

E. M. Forster in Egypt

Ahmed Al-Hout
King Abdulaziz University

Abstract: *The research aims at examining the kind of relationship the English novelist Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970) had with Egypt during his stay there for three years, when he traveled presumably for only six months to work as a Red Cross Searcher to report missing soldiers and interview wounded soldiers during the First World War (1914-1918). Egypt was then a colony of the British Empire. The research shows Forster's attitude towards Egypt, Egyptian life, customs, music and nature, and towards Egyptians and Europeans, including Anglo-Egyptians and other foreigners. It also explains the reasons behind the change of his view of Egyptians and traces his sympathy with them, especially after being acquainted with Mohamed el Adl, an Egyptian tram conductor. After leaving Egypt, he continued to be connected to it emotionally, literarily and politically. He revisited it three times later. He admitted its positive effect on him and he continued to support it politically. It inspired him some short stories, two geography and history books of ancient Egypt. A big deal of his experience in Egypt was echoed in two of his novels, his Indian novel *A Passage to India* and his posthumous novel *Maurice*.*

The relationship between E. M. Forster and Egypt is a special one in the sense that it is different from his relationship with other countries he had visited earlier. He toured some European countries, like France, Italy and Greece for the sake of tourism and for enjoying himself with his mother and his friends. He traveled to India to visit his Indian friend Syed Ross Masood, whom he taught Latin while the former was studying at Oxford University, England. In 1916, Forster was asked to join the army during the First World War, but he refused to do any kind of military work, not even joining an ambulance unit in Italy (Furbank, 1978: 19). He, however, was interested in securing a job with the Red Cross instead. He wrote to his friend, Virginia Woolf, an English novelist, on 17 October 1915 about how hard he tried to obtain the job: "I am leaving no stone a gentleman may turn to be sent to Egypt as a Searcher by the Red Cross" (Furbank, 1977: 20). His attempts succeeded and he was assigned to Egypt to work as a Red Cross Searcher to report missing soldiers and interview wounded ones. He left for Egypt in early November 1915, presumably for not more than six months, but he, surprisingly, stayed there for more than three years and returned to England in January 1919.

As he had already visited other countries before going to Egypt, it was naturally difficult for him to like the place or its people right away: first because it was his personal nature not to be impressed at the beginning, as the same happened to him when he visited other countries, like France, Italy and Greece, and second, because he had already seen other countries with which he tried to compare Egypt. Hence, neither Egypt nor the Egyptians appealed to him at first and he recorded his feelings and impressions in his letters to his mother and friends. He found the Egyptians, as he told Masood in one of his letters,

inferior to the Indians...both in charm, intellect and morality... Here there is only the pseudo-East - the pretentious, squalid, guttural Levant - and I shut my eyes to it on purpose, lest it spoil my pleasure in the true East, to which I shall one day return... (Furbank, 1977: 27-8)

After spending some time in Egypt, he desired to see India again and thought Egypt very inferior to it. He was worried that his stay in Egypt might put him against "the true East - Dewas, Aurangabad, Jodhpur..." (Furbank, 1977: 28). He, therefore, wanted to go direct to India from England without going to Egypt so that the Egyptian East would not spoil the view he held of India and he would not be stained by the Nile, as he wrote to Malcolm Darling (KCC, 6 Aug. 1916).

He wandered in Egypt, going from one place to another, visiting and touring the country and trying to learn about its history and people. He was pleased to be in cosmopolitan Alexandria, for he hated the idea of pure race (Forster, "A Lost Guide"). Having spent one month in Alexandria, he visited Damanhur, which is around twenty miles south of the Mediterranean coast. He described it in a letter to his mother on Christmas Day as a town (KCC, 1915) "built on the ruins of previous towns and rises on great a hill out of the plain" He greatly admired the beautiful scene at sunset, and thought that the minarets of the mosques and the spires of the cathedral and tall date palms made a "wonderful outline against the deep orange of the sky." He believed that the "wonderful sunsets" in Egypt were spectacular, "no effect in India compares with them." In another letter, he wrote to Alice Clara Forster that Egypt was "curiously unlike India, but thoroughly oriental" (KCC, 25 Dec. 1915). Then he visited Assouan and Luxor and described his impressions about them in a letter addressed to Malcolm Darling (KCC, 2 Dec.: 1917):

Assouan I like - indeed loved... But antiquities - i.e. Luxor - didn't impress me like the Indian. Of course I went in [a] different mood and at a moment when several worries were focusing....

He continued to tour the country and examine its natural landmarks and scenery. It appeared to him that its picture reflected in postcards was very different from that known to him and to other people and did not in any way suggest its real life or true scenery. In his article "Photographic Egypt," he wrote that he had found a big difference between the traditional picturesque Egypt he had known before and the real one he had seen. He wrote to *The Egyptian Mail*:

Queen Victoria, had she permitted her imagination to luxuriate, would have conceived the East as thus. To her, as to the photographer, there could have been cushions in front and the Pyramids behind, and maidens going with pitchers to the well in the middle distance, perhaps. It is doubtful whether such an Egypt ever existed. (Spear and Aly, 1988: 53).

He was somehow disillusioned about its romantic and atmospheric nature. After widely touring the city, he, decided to write a book about it, he called it later *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*. He, therefore, started a wide reading in histories of the Ptolemaic and Christian periods. He also started working on a second book entitled *Pharos and Pharillon*. These two books were published after his departure for England in 1922 and 1923 respectively.

Egypt, in fact, did not always represent the same thing for Forster; it appeared to him once as only a part of Africa, and has nothing to do with the East or the West in the sense that it was neither glamorous nor mysterious as the East is, nor clearly shaped like the West. But when he visited the Montazah Palace in Alexandria, he felt that he was in real Africa, "the Africa of romance and pirates and shipwrecked heroines"¹ (KCC, Letter to Alice Clara Forster, 10 Jan., 1916) and his view of Egypt continued to acquire new impressions the more he stayed there and the more he toured the area. He found out that the Egyptian East was closer to Europe than to the "real East" of India. In a letter on 28 April, he wrote from Sidi Gaber to Florence Barger:

to one who has been to India, it is almost initiating - the 'real East' seems always vanishing round the corner fluttering the hem of a garment or the phantom of a smell. But on the whole, one's much nearer Europe than the East here.

Forster perceived it "as an atmospheric country" although residents did not perceive it so (KCC, 1916). Egypt, like Italy and Greece, reminded him occasionally of the natural scenery of England; he thought of Egypt near Rosetta as a Cambridgeshire or Surrey.

As he had decided to write about Egypt, he realized the need for collecting information and started touring the ancient archaeological Egyptian locations. He visited some Coptic churches in Old Cairo and in the area of Wady Naturn. He also saw 'Amr Ibn el-'As Mosque, by which he was greatly impressed. He admired Islam and attributed his admiration to its defiled form. He wrote to his mother on 20 February 1917:

Mohammedanism [Islam] undefiled is drearier than the dreariest Non-conformity, but fortunately it generally gets defiled - by Hinduism in India, Shi'ism in Persia, Christianity in Spain, Sicily, and Constantinople - and in its alloyed condition can produce beautiful art. (KCC, 20 Feb. 1917).

Islam appealed to Forster but he thought that he had to come to it through Hinduism in order to recognize its values and essence. He, in the meantime, showed his misunderstanding of it, of course, owing to his lack of knowledge about it. He uttered judgments based on mere personal observation and drawing of comparisons between the rituals of Islam and those of other religions, like Hinduism and Christianity. He wrote:

Islam, like Christianity, is troubled by the illogical and the idolatrous, but it has made a sterner fight against them. The Caaba, the worship of saints, the Mecca-position, do not succeed in obscuring the central truth: that there is no god but God, and that even Mohammed is but the Prophet of God (Forster, 1953: 147-8.)

This obviously suggests Forster's lack of knowledge of Islam, as he interpreted the ritual of compassing the Caaba as a pagan one, not knowing that it is, like other rituals, based on divine revelation and a part of the Islamic faith which does not recognize or admit any forms of the worship of saints. The Caaba, however, has never been an idol in Islam, and Moslems do not worship it. Muslims, also, compass it because of its holiness; it is the first mosque on earth.

Forster also visited el Azhar University in Cairo and seems to have been surprised by its "very queer, impressive and picturesque" atmosphere. He

wrote to his mother on 8 April 1918 (KCC) explaining to her the primitive methods of teaching. He gave a detailed description of it:

El Azhar is the Mohammedan university where they still teach that the earth is flat, & tc. It is situated in the courtyard and interior of an immense Mosque, tuition taking place entirely on the floor. There are infant schools--including little girls—who write with reed pens upon white sheets of tin which they wave at you for approbation. Older people learn the Koran by heart--swaying to and fro and moaning; others dispute upon sheep skins; others sleep and eat. It is very queer, impressive and picturesque: the interior of the mosque alone is as big as a cathedral and you see arcade after arcade of columns with these odd scenes at their bases.

During his stay in Egypt, Forster not only toured the country, read about its history and geography but also joined some local social activities there. He lived his life and mixed with the foreigners and Egyptians. At first, he felt more at home with the Europeans, especially the English with whom he shared almost everything. He attended musical parties and observed the reaction of the audience belonging to various nationalities. He observed how the reaction of the Italians to music was different from that of other nations; they reacted dynamically and physically. He described them as people who do not love music silently, unlike the other Europeans, especially the British. He enjoyed the music of the Italian composer Signor Enrico Terni, who was one of his friends there. Enrico gave concerts in San Stefano and Alexandria. Forster compared himself to him in the sense that both of them were talented individuals living in Egypt in exile as Forster thought. He suggested in what he has written about him that the lack of creation of the talented people was attributed not to the "unheroic talent" but rather to the situation of living on an unheroic "soil," in an "unheroic age." He wrote:

We are exiled here in Egypt for the purpose of doing various little jobs - eggs, cotton, onions, administration and so on - and of the population of exiled little jobbers, it is impossible that a heroic art should be raised. (KCC, letter to Barger, 18 Nov. 1917: 2).

The Egyptian music did not appeal to him although he tried to listen to it. In fact, he failed to enjoy it and found it not only different from the English or European music but also very much inferior in rhythm and traditional instruments. He despised it and looked down upon those who played it for their lack of creativity. He wrote to Barger how he listened to

some native music - such bald bad stuff played on the oadh (a kind of guitar) - and a silly little drum. These people are most uninventive and puerile. (KCC, letter to Florence Berger, 14 Oct. 1917).

Forster persistently made comparisons between himself and others, between Egypt and other countries, between Egyptians and others, between the British and others, and between Muslims and Christians. He, particularly at the beginning of his stay there, compared the Egyptians to Indians and found them more attractive in shape. He wrote that Egypt

has an advantage over India, that land of thin legs and swollen tummies. Here [in Egypt] the men are splendidly made and often finely featured. They are queer creatures, attentive in their good moments and worrying in their bad. I don't find my heart going out o them at all yet (Forster, 1952: 21)

Although he went to Egypt without preconceptions about the Egyptians or Egypt. He hoped that he would not be like the Anglo-Indians in India, whom he had met earlier during his visit to India. He himself had been extensively against their way of thinking and prejudice towards the native Indians. Contrary to his expectations, he did not feel comfortable with the Egyptians and felt alienated in the new environment. He ended in extremely hating both the place and its inhabitants. In fact, he was disgusted after ten months of stay; he "acquired an instinctive dislike to the Arab voice, the Arab figure, the Arab way of looking or walking or pump shitting or eating or laughing or anything." He considered this to be "damnable and disgraceful" and blamed himself for it (KCC, letter to Malcolm Darling, 6 Aug.: 1916). He tried to know the reason behind this, once attributing it to his getting old, another to the war, and sometimes he thought that the Arabs were "intrinsically worse." He could then, as he thought, understand them and justify the anger of the Anglo-Indians whom he did not respect because of their arrogance and prejudice towards, and abuse of the Indians (KCC, letter to Malcolm Darling, 6 August 1916).

It is, however, possible to say that Forster's approach to Egypt and Egyptians was an example of the conflict that Westerners experience in the East. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of the East appear to be the same to the Westerners, as the Westerners themselves appear to be the same to Easterners at first, and this is psychologically explained; they appear to be different from the Europeans in everything: colour, race and culture. This picture changes in time, when the individual identities of the people start to acquire distinct shapes after some direct experience with

them and when more familiarity is achieved between the individuals belonging to different races. For some time, Forster disliked Egyptians and regarded them as worthless people. He, nevertheless, was not happy with the way he felt, for he went against his ideals of integrity and equality. He saw them as being greatly different from him and from his people. He found some of their customs repellent and off-putting, such customs as "slackness". He expressed his fear of the possibility of contracting slackness himself; he attributed it to the prevalent local hot weather and expressed his complaint of it to Florence Barger in a letter describing himself as "a slacker from the land of slackness" (KCC, 2 Aug. 1917). In another letter he expressed the same feeling and admitted his defeat by the climate:

I wish I didn't feel so slack. The climate has felled me, though it is bearable thermometrically. (KCC, 6 Sept. 1917).

This is one reason why Forster could justify certain customs, like slackness, he could not apprehend at first, but when he started to contract it himself, he knew the effect of the climate on all.

In spite of his psychological feeling of discomfort in the Egyptian milieu, Forster was keen on having some form of inspiration to write fiction, but that did not happen then. He thought that the effect of the long First World War on Egypt was fundamentally responsible for the lack of inspiration to create or innovate, or even to produce anything new. He noticed that the general atmosphere was depressive and pessimistic. The long time of the war exasperated both the soldiers as well as the civilians. In a letter to his mother, he wrote about the general dissatisfaction of the soldiers he interviewed:

Those [soldiers] who wait fighting want to fight, and those who have fought never want to fight again. What do people mean when they say that there is a spiritual satisfaction to be gained from war? Discontent beforehand and disgust afterwards--that seems to sum it up. (KCC, letter to Alice Clara Forster, [Feb. 1916?]).

He felt that the British soldiers acquired new negative perceptions about King and Country. These two things were no longer regarded as being sacred. While visiting the suffering soldiers in the hospitals he could read their feelings of dissatisfaction and wrote to Dickinson.

It's more a wave of helpless indignation that still shakes me so that I look down the ward at the suffering and the efforts of the able doctors and nurses to alleviate it and wonder how long the waste must all go on. (Lago and Furbank, 1983: 253).

He also wrote to Masood that the war was the cause of all that was evil and it "saps away one's spirit even when one's body's whole still" (Lago and Furbank, 1983: 253).

In another letter to Dickinson, he wrote to explain the stultifying effect of a purely practical life on the imaginative capacity of the individual:

I understand better now why everyone's so stupid. Once immersed in a job, all the wonder and alertness begin to go. What an immense gulf between work and creation! Did it really not exist in the Middle Ages. (KCC, letter to G. E. Dickinson, 5 December 1915).

He thought that to spend one's time in work and only work is death in life for man and in order to stop that one should know where to draw the demarcation line before it engulfs him completely.

In such an environment, it was not easy for Forster to change his attitude of dislike towards Egyptians. It remained for some time until it gradually vanished and he felt that he started to like the Egyptians more and more. This happened when he was acquainted with one Egyptian tram conductor, called Mohammed el Adl, with whom he had a homosexual affair, and with whom he personally identified himself. This was one major step in the life of Forster; it considerably contributed to the change of his attitude towards Egyptians. He described his Egyptian friend as a special Egyptian, the "pick" of the natives and el Adl regarded himself as being different from his father. He said once to Forster: "I have always ate [sic] apart and lived apart and thought apart. Perhaps I am not my father's son." Forster learned so much from him about Egypt and Egyptians. He wrote:

I can scarcely believe him the son of Egypt, for there is no Nile mud either in his body or mind. How misleading generalisations are, whether racial or social. I envy children their power of regarding each person as a new species. (Lago and Furbank, 1985: 257).

Forster's relationship with el Adl represented the turning point in his life; he more than any time before felt so sure of himself and independent,

especially from his mother who had always dominated him, and, on more than one occasion, he expressed that special feeling to his friends. In a letter to Florence Barger, he wrote:

I wish I could convey to you what I feel at this unique time - far far from the greatest time of my life, but for me quite new. It isn't happiness: it's rather - offensive phrase - that I first feel a grown up man. (KCC, letter to Barger, 1 June 1917).

This new feeling had a great effect on his personality. He also wrote on 23 April 1917 to Edward Carpenter: "I have never felt so independent or so sure of myself before" (KCC).

By having such a relationship with someone who is from a different culture, race and colour, it was for Forster a major challenge that he overcame, and it, in turn, transfigured and transformed him. El Adl was socially inferior to Forster; he was a tram-conductor, and this kind of relationship is disapproved by the hierarchical English society. Also, El Adl belonged to a different society which was regarded by the English as inferior, he was a member of the subject race whereas Forster was an individual from the ruling state. Forster knew that he was challenging the established social and moral conventions of his society. He wrote to Florence Barger explaining to her this kind of relationship:

by some trick of the nerves I happened not to be frightened. It was merely the pressure of habit and social conventions trying to make me behave as if I was afraid, which is corrupting. ((KCC, "el Adl memoir", 1922-29, 1960, F 2/11: 18)

He attributed his courage to el Adl's personality which encouraged him to challenge and overcome all kinds of difficulties. He wrote to Barger:

The practical difficulties - there is a big racial and social gulf -are great: but when you are offered affection, honesty and intelligence with all that you can possibly want in externals thrown in (including a delightful sense of humour), you surely have to take it or die spiritually. (ibid)

El Adl himself inquired from Forster about whether the purpose of Forster's relationship with him was for physical reasons; he was not willing to get involved physically and the relationship started to be based on affection, honour and honesty first. El Adl rejected the sex part of the relationship at first and described it as a disgrace, but he seems to have

accepted it gradually. This relationship across social and cultural barriers is developed in *Maurice*. When Forster realized the advantages of this relationship with el Adl, he wished, as he wrote to Florence Barger, that he had been writing the "later half of Maurice [then]." "I know so much more. It is awful to think of the thousands who go through youth without ever knowing." He wrote that his "luck has been amazing" (Lago and Furbank, 1985: 257-8) He further wrote to Florence Barger on 25 August 1917 about the intimacy, happiness, friendliness and tolerance he felt when he was with him:

When I am with him, smoking or talking quietly ahead, or whatever it may be, I see, beyond my own happiness an intimacy, occasional glimpses of the happiness of 1000s of others whose names I shall never hear, and know that there is a great unrecorded history. I have never had anything like this in my life - much friendliness and tolerance, but never this--and not till now was I capable of having it, for I hadn't attained the complete contempt and indifference for civilisation that provides the necessary calm. (Lago and Furbank, 1985: 274).

The strength of the affectionate personal relationship led Forster to change his attitude towards the British in Egypt and towards the situation imposed by the British rule on Egypt. He gradually identified himself with el Adl and with his views. He defended the Egyptian causes and attacked the British ruling class for the injustices committed by them. He, in fact, started to see things from the point of view of the poor natives who suffered as a result of the arrogant and insolent British rule. He was angry with the British administration of the affairs of the Egyptian people and censured the British abuse of power. He wrote: "We [the British] broke promises and made mistakes both before and during the war" (Lago and Furbank, 1985: 269). He believed that the racial prejudice of the British, and their contempt and disregard of the natives were offensive and an expression of their inefficiency which eventually led to the racial conflict between both sides. He personally witnessed some incidents of racial discrimination in the Gezira Club, for example. Egyptians were prohibited from joining the club because of their origin. Forster criticized such rules in his novel *A Passage to India*, where the Indians are not allowed into the clubs of the British. Likewise, they were regarded as socially and racially inferior. Furthermore, the British and other foreigners in Egypt monopolized most of the important jobs and excluded the natives. This situation is echoed in *A Passage to India*, when Hammidullah says to Fielding,

Well qualified Indians also need jobs" and question the British injustice by saying "is it fair an Englishman should occupy one when Indians are available? (Forster, 1924; 1978: 116.)

Forster also wrote a pamphlet in which he sympathized with the Egyptians and criticized the British for their racial arrogance and attacked Lord Cromer - the British Consul-General then - the colonial administrators and their wives, who were mainly responsible for the introduction of racial arrogance in Egypt.

Forster felt a change in the attitude of the tolerant Egyptians. He noticed how they welcomed the British troops at first. He himself was dressed in khaki during the war, yet he was not exposed to any sort of danger. He remarked that he visited native quarters and the country and he was received kindly in both places. He also entered mosques peacefully, but, meanwhile, realized that "evil influences were at work then" (Forster, "Egypt": 5). He witnessed this and saw the disappointment of the Egyptians because of injustices committed by the British against them. He said: "During the winter of 1918-19 the natives, including the peasantry, became definitely anti-British: I noticed the change." The British appeared more than before as intruders. The imperial Government was changing the names of places and the British Army broke up ancient buildings for the stones to build roads (Forster, "Egypt": 6).

Thus, the disappointment of the Egyptians was not unjustified, they felt they were neglected and deprived of their rights by the Europeans in Egypt. The Europeans belonging to different nationalities (mainly British, Greek, Italians, and French) were not more than a quarter of a million while the Egyptian population consisted of thirteen million. Forster remarked that the foreigners in Egypt possessed "most of the business, banking, and industrial enterprise" and that their presence caused "many difficulties." He believed that they

At the worst they include some unmitigated scoundrels, at the best they contain men of character and culture whom it is a privilege to have known; but in all cases they are aliens in Egypt and have come to exploit it...(ibid)

He knew that they did not have a friendly relationship with the natives; they had no respect for "Oriental ways", whether they were agnostics or Christians, they

have no sympathy for Islam, and they feel for the natives a fear that too often proceeds from a bad conscience ... at bottom their interests and those of British Imperialism are the same. They dread a strong native government (Forster, "Egypt": 9).

This feeling of animosity and the conflicting interests of both of the foreigners and the Egyptians generated a new spirit of hostility and hatred. The oriental Christians there did not escape his criticism for their negative role in the Egyptian life and politics, although they were Arabs themselves. George Antonius, a Syrian Christian, was an example of those people who worried most about their interests and benefits and supported the use of force against the Egyptians. He was working then as a censor for the British authorities in Alexandria. Forster wrote in his diary for 13 September 1920 what he thought of Antonius and the confrontation between the British and the natives:

... Antonius is here ... Long discussion upon the Egyptian situation. Officers inclined to shoot down the gippos [Egyptians] and did at Damanhur: but Boyle at Alexandria commanded moderation. At Assiout the English funk'd. This precipitated the siege which was mainly conducted by Bedouins. These oriental Christians are the jackals of Western powers. He [Antonius] denigrated the modern reformers for not opposing the extremists. (Forster, "Egypt": 9)

Forster criticised the Christian Syrians and compared them to the Americans. He wrote that they, "like the Americans there, only retain their footing as jackals to the British." He knew that once the British leave Egypt, the others would go with "less dignity." That is why one of Forster's English friends in Alexandria called G. H. Ludolf "dislikes them and likes the Egyptians." Ludolf says that the oriental Christians "live by making mischief and are greatly responsible for our – [the British] unpopularity. And Antonius' remarks about the Egyptians to me were all part of an elaborate denigration..." Forster knew the selfish interests of the Oriental Christians and expected that

If the Report passes Parliament he [Antonius] will be dumped back in to Syria, where he does not want to be for nuts. God damn those Oriental Christians! I understand why the Turks cut their throats. (Lago and Furbank, 1983: 317-8.)

With the end of the First World War, Forster finished his Red Cross services and decided to go back to England but just before his departure

for England in January 1919, Forster visited Mansurah to see el Adl. They walked together in its fields in the morning and the place appeared to him "awfully like Cambridge... Flat with ditches and in the distance misty farms and trees" (Lago and Furbank, 1983: 299)

A few months after his departure from Egypt, Foster looked at his whole experience in Egypt as something that was worth the efforts and time he spent there. It was something which he never regretted and always remembered as something which contributed to his life in spite of the boredom he experienced there. At least, he learned how to swim and how to use the telephone. He wrote to Hugh Walpole on 5 July 1919:

I came back from Egypt at the beginning of the year--was there three years, sometimes bored, sometimes not: not bad years on the whole: any how I learnt how to use the telephone and how to swim. (Lago and Furbank, 1983: 304).

Forster's long and enduring relationship with Egypt, like his relationship with the other countries he had visited, continued to grow after he left the country. The immense effect Egypt had on his maturity and experience continued to affect his life and contributed considerably to the writing of two of his novels, *A Passage to India* and *Maurice*, and some short stories, such as "The Life to Come" and "An Unfinished Short Story" (1980). Besides, he wrote two history and geography books of ancient Egypt.

The personal relationship between Forster and el Adl not only changed the former's attitude and views towards Egypt and the Egyptians, it gave him the inspiration he needed to write fiction. He had already been inspired by other countries' culture and environment and now the turn of Egypt has come to work its spell on him.

He thought of making use of his relationship with el Adl, his reminiscences and experience there by writing something publishable, especially after he heard of el-Adl's death. He wrote to Florence Barger on 25 May 1922 (KCC):

I simply don't know what to do with this great perfect thing. His death doesn't destroy it but mine will, and as for getting it into a book - the wind blows as it listeth, as you said and just now seems not to blow at all.

El Adl became like an apparition appearing frequently in Forster's thoughts, ideas and dreams. He decided to revisit Egypt and when he arrived there, more than one month later, he wrote in his diary for 27 June 1922 (KCC):

...his ghost as one needing forgiveness came out from the curtain in a sort of way, conceived of as taller than normal. The affair has treated me very gently. Nearest approach to a shock when I landed at Port Said and he was not there. I think of writing all out, but fear I may then remember what I write instead of what happened.

Around ten days later he admitted to Florence Barger in a letter dated 7 July 1922 (ibid.) that he was inspired by el Adl to write a short story he called "The Life to Come." He wrote to Florence Barger, in a letter dated 7 July 1922 (KCC): "I have just written a short story which is his [el Adl's] in another sense, though I did not realise that when I started." The story, as he described it, "violent and wholly unpublishable." He did not know whether it was good". By doing so, he intended to immortalize his friend el Adl. He, therefore, wrote in his "El Adl Memoir" (KCC: 9): "I have written a story because of you and dedicated a book to you and you are more real than in these direct invocations". The book Forster dedicated to el Adl was his second Egyptian book, *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923). The dedication is a few Greek words meaning: "O Hermes, the conductor of Souls". By associating el Adl with Hermes, Forster intended to bestow immortality on him, by making him a symbol of both life and death, as Hermes is considered to be. El Adl remained living in Forster's imagination but he gradually got dimmer and dimmer. Forster addressed him in his El Adl memoir and contrasted him with his house, where el Adl used to live. He promised that he would visit it in order to remember its dead resident (Forster, "El Adl memoir" 1922-29; 1960: 17-18).

Forster was inspired by his relationship with el Adl to write another short story which he started but did not finish - "An Unfinished Short Story". Forster presents Egypt in this story as a place for adventure and sexual escapades away from restrictive and conventional British life. It offers a service held to be risky for Englishmen like Gregory Dale, who goes to Egypt for a short stay with his wife. Gregory's affair with a local woman echoes Forster's with el Adl, who gave Forster the sexual release he wanted. Egypt is described as a convenient place for the British middle-class character to break in which the moral code of his class, for the risk in Egypt is more much more limited than it is in England. Egypt is

portrayed by Forster as the place for Gregory to go "native" and liberate himself from his English wife's control and oppression that make him feel obliged to belong to her in thoughts and inclinations. The East appears to him in his dreams as a land of real adventure of sensual desires. This brings to mind Forster's dreams about el-Adl and the restrictions he was obliged to obey from his landlady in Egypt. Gregory resents his wife and wishes that she were dead in order that "he could replace her with a costly harem" (Forster, 1972; rpt. 1975, 218). The local atmosphere reflects on his desire to go "native":

A glutinous and luxurious air moved off the Eastern harbour and spread over the waste spaces of the sea-front...The atmosphere was not beautiful, but it was sensuous and venal, and suggested that if you cared to do wrong in it you would come to no great harm. (Forster, 1972; 1984: 219)

Both of Alexandria and Cairo are portrayed in the story as two cities of vice and lust, or "two buckets...if you emptied the dirty water out of one you filled the other" (Forster, 1972; 1984: 219). Forster, ironically, blames the British ruling class for the spread of vice in Egypt; instead of trying to eradicate vice, they actually add to it, as it is the case with Gregory Dale whose wife and other women work together to clean the city of its corruption and immorality while he looks for a corrupt woman to satisfy his desire. He goes to the poor quarter of the city where he can see the sensual women indulged in sensuality and whose customers are ironically British. Ironically again, the woman with whom he has an affair is French, Mademoiselle Marcel.

In another short story, "The Other Boat," Forster explores the effect that foreign people in the British colonies have on the life of British soldiers. He ironically shows the defeat of the British soldiers who truly ruled the occupied countries by the sword and failed to resist the natural elements, or the charming effect of the natives. Forster describes the burning heat of the sun as threatening to the Ruling Class on board ship:

the sun in those far-off days was a mighty power and hostile to the Ruling Race. Officers staggered at a touch of it, Tommies collapsed. (Forster, 1984: 205).

As Forster had not finished the writing of his two novels *A Passage to India* and *Maurice*, he included in them many of the events in which he was involved and many situations he met during his relationship with el Adl and his life in Egypt. The kind of feeling that Maurice has because of

his homosexual relationship with the lower class English friend, Alec Scudder, the gamekeeper, reminds of Forster's feeling towards his relationship with el Adl, who was a tram conductor. The cross-racial relationship between Forster and el Adl is echoed in *A Passage to India* in the relationship between Cyril Fielding and Dr. Aziz. When el Adl invited Forster to visit him at home, he described his house as "the Home of Misery" (Forster, Manuscript: 69). When Dr. Aziz invites Mrs. Moore and her friends, he feels ashamed of his house. He thinks of "bungalow with horror" because it was "a detestable shanty near a low bazaar" (Forster, 1923: 87). Like Forster, Fielding establishes a strong relationship with Dr. Aziz and realizes the damages which might be caused because of the British community.

It, however, should be mentioned that that Forster more than once burned some of his literary writings and some of them were related to Egypt. He believed that they were unpublishable because of their subject matter. He, however, did not burn the manuscript of his posthumous *Maurice* and the stories in *The Life to Come and Other Short Stories*.

One can conclude that surmise that Forster's relationship with Egypt did not end with his first stay while working as a Red Cross Searcher. He revisited it three times later on. He visited it in March 1921, as he was on his way to India during which he spent one evening in Port Said with his friend Mohammed el Adl; then, in January 1922, when he was on his way back to England from India and spent in Egypt some weeks. He wrote to his mother from the city of Suez (22 January 1922): "I shall stop 3 weeks or a month in Egypt if all is well in England" (Lago and Furbank, 1985: 20) and finally in September 1929, with Florence Barger (KCC, "el Adl memoir", 1922-29, 1960, F 2/11: 18). He was pleased with the way it was and he himself felt that he was 250 years a fortnight back, before visiting Egypt. He felt young again and described the independent Egypt after the British Empire as "more wonderful, beautiful, and amusing than can well be described" (Das and Beer, 1979: 174).

Thus Egypt did not mean anything significant to Forster at first, and then it gradually developed into being the most important phase in his life. It was responsible for his development and for his change of thoughts and attitudes. It made him see clearly the kinds of injustices committed by his ruling country. He remained attached to it emotionally, literarily and politically. Presently, most of his critical and fictional writings, especially *A Passage to India*, are prescribed as textbooks in most of the universities

around the world, for they examine and encourage personal relationships across cultural, racial and geographical barriers and emphasise the importance of friendship while showing the effect of occupation on both the occupier as well as the occupied.

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