

In Love and War

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The last summer

Surrey

A perfect idyll, English to the maximum – that was what I intended for the background of the storyline.

A scenery that was rural and green, with forests and fields and manor houses. A peaceful, placid region where time moves slower. Where children can grow up sheltered and happy and enjoy returning as grownups again and again. Home, in the truest sense of the word.



Harvest time, Surrey - John Clayton Adams, 1874

In the end, I chose Surrey. Photographies of then and now, descriptions of landscapes and people and biographical memoirs painted a picture of Surrey that corresponded to my idea of the Norburys' home.

There was also a practical consideration: Surrey adjoins to Berkshire, and immediately on the other side of the border the Royal Military College of Sandhurst is located, where Colonel Norbury teaches as professor for military tactics.

Close enough that Ben drives him there every day; also close enough that Grace, Ada and Becky can spontaneously ride there in the tilbury to surprise Stephen and his friends at the rugby match - for two hours in a carriage was not considered a long drive in those days.

And I was beguiled when I read about the bluebells flowering in the forests of Surrey each May. Blue lakes on forest clearings – a perfect setting for a gentle encounter between Jeremy and Grace.



Above all, one can find in Surrey such wonderful place names like Shamley Green or Givons Grove, like Woking or Weybridge, like Guildford, Abinger Common or Cranleigh Waters

Names that sound exactly like I imagined the Norburys', the Hainsworths' home. A world of green pastures and groomed gardens where one meets around a tea table. Where one maintains old values without being ossified in strait-laced conventions, in a pragmatic way taking a pride in the long history of the county. Where life is freer and more casual than in the city, with a certain ease, a bounce unknown further in the north.

I sat over old maps and newer ones, rummaged through images of landscapes, houses, rivers, railway lines, researched geographical properties, distances, flora and fauna and common field crops of that period, even characteristic garden plants of those days – and nevertheless the novel's Surrey is purely fictional.

Not because the manor of Shamley Green is actually situated somewhere else, just like that of Givons Grove.

But because I wanted to convey a specific vision of Surrey.



High Street, Guildford, ca. 1890

The Surrey for instance depicted in Jane Austen's *Emma*, where George Eliot wrote parts of *Middlemarch* and Charles Dickens passages of *The Pickwick Papers*. E.M. Forster lived and worked in Weybridge, and Tennyson spent the last years of his life in Surrey.

Connotations that strongly influenced my idea of this fictional Surrey – together with the atmosphere Ismail Merchant and James Ivory created in the 1980s and 1990s for the adaptations of Forster's novels: in *Howards End*, *Maurice* and above all in *A Room With a View*.

I wanted to have this vision of England in my novel, this way of life, these vibes and emotions. And when I wrote about Ada, her journey, her development, I had Forster's Lucy Honeychurch in mind, her impressions of Italy, her experiences there that change her so much back home in England

And if you happen to know *A Room With a View* (my favorite novel of E.M. Forster and one of my favorite movies) and, while reading *Beyond the Nile*, stop short at the scene at the river: it is no coincidence, I always wanted to write a scene like this.

Because of the movie. Because of Forster.

Just like Grace, Ada and Stephen, like Leonard, Cecily and Tommy, Becky also is a child of this landscape – although more enrooted in Guildford, the county's capital. A bustling but nevertheless placid town with an old town center, a cathedral – and last but not least the Holy Trinity Church, whose parish indeed used to extend as far as Shamley Green in those days.

Shamley Green is not only for the story itself some kind of anchor where all plotlines cross, but also for the young people in the novel. A place of yearning, in spite of all conflicts breaking open in the course of the novel – and a place some of the characters have to leave in order to return.

Shamley Green and Surrey have shaped Grace, Ada and Stephen, and to Becky, Shamley Green is the quintessence of everything she dreams about: another life than the one she has. A better life, an easier and more carefree one, for her embodied not only by Grace and her parents but especially by Stephen.



Holy Trinity Church, Guildford, ca. 1900



A Stream Near Shalford - Harry Sutton Palmer, 1906

Within the novel, Shamley Green is a synonym for Surrey and vice versa, and both also represent a certain peace and comfort, a sense of safety. And as much the characters may have changed during the course of the novel – in Surrey everything has still remained the same.

For Surrey stands also for the immutable, for everything that endures, that defies all storms of life.

Of houses and humans

When you consult a map of England and take a closer look at Surrey, you will actually find places named *Shamley Green* and *Givons Grove*, but not the corresponding manor houses.

They are not entirely fictional though: each house of the Norburys, the Hainsworths, the Digby-Jones' and the Ashcombe family is based on an existing house.

Shamley Green

Shamley Green is the main location of the novel. Here the story begins and ends, here all the characters' paths cross. Shamley Green is the epitome of home, of good times and cherished memories.

The destination of everyone's yearning.

The model for Shamley Green was Hatchlands Park, equally situated near Guildford.

Since the Norbury family is affluent but not rich and the Colonel only bears the title of a baronet, their home wasn't to be overly sumptuous; rather unpretentious instead and down-to-earth in a way – but above all, it had to be homely.

All this I found in Hatchlands Park. I adopted the exterior and the outline, just as the garden



Hatchlands Park ("Shamley Green")

design and the oaks surrounding the house. I also took up some details from the interior but all in all, imagined it simpler, more modest.

The long tradition of the estate and the fact that its first owner had been a captain in the East India Company were absorbed into the history of the Norbury family. Even the garden's rotunda really exists.

And I wish that one reader or the other shares at the end of the novel the characters' yearning for Shamley Green, thinking: I would like to be there now, at Shamley Green.

Givons Grove

Like with the Norburys and Ashcombes, the Hainsworths' manor house was to reflect the character and the lifestyle of its inhabitants. Not too luxurious on one hand, since the Earl himself but also Leonard and Tommy are unpretentious and easy-going, but on the other hand with a certain elegance and nobility, corresponding to class and wealth of the family, apparent in Lady Grantham and – although sometimes in a bitchy and arrogant way - in Cecily.

Polesden Lacey, equally situated in Surrey, matched up to every detail my vision of Givons Grove, up to the interior design that I adopted for the corresponding scenes in the novel.

And it is in the forest of Givons Grove that in May, the bluebells of Surrey are flowering.



Polesden Lacey ("Givons Grove")

Estreham House

Of old nobility with a drop of royal blood, immensely rich and therefore quite snobbish- the Ashcombe family had to have a massive, lavish kind of home – maybe even with a dash if scurrility.

As a model for Estreham House I chose Ham House, built on the riverbanks of the Thames near Richmond in 1610. With this house, I was able to draw from unlimited resources of inspiration, and I stayed close to facts not only regarding its name: I only relocated the bedrooms from ground floor to the first floor, the famous yellow room with the paintings of Watteau included.



Ham House ("Estreham House")

Many details from the history of Ham House found their way into the novel, the lost bloodstained ruff collar of Thomas More as well among them as the diamond, cut in the shape of a pomegranate, originating from the casket of Mary Stuart. Or the legend that the house is haunted. And the Christ's thorn, the Earl's pride, whose offshoot later puts down roots in the garden of Shamley Green, also exists at Ham House.

And last but not least there exists also the gardener's house – the same that plays such an important role for Ada that one weekend.

Bellingham Court

Although mentioned only briefly in the novel and not a location in the actual sense, Bellingham Court, seat of the Digby-Jones family, has to be mentioned here. In the novel, the manor is located in Somerset, near Ilminster, just like its model Barrington Court.

Bellingham / Barrington Court is a sober, almost austere Tudor building but bestowed with some loveliness, an almost romantic touch by the surrounding gardens – significant for the Digby-Jones', for Baron Alford as well as for his second wife and their son Simon.

Not a house of great splendor, for the Digby-Jones' are well-off but not rich, especially not rich enough for the four sons to expect a large inheritance. Therefore, all of them – even including the eldest son Charles, heir to the title – got a good education enabling them to ensure their livelihood.

To me, there is some sadness around Bellingham Court, due to the untimely death of the first Lady Alford, leaving Baron Alford a widower with three small sons. At the same time, the house emanates some warmth, flared up again with the second Lady Alford.

Located far from the strait-laced conventions of society, human warmth and closeness are more important at Bellingham Court than stiff ceremonies; an atmosphere that has influenced Simon's personality.



Bellingham Court ("Barrington Court")

Hawthorne House

Hawthorne House is also only briefly mentioned in the novel: the Hainsworth's considerably larger and more impressive country estate in Lincolnshire, modelled after Belton House, situated in Lincolnshire as well.

Elegant, extensive and with luxurious furnishing, it epitomizes the class and wealth of the Hainsworth family.

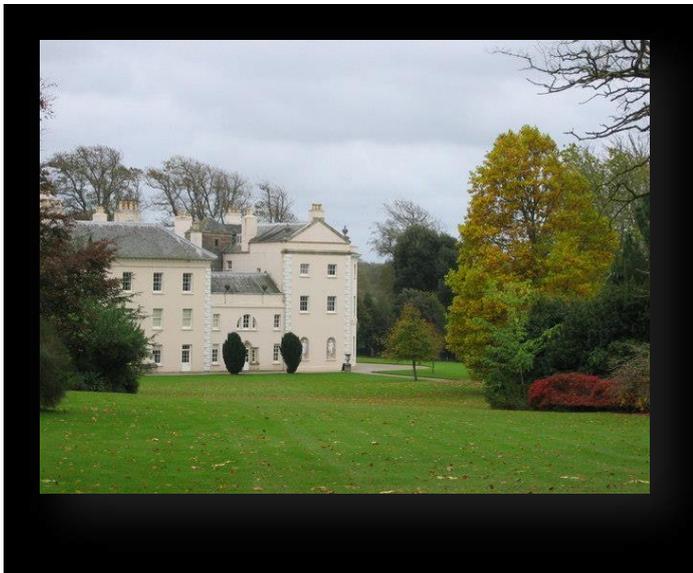
The Hainsworths prefer spending their time at Givons Grove though; Leonard and Cecily have been raised there and consider it their actual home.

Although one might guess if Cecily indeed likes Hawthorne house better.



Belton House ("Hawthorne House")

Ashcombe House



Saltram House ("Ashcombe House")

The Ashcombes needed a vast and impressive ancestral seat. One of dignified tradition, by and by enlarged and embellished. An unequivocal statement of heritage and the importance of class and title and fortune. A house suitable to perform social duties, contrary to the more intimate Estreham House, preferred for family occasions like the engagement of Royston and Cecily.

A place where the whole family has its roots, where they all come together and which is large enough to host parents, children, grandchildren, uncles, aunts and cousins at these gatherings.

With Saltram House, like Ashcombe House located in Devon, I found such a house. In the novel, it is situated isolated, in the midst of wide heath plains and not far from the steep coast. Quiet and lonely, as preferred by the Earl.

Of simple exterior, it mainly appeals by its size and the vastness of the estate. The interior though is lavishly decorated, with colors, fabrics, patterns, with elaborate furniture. A house to be proud of, to show to visitors, and one to make residents and guests constantly aware of heritage and class.



Saltram House - Thomas Allom, ca. 1832

At least this has always been the notion of Lady Evelyn; both daughters have left the manor early to get married, Roderick, the youngest, dedicates his life to university, and Royston, the eldest and heir of the title, also spends hardly any time here, although Ashcombe House means as much to him as to his father. Because his roots are here.

Sandhurst



Winston Churchill in the uniform of his cavalry regiment, 1895

What do the great statesman Winston Churchill, Ian Fleming, the creator of *James Bond*, Princes William and Harry and singer-songwriter James Blunt have in common? And what links all of them to Jeremy, Leonard, Stephen, Royston, and Simon?

They all went to Sandhurst.

Since 1947, Sandhurst has been known as *Royal Military Academy (RMA)*; before that, it was called the *Royal Military College of Sandhurst*.

Founded in 1802 in competition to the *Royal Military Academy in Woolwich* (established in 1741), the college relocated to Sandhurst in 1813; both merged in 1947.

At the beginning, the college had a doubtful reputation; the equipment was frugal, the education sketchy and the cadets' conditions of living and learning poor. With financial – and especially royal - support and after profound changes in regulations and requirements for education, Sandhurst by and by acquired the reputation it still has today: that of an elite college.

Still it was shocking to learn during my researches that in 1881, cadets were only trained for one year - instead of four years, like cadets at West Point in the USA (mentioned in John Jakes' *North and South* – and accidentally founded in the same year as Sandhurst).

In those days, firing practices were indeed still voluntary instead of compulsory, as criticized by Royston at the picnic on Grace's birthday.



Sandhurst, main building, ca. 1900



Sandhurst, gymnasium and cricket field, ca. 1900

Some years later, the training period was prolonged, the curriculum adapted, but it still took some time until Sandhurst was an institution for training officers not only by reputation but also in effect.

This didn't change the way Sandhurst was perceived or the fact that the new college's luster had already been outshining the old academy of Woolwich. Whoever passed the entrance exam of Sandhurst had any reason to be proud; who left after the training with a good or even very good degree had made it – with a stellar career ahead of him. All great war heroes in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth were graduates of Sandhurst; King Hussein of Jordan and Henri, Grand Duke of Luxembourg are also graduates of Sandhurst.

The lake in front of the main building, situated half in Berkshire, half in Surrey, is an artificial one, specially created in the nineteenth century for purposes of teaching and training.



View across the lake, ca. 1900

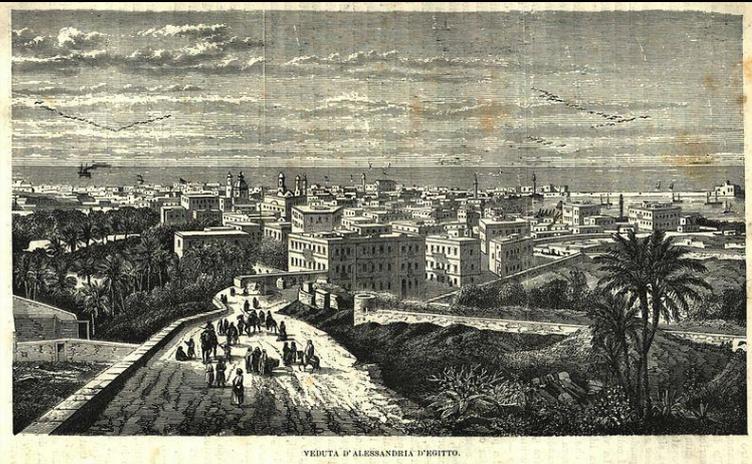
The famous Sovereign's Parade for successful graduates has only been in existence since 1948 – since King George VI. for the first time attended the celebrations marking the passing out of a new generation of officers and granted awards.

These days, it is rather unusual that Queen Elizabeth II. attends the parade; almost always, a representative attends instead. After fifteen years, the Queen indeed attended again Sovereign's Parade in 2006: at the passing out of Prince Harry.

Since the closure of the Women's Royal Army Corps in nearby Bagshot in 1981, women are also admitted at Sandhurst for training.

In love and war

Alexandria



Alexandria, often admiringly called the *Bride of the Mediterranean Sea* or the *Pearl of the Mediterranean*, is the first station for Jeremy, Leonard, Stephen, Royston, and Simon during the deployment of the Royal Sussex in Egypt.

Founded in the third century BC by Alexander the Great, Alexandria, famous for its lighthouse and its library, was one of the largest and most splendid cities of ancient times.

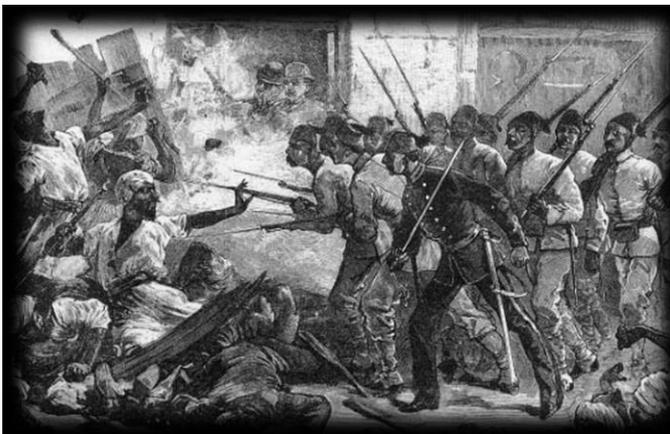
Here in June 1882 the 'Urabi Revolt escalated into a wave of violence, and after the bombardment of the city by European battleships, British troops landed in order to crush the revolt – the Royal Sussex among them.

The headquarter was located in the Villa Antoniadis, in the south of the city. An extensive estate with lush gardens and a more than just generous mid-nineteenth century mansion.

Sir John Antoniadis was the best example of the diversity and cosmopolitanism in nineteenth-century Alexandria. Originating from the Greek island of Lemnos but with a British passport, wealthy Antoniadis was a generous patron and sponsor, especially for the Greek community in Alexandria.



Landing of the Scots Guards in Alexandria, 1882



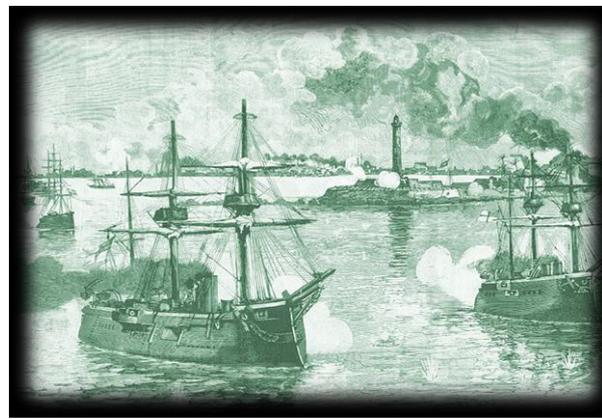
Alexandria, June 11th, 1882 - Canadian Illustrated News

His villa and the gardens were location of gorgeous parties, one of them for the Khedive Ismail, attended also by his son and heir Prince Tewfik and all of Alexandria's high society.

After the last owner Antony Antoniadis conveyed the estate to the city of Alexandria, it served as guesthouse for state visits. The kings of Belgium, Greece and Italy temporarily resided here, as well as the Shah of Iran. The Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 was signed in the villa's rooms, and in 1946, the Arab League was founded here.

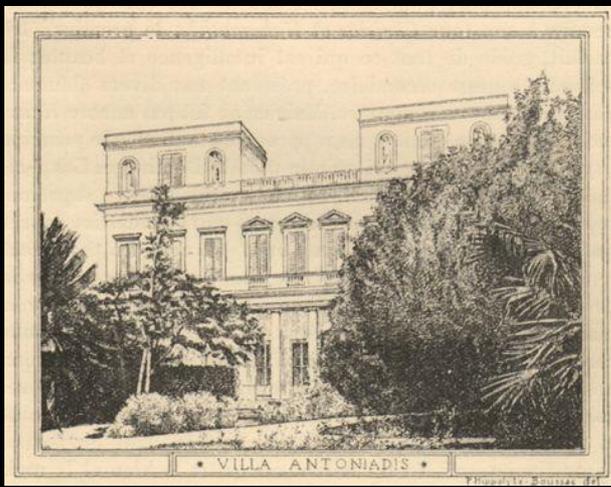


Old port of Alexandria, 1878



Bombardment of Alexandria - Le Monde Illustré, 1882

The villa has been ravaged by time; at the moment, it is thoroughly renovated in order to house the Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center afterwards - an institution dedicated to the history of Alexandria and the relations of the city within the Mediterranean region.



Villa Antoniadis - Hyppolite Bousac, 19th century



Villa Antoniadis, early 20th century

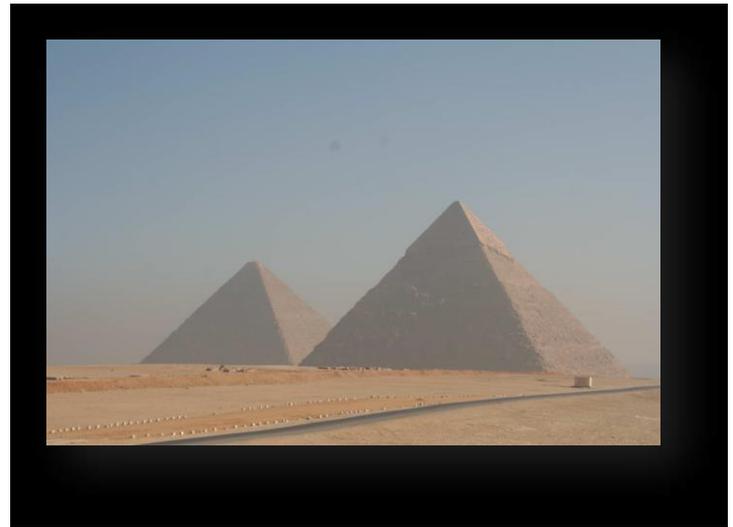


Ball at the Villa Antoniadis



Giza

I guess there is no actual need to write anything about Giza, the small town just outside Cairo; everything seems to be already written, already said, already photographed - millions of times, by millions of tourists flooding the empty plains of Giza to marvel at the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx.

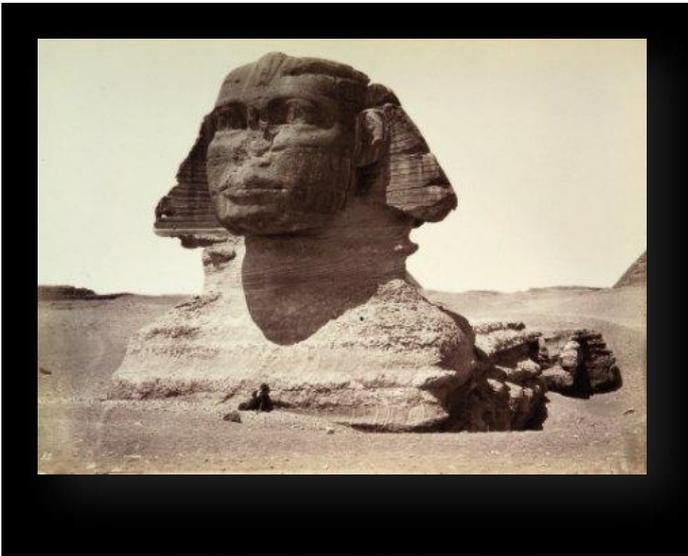


To travel to Egypt and visit the pyramids is no phenomenon of our time, and neither is the fact that multitudes of people pilgrimage to these cultural sites. The nineteenth century already had its share of this kind of sightseeing, and whoever travels there today is in very good company: with Florence Nightingale for instance, or with Gustave Flaubert, who both travelled there shortly after another in 1849.

In 1882 though, the camp of the British troops was located in Giza – and the pyramids and the Sphinx by night were a perfect setting to create an intimate atmosphere in which I could come closer to Stephen as well as Jeremy.



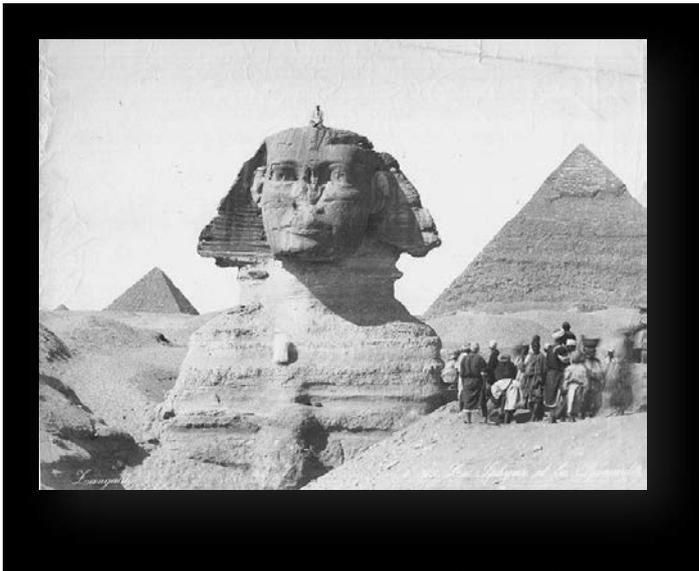
British camp in Giza, 1882



The Sphinx - Pascal Sebah, ca. 1875



... and in 2009



Sphinx and pyramids - Zangaki, ca. 1880



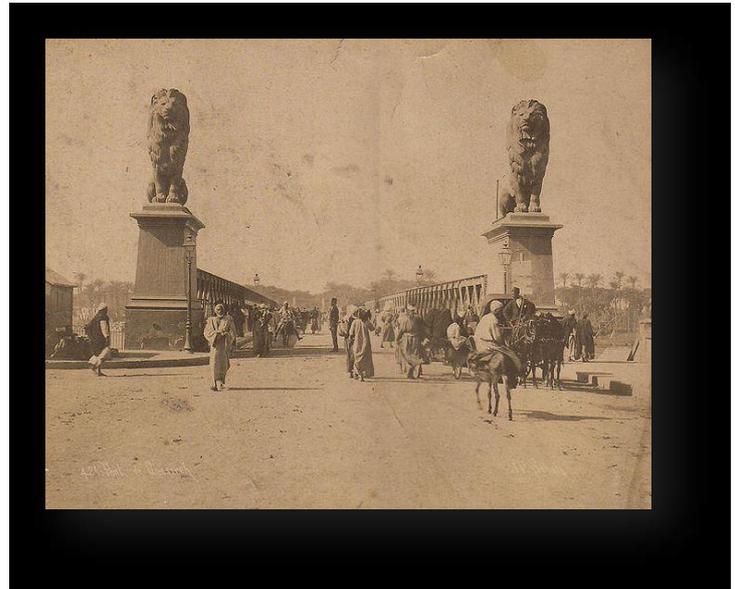
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Cairo

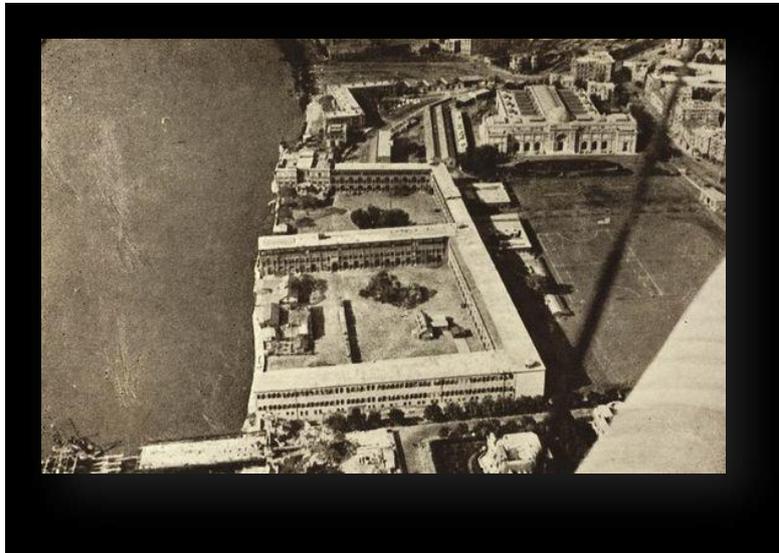
All roads lead to Cairo.

At least in my novels: after *Beneath the Saffron Moon* and *Stars Over Zanzibar*, some chapters of *Beyond the Nile* also take place in Cairo, and reciprocally, the city plays a not unimportant role in the novel – and moreover, in the life of some of the characters.

Here, Jeremy, Stephen, Leonard, Royston, and Simon are stationed with their regiment twice, and both times in the barracks of Qasr el-Nil.



Bridge between Qasr el-Nil and Gezira - Pascal Sebah, ca. 1880



Qasr el-Nil, 20th century

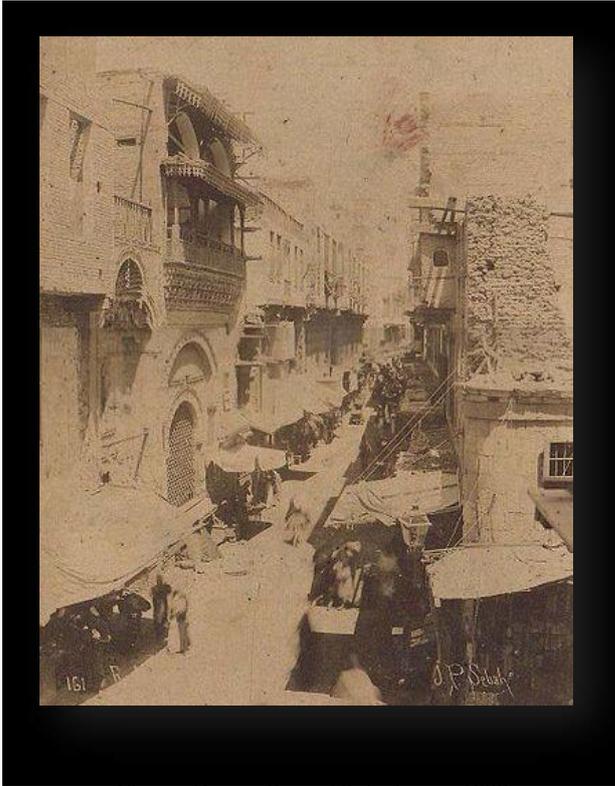
Situated immediately on the banks of the Nile and near the bridge of the same name leading to Gezira, there are three well-known landmarks behind the barracks: the Egyptian Museum in the north, the Tahrir Square, center of protests and riots in the Arab Spring of 2011, in the east and finally the legendary Shepherd's Hotel in the south, where Richard Francis Burton was frequently a guest.

Built by the Khedive Isma'il Pasha, the barracks were occupied by the British at their arrival in 1882 and remained headquarter of the army continuously during the British protectorate. Until in 1948, King Farouk demanded the withdrawal of the British and in addition, the restitution of the barracks. He did not accommodate his own troops though, and in subsequent years, the barracks had to give way to civilian building projects.

For Grace, Cairo is the starting point of her journey to Sudan, in search for Jeremy. In search for answers to her questions concerning his fate - and if he might be



Inner courtyard of Qasr el-Nil, ca. 1900



Alley in Cairo - Pascal Sebah, ca. 1880

still alive. After she has been to Lincoln and after the passage to Egypt, the actual journey only starts here, in some small and not very comfortable hotel in an unspecified street, an unspecified quarter.

Cairo is a place of refuge in this novel.

A protected space, a place that takes one in, almost absorbing, but by that, Cairo creates the necessary space to draw a breath. To rest. To sort oneself out, one's emotions, one's wishes and desires.

Cairo is timeless, joining past, present and future, at the same time negating them in a unique way.

It is not only the geographical situation that makes Cairo such a special place – nor is it the size of the city, its overflowing vividness.

Cairo has always been a place where Orient and Occident met and blended, where cultures, ethnicities and religions mingled.

A world in between, one might say, and such a world in between is my understanding of Cairo within the novel: between England and the Sudan, between the green island and the desert. Between life before – and after.

No matter which character in *Beyond the Nile* arrives in Cairo and no matter in which direction this character leaves the city – nothing will be the same again beyond Cairo.

Beyond the Nile.

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