Works by & about

E.M. Forster

THE CELESTIAL OMNIBUS

E.M. Forster

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WORKS BY & ABOUT E.M. FORSTER

THE LONGEST JOURNEY. THE CELESTIAL OMNIBUS.
PASSAGE TO INDIA. ‘T.S. ELIOT AND HIS DIFFICULTIES’.
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**First edition.** Forster’s first published novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, was published in 1905, and ‘[d]uring winter 1905-6 and all through the next year Forster was at work on *The Longest Journey*, a novel with strongly autobiographical elements (it was his own favourite) about Rickie Elliott, who is idyllically happy at Cambridge but then stumbles into marriage and a life teaching at an English public school. Its themes are truth and loyalty versus convention and self-interest, the English countryside versus suburbia, the constrictions of bourgeois marriage, the aesthetic impulse versus the worldly, the tragic result of ignoring the defining or “symbolic” moment’ (ODNB). *The Longest Journey* was published in April 1907 (probably on the 16th of April) in an edition of 1,587 copies, and a second impression of 525 copies was printed a few months later in June 1907.

Forster became a fellow, Stephen Keynes won a scholarship to King’s College, Cambridge. It seems likely that the ‘H. Rackham’ who previously owned this copy was Harris Rackham (1868-1944), the brother of the illustrator Arthur Rackham, and a classical scholar and fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge. Harris Rackham was also the husband of the suffragist and political activist Clara Dorothea Rackham (née Tabor, 1875-1966), who had been educated at Newnham College, Cambridge, and became the first woman Labour councillor on Cambridge city council in 1919. Clara Rackham would have served alongside Florence Ada Keynes (the mother of John Maynard, Margaret, and Geoffrey Keynes, and thus the grandmother of Stephen Keynes), who had become the first female councillor in Cambridge after married women had become eligible for the role in 1914. Harris Rackham had died in the year prior to Stephen Keynes’ arrival in Cambridge, and it seems likely that Stephen Keynes then acquired this copy while an undergraduate at Cambridge.

This copy is from the library of the noted bibliophile Stephen Keynes, a great-grandson of Charles Darwin, the founder and chairman of the Charles Darwin Trust, and a member of the Roxburghe Club. Stephen Keynes’ uncle and godfather John Maynard Keynes had been a friend of Forster’s and a fellow Apostle, and in 1945, the year before Connolly, *The Modern Movement*, 19 (‘the most romantic and passionate of the novels’); Kirkpatrick, *Forster* (1985) A2a.
FORSTER’S CELESTIAL OMNIBUS
‘THE FIRST OF BLOOMSBURY’S LITERARY WORKS […] TO INCLUDE BLOOMSBURY ART’


Octavo (184 x 135mm), pp. [viii], 164, [4 (advertisements)]. P. 95 misnumbered ‘94’. Running title printed in blackletter. (D3 with light marginal crease.) Original light brown cloth gilt after Roger Fry, upper board blocked with gilt ornamental design and lettered in gilt, lower board blocked in blind with publisher’s device, spine lettered and ruled in gilt, top edges gilt, light grey pictorial endpapers after a design by Fry. (Extremities very lightly rubbed, spine slightly faded). A very good, fresh copy in the original cloth. *Provenance*: Sir Geoffrey Langdon Keynes FRCP, FRCS, FRCOG, FBA (1887-1982; ownership signature on front free endpaper) – Stephen John Keynes OBE, FLS (1927-2017).

**First edition.** Published the year after *Howards End*, *The Celestial Omnibus* was the first collection of Forster’s short stories to be published, and collects six early pieces: ‘The Story of a Panic’, ‘The Other Side of the Hedge’, ‘The Celestial Omnibus’, ‘Other Kingdom’, ‘The Curate’s Friend’, and ‘The Road from Colonus’, which had previously appeared in *The Albany Review*, *The English Review*, *The Independent Review*, *The English Review*, and Putnam’s Magazine. *The English Review* praised it with the words: ‘[t]he half-dozen stories in this book are full of the finest writing: humour, tenderness, and a touch of malice sometimes – malice smiling through tears, the clear-sightedness of the humane ironist. They all deal with the country to which the Celestial Omnibus may be supposed to run, the land of truth and poetry, where fauns and dryads still play in the beech-wood’ (vol. 9 (1911), p. 532).

The present, first edition was a handsomely-produced volume with letterpress printed by the Chiswick Press, a striking binding designed by Roger Fry, and endpapers designed by Fry which illustrate the title story; it is also notable as ‘the first of [the Bloomsbury Group’s] literary works – and the only one of Forster’s – to include Bloomsbury art’ (S.P. Rosenbaum *Georgian Bloomsbury*. The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group 1910-1914 (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 64). The first edition of 1,000 copies was published on 11 May 1911 and was followed in February 1912 by a second impression of 500 copies.

This copy is from the library of the surgeon, literary scholar, and bibliographer Sir Geoffrey Keynes – the
brother of John Maynard Keynes, who had been a friend of Forster’s and a fellow Apostle – and was inherited by his son Stephen Keynes, the nephew and godson of John Maynard Keynes. Stephen Keynes, who was also a bibliophile and a member of the Roxburghe Club, won a scholarship to King’s College, Cambridge in 1945, the year before Forster became a fellow.


Octavo (188 x 120mm), pp. 335, [3 (publisher’s advertisements)]. (Some light spotting, heavier on first and last ll., a few ink marks, bookblock cracking at hinges and between U8 and X1, tears, apparently caused in production, on T4.) Original maroon cloth, upper board and spine lettered in black. (Light offsetting on free endpapers, spine faded, extremities lightly rubbed and bumped.) A very good copy. *Provenance: Jeremy Michael Wilson* (1944-2017, ownership signature on front free endpaper).

£450

**First edition.** Forster first travelled to India in 1912, and during his six-month visit he conceived the novel which became *A Passage to India*. The first seven chapters were written in England in 1913, but it was only completed some ten years later with the encouragement of friends such as Leonard and Virginia Woolf, and following a critical reading of the draft of T.E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, ‘which helped me to finish a book of my own’ (T.E. Lawrence, *Correspondence with E.M. Forster and F.L. Lucas. Edited by Jeremy and Nicole Wilson*. ([Fordingbridge], 2010), p. 9). Connolly comments that ‘Forster’s great novel bridges the Edwardian-Georgian era.

The Mahommedan Aziz, the Hindu Dr Godbole, the emancipated Englishman Fielding and the sibylline Mrs Moore are his most complete creations against a crisis that is emotionally experienced and also worked out ethically and philosophically. [...] “A miracle of intelligence, tact, irony, prudence and ability” (André Gide)."

This copy was previously in the collection of the distinguished Lawrence scholar Jeremy Wilson, the editor of T.E. Lawrence’s *Minorities* (London, 1971), and the author of the National Portrait Gallery catalogue *T.E. Lawrence: Lawrence of Arabia* (London, 1988) and the authoritative biography *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorised Biography of T.E. Lawrence* (London, 1989). Jeremy Wilson was also the co-founder, with his wife Nicole, of the Castle Hill Press, which has published scholarly editions of works by Lawrence and the definitive series of Lawrence’s letters, including Lawrence’s *Correspondence with E.M. Forster and F.L. Lucas*.


First English edition. First published in the New York Herald Tribune under the title ‘Some of Our Difficulties’ on 12 May 1929, and reprinted here two months later, Forster’s critical essay ‘T.S. Eliot and His Difficulties’ offers an interpretation of Eliot’s poetry based on the concept of horrors experienced but not expressed. ‘It was during the war that I first came across Mr. Eliot’s work. It was Egypt, no danger or discomfort; still it was the war, and while waiting for a tram in Cairo I sprained my ankle’ (p. 417), he begins, telling of his reading during the recovery period and identifying his unease within himself, the reader, not Eliot: ‘Mr. Eliot does not write for the lazy, the stupid, or the gross. [...] A reader who cannot rise to his level, and who opens a book as he would open a cigarette case, cannot expect to get very far’ (p. 419). The essay was later collected in Forster’s Abinger Harvest (1936).

Life and Letters was edited by the literary critic Desmond MacCarthy who was, like Forster, one of the Cambridge Apostles. ‘After the war and the Admiralty and a journey to South Africa, MacCarthy became literary editor of the New Statesman. [...] As before, and like other Apostles before him, MacCarthy called on Lytton Strachey, Robert Trevelyan, and Leonard Woolf to participate in this new venture [...]’. MacCarthy did even more as a literary entrepreneur after Oliver Brett made him editor of Life and Letters in 1928. [...] “Don’t forget”, he wrote to Lytton Strachey, “I am counting on you to write for Life and Letters [...]”’ (W.C. Lubenow, The Cambridge Apostles 1820-1914 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 217-218; Strachey contributed an article on Mandell Creighton to this issue).

This copy is from the library of the noted bibliophile Stephen Keynes, a great-grandson of Charles Darwin, the founder and chairman of the Charles Darwin Trust, and a member of the Roxburghe Club. Stephen Keynes’ uncle and godfather John Maynard Keynes had been a friend of Forster’s and a fellow Apostle, and in 1945, the year before Forster became a fellow, Stephen Keynes won a scholarship to King’s College, Cambridge.


Octavo (217 x 137mm), pp. 301, [1 (blank)], [2 (blank l.)]. Half-tone portrait frontispiece after George Richmond and 15 half-tone plates after Sir George Chalmers, John Hoppner, Richmond, *et al*. One full-page letterpress genealogy in the text. (A few ll. lightly creased.) Original royal-blue cloth, spine lettered in gilt, dustwrapper designed by Beryl Thornborough, not price-clipped. (Offsetting on free endpapers, spine slightly leant, extremities lightly bumped, dustwrapper slightly faded on spine, very lightly spotted, lightly rubbed at edges, lightly marked.) A very good, clean copy in the dustwrapper. *Provenance*: early reader’s notes in pencil on lower pastedown.

**First edition.** *Marianne Thornton* was the last of Forster’s full-length books and the second of his biographies (the first, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, had been published in 1934). Its eponymous subject was the author’s paternal great-aunt, and the book is based upon family papers, personal recollections, and archival sources. Forster explains in his preface that ‘[o]wing to its domestic character, the biography falls naturally into the four sections of Daughter, Sister, Aunt, and Great Aunt’ (p. 8). It spans the nineteenth century, documenting the huge changes of the era through the life of a woman at the centre of the Clapham Sect, whose family circle included William Wilberforce, T.B. Macaulay, and Hannah More.

Forster himself enters the narrative during her final years, and ‘Great Aunt’ (the last section of the book) is of interest for the important autobiographical material about Forster’s boyhood it contains. In 1887 Marianne Thornton left a significant bequest to Forster’s widowed mother Alice Whichelo, as Forster relates in the closing sentences of the book: ‘[s]he made a will which was of the greatest importance to me, though I did not know it at the time. She died worth about £20,000 [...] there were legacies to Laura Forster, to my mother, etc., and to me she left £8000. The interest was to be devoted to my education and when I was twenty-five I was to receive the capital. This £8000 has been the financial salvation of my life. Thanks to it, I was able to go to Cambridge – impossible otherwise, for I failed to win scholarships. After Cambridge I was able to travel for a couple of years, and travelling inclined me to write. After my first visit to India and after the first world war the value of the £8000 began to diminish, and later on it practically vanished. But by then my writings had begun to sell, and I have been able to live on them instead. Whether – in so stormy an age as
ours – this is a reputable sequence I do not know. Still less do I know how the sequence and all sequences will end, with the storms increasing. But I am thankful so far, and thankful to Marianne Thornton; for she and no one else made my career as a writer possible, and her love, in a most tangible sense, followed me beyond the grave’ (p. 289).

The first chapter of Marianne Thornton was issued in a slightly condensed form by Harcourt, Brace and Company (Forster’s American publishers), under the title Battersea Rise on 21 December 1955. This was a privately-printed volume which was given to friends of the author and the publisher as a New Year’s greeting, and the text was reprinted some months later in the April 1956 issue of the London Magazine. The first appearance of the complete text of Marianne Thornton was in this edition, which was published on 1 May 1956 in an edition of 8,685 copies at a price of 21s, the price printed on the dustwrapper of this copy. It remained in print for some time and later copies are known with a publisher’s price sticker on the dustwrapper flap giving a decimal price presumably dating from around the introduction of decimal currency in the UK in 1971.


Folio (282 x 173 mm), pp. xvi, 312. Mounted colour-printed portrait frontispiece of Forster after Dora Carrington. Original ‘Quarter Cloth Fine Binding’ of cream Rohalbleinen canvas backed boards covered with Fabriano Tiziano sides, gilt morocco lettering-piece on spine, top edges purple, light-brown endpapers. A fine copy. £250

First edition, limited to 377 numbered copies, this number 258 of 225 copies bound in cloth. Although Forster had met Lawrence fleetingly in 1921, the friendship between them commenced when Siegfried Sassoon (a friend of both) suggested that Forster would be a useful and constructive critic of Seven Pillars of Wisdom in late 1923, while Lawrence was revising and editing the work. Lawrence concurred and Sassoon lent his copy to Forster, who wrote a long and full letter about it to Lawrence in February 1924, while he was attempting to finish A Passage to India. The concentration on another author’s work seemed to assist Forster’s writing; he noted at the end of one letter that ‘your book helped me to finish a book of my
own. Seemed to pull me together’ (p. 9). Writing continued to be the central axis of their relationship, as Forster recalled in *T.E. Lawrence by his Friends*: ‘T.E. liked to meet people upon a platform of his own designing. In my own case it was the platform of aesthetic creation, where I had to figure as a great artist and he was a bungling amateur. This did not suit me in the least, but protests were useless, and after all the important thing was to meet’ (p. 282). Apart from the correspondence between Lawrence and Forster, this volume collects Lawrence’s presentation inscription in Forster’s copy of the ‘Subscribers’ Edition’ of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and Forster’s review of the Cape 1935 edition; Forster’s contribution to *T.E. Lawrence by his Friends*; texts relating to the *Letters of T.E. Lawrence* (which Forster had agreed to edit, although he later relinquished the task, which was eventually undertaken by D.G. Garnett); and Forster’s pieces on Clouds Hill and *The Mint for The Listener*.

The second part of the volume is dedicated to Lawrence’s correspondence with the author and classicist F.L. Lucas (1894-1967), who was (like Forster) a fellow of King’s College, Cambridge; had been a member of the Apostles; and had served with distinction during World War I, first on the Western Front and then in the Intelligence Corps (during World War II Lucas would work at Bletchley Park on the Ultra Project and prepare intelligence reports based upon Enigma decodes). Lawrence thought Lucas an excellent poet and pressed Forster to effect an introduction, which the novelist duly did in December 1925. Shortly afterwards Lawrence agreed that Lucas could read the 1922 ‘Oxford’ edition of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and in turn Lucas would dedicate his 1930 novel *Cécile* ‘To the author of “The Seven Pillars of Wisdom”’ (p. 287). The Castle Hill Press prospectus judged that *Correspondence with E.M. Forster and F.L. Lucas* ‘is one of the most important volumes in the T.E. Lawrence *Letters* series. It includes a number of previously unpublished letters, in addition to detailed editorial notes and a scholarly index’.

This copy is in the ‘Quarter Cloth Fine Binding’ of cream canvas backed maroon boards with stained top edges.


First edition. ‘Writers, like other people, are rooted in time and place, embedded in, growing and flowering out of, these conditioning soils, so that you will only with some pains sort their elements, disentangle the individual from the background and never (I think) quite; indeed, how could you, since all the background, the march of all the centuries, the crowding shades of all the dead up to that moment, of all the living in that moment, charge the lightest spoken word at
any given hour, with their unescapable rhythms, echoes, syntheses and purposes? (p. 7). Thus begins Rose Macaulay’s engaging study of *The Writings of E.M. Forster*, the first full-length study of Forster’s work, identifying Forster as ‘a product of [...] liberal bourgeois culture’ and also ‘a product of an upper-middle-class school and university, and conditioned more precisely by the fact that his college was King’s College, Cambridge, and his Triposes classical and historical. It is apparent that he fell in love with Cambridge’ (p. 9).


Dame Rose Macauley (1881-1958) had read modern history at Somerville College, Oxford, and was a prolific and prize-winning novelist. ‘In 1921 she rather self-consciously entered the Bloomsbury circle, forming a – sometimes strained – friendship with Virginia Woolf’ (ODNB); her friendship with Forster to which she alludes in the biographical chapter (‘[t]he writing of the biography of a relation or close friend is one of the most difficult literary jobs’, p. 257), and indeed her acquaintance with John Maynard Keynes, would have developed in this context. The Hogarth Press printed 2,250 sets of sheets of *The Writings of E.M. Forster*, of which 1,185 sets were used for this first edition issued in March 1938 and the remaining 1,065 sets were supplied to Harcourt, Brace for the American first edition issued in August 1938.

The light-pink dustwrapper of the first edition is known in two states: the first has the lettering printed in dark pink (as here) and the second has the lettering printed in blue (no priority assigned).

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First edition. King’s College Cambridge was E.M. Forster’s intellectual home for more than seven decades, albeit with interruptions. He first went up to King’s in the autumn of 1897, at a time when ‘it had a radical reputation and “an unconquerable faith in the value and interest of human beings”’ (ODNB, citing John Sheppard). Following the three years of his classics tripos he read history and was elected to the Conversazione Society, a self-selecting group of Apostles who met in secret to discuss each other’s papers on philosophical and moral questions’ (loc. cit.), but was unable to stay due to gaining only a second. This began the period of his travels and writing that would result in his famous novels and early writings. Yet Cambridge appears to have been the constant in his peripatetic life. ‘Early in 1927 he gave the Clark lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, published as Aspects of the Novel later that year; he was also elected to a supernumerary fellowship at King’s College and started to spend six weeks a year in Cambridge’; and in 1946, he returned to King’s with an honorary fellowship. ‘It was at King’s in May 1970 that Forster had a stroke’ (loc. cit.), and he died shortly afterwards.

Published upon Forster’s death, this pamphlet was written by Patrick Wilkinson, who was a lecturer in classics, Fellow of King’s College Cambridge from 1932, its Vice-Provost from 1961, and had also served at Bletchley Part from 1939 to 1945. It provides a familiar and sympathetic biography of Forster in the King’s context, in the form of Wilkinson’s chapter from Aspects of E.M. Forster (ed. Oliver Stallybrass (1969)), which had been published for presentation to Forster on his ninetieth birthday, ‘with a few photographs, alterations and amendments’ (p. [3]). It also included a new paragraph on Forster’s gifts of books to King’s by the College’s Librarian, A.N.L. (‘Tim’) Munby: ‘[f]rom time to time the Librarian would receive a note beginning with some formula such as “A little to disquantify my train, I am giving or throwing away a quantity of books. You will be obliged to accept this”'.
one.” “This one” was aunt Laura’s copy of the *Life of Charles Darwin*, bound by herself and with a Darwin letter inserted’ (p. 26).

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