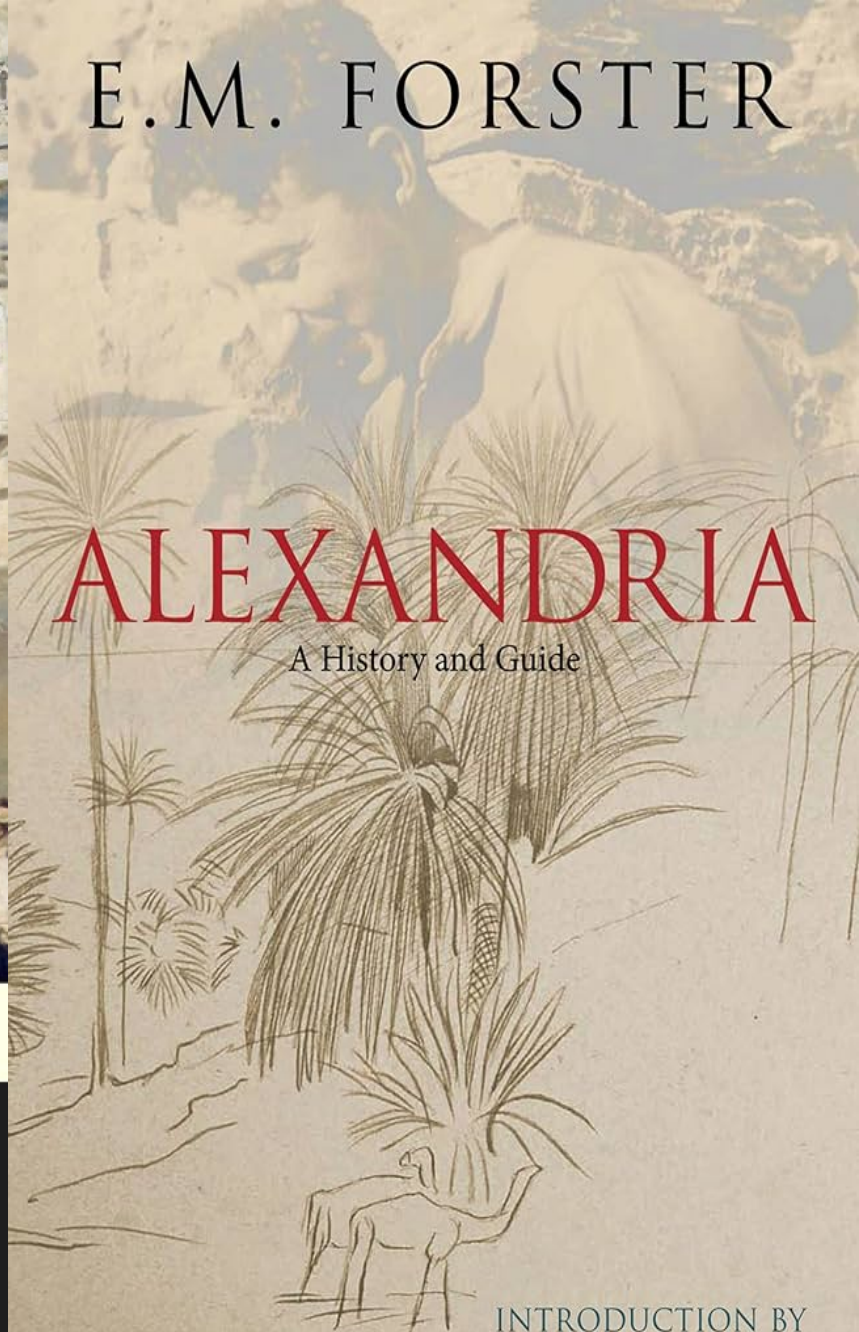
S E R I A L

A Passage to India
E. M. Forster

E. M. FORSTER

ALEXANDRIA

A History and Guide



TPP

INTRODUCTION BY
LAWRENCE DURRELL

“At last Ethel, to humour him, and not disinclined to air her modern Greek, went into the Khan with the astonished dragoman to look at the rooms. The woman inside received them with loud welcomes, and the young man, when no one was looking, began to lead Mr. Lucas’ mule to the stable.

‘Drop it, you brigand!’ shouted Graham, who always declared that foreigners could understand English if they chose. He was right, for the man obeyed, and they all stood waiting for Ethel’s return.

She emerged at last, with close-gathered skirts, followed by the dragoman bearing the little pig, which he had bought at a bargain.

‘My dear papa, I will do all I can for you, but stop in that Khan—no.’

‘Are there—fleas?’ asked Mrs Forman.

Ethel intimated that ‘fleas’ was not the word. [...]

‘They might knife you,’ was Mr. Graham’s contribution.”

E.M. Forster, “The Road from Colonus” pp. 85-86





Route de Sparte.

La halte au khani (1910)

Frédéric Boissonnas

(Swiss, 1858 - 1946)

Heliogravure/Photolithograph 9.9

× 13.7 cm (3 7/8 × 5 3/8 in.)

84.XB.584.82

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los

Angeles

<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects>

A stone had caught him in the middle of the back. It was thrown by the **little boy**, who was pursuing them along the mule track. He was followed by his sister, also throwing stones.

Ethel screamed to the dragoman, who was some way ahead with Mrs. Forman, but before he could rejoin them, another adversary appeared. It was the **young Greek**, who had cut them off in front, and now dashed down at Mr. Lucas' bridle. Fortunately Graham was an expert boxer, and it did not take him a moment to beat down the **youth's** feeble defence, and to send him sprawling with a bleeding mouth into the asphodel. By this time the dragoman had arrived, **the children**, alarmed at the fate of their brother, had desisted, and the rescue party, if such it is to be considered, retired in disorder to the trees.

"Little devils!" said Graham, laughing with triumph. **"That's the modern Greek all over.** Your father meant money if he stopped, and they consider we were taking it out of their pocket."

"Oh, they are terrible—simple savages! I don't know how I shall ever thank you. You've saved my father."

E. M. Forster, "The Road from Colonus" p. 87 (emphasis added)



18. AU KHANI D'ANESTI

TZIGANES

Au khani d'Anesti. Tziganes (1910)
Frédéric Boissonnas (Swiss, 1858 - 1946)
Medium: Heliogravure / Photolithograph
Anestias, Kavala, Greece (Place Depicted)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects>

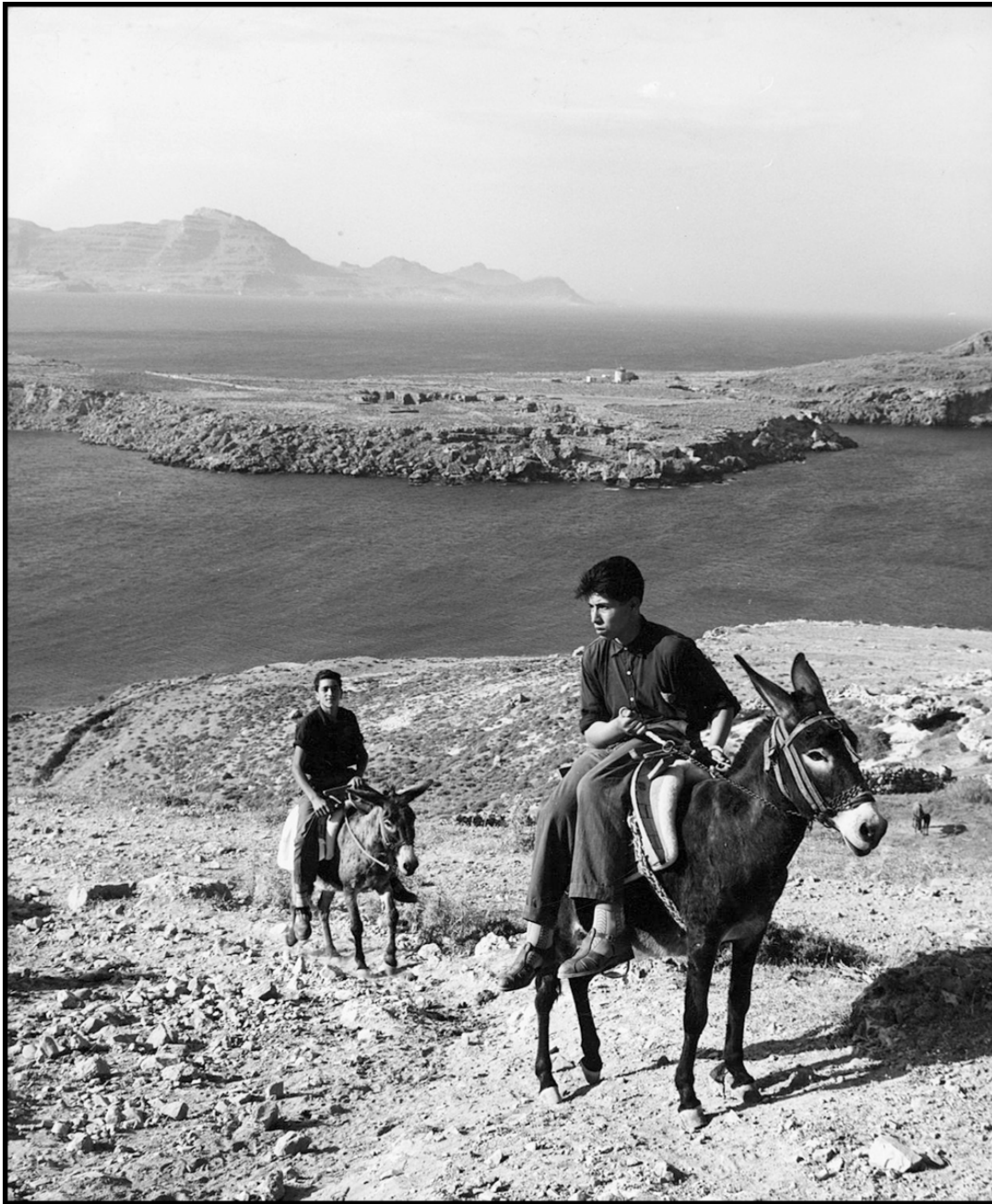
To sleep in the Khan with the gracious, kind-eyed country people, to watch the bats flit about within the globe of shade, and see the moon turn the golden patterns into silver—one such night would place him beyond relapse, and confirm him for ever in the kingdom he had regained. But all his lips could say was: “I should be willing to put in a night here.” [...] The inmates of the Khan only consisted of an old woman, a middle-aged woman, a young man and two children, and to none of them had he spoken, yet he loved them as he loved everything that moved or breathed or existed beneath the benedictory shade of the planes. [...] He would be a fool as well as a coward if he stirred from the place which brought him happiness and peace.

E. M. Forster, “The Road from Colonus” pp. 83-85



‘Listen to me! “A rural disaster.” Oh, I’ve hit on something sad. But never mind. “Last Tuesday at Plataniste, in the province of Messenia, a shocking tragedy occurred. A large tree”—aren’t I getting on well?— “blew down in the night and”—wait a minute—oh, dear! “crushed to death the five occupants of the little Khan there, who had apparently been sitting in the balcony. The bodies of Maria Rhomaides, the aged proprietress, and of her daughter, aged forty-six, were easily recognizable, whereas that of her grandson”—oh, the rest is really too horrid; I wish I had never tried it, and what’s more I feel to have heard the name Plataniste before. We didn’t stop there, did we, in the spring?’

E. M. Forster, “The Road from Colonus” p. 89



“A young man came singing
over the streams on a mule,
and there was beauty in his
pose and sincerity in his
greeting.”

E. M. Forster, “The Road from
Colonus” p. 82

Photo taken by Nicholson Museum curator William J Woodhouse in Delphi between 1890 and 1935 (Woodhouse Archive, NM2007.105.3) <https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/our-research/woodhouse-archive-flickr-project.html>

