

## Forster on the Air: TV and Radio Adaptations of the Works of E. M. Forster

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**Abstract:** The paper attempts to show how radio and TV adaptations kept E. M. Forster's popularity as a writer alive in a period when he no longer wrote and published fiction. Half a century of the continuous presence of these audio-visual adaptations on the air paved the way for the Academy Awards winning movies in the 1980s and 1990s, and the consequent rediscovery of Forster's fiction, which also resulted, in turn, in further adaptations, such as the most recent Marcy Kahan's two-part BBC radio dramatisation of *A Room With A View* in May 2023. The discussion covers the period from Forster's first broadcasted short story in 1927 to the premiere of David Lean's *A Passage to India* in 1984<sup>1</sup>. It follows Forster's collaboration with the most eminent radio producers and various media outlets. It charts as well the gradual change of the writer's attitude from the initial mistrust in the new medium to the extensive collaboration with the adapters. One of the particular points made in the paper is the multimedial character of these adaptations as they were typically re-adapted to various formats – the same text could be used for stage performance, radio play, and TV film as was the case of Santa Rama Rau stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* (1960). The paper is based on the limited available materials (sadly, most of the early TV films and radio recordings are apparently either lost or hidden in the archives of the BBC), criticism, as well as Forster's own comments on the cinema and adaptations.

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1 Consequently, the present paper covers what Claire Monk defined as Phase 1 of Forster/ian adaptation (Monk 2021, 139). Monk's studies concentrate, however, on Phases 2 and 3.




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E. M. Forster continuously and adamantly refused to authorise movie adaptations of his novels. Consequently, the first feature film made of one of them, David Lean's *A Passage to India*, was produced as late as 1984, fourteen years after the writer's death. However, Lean's movie was not only the ninth film adaptation of a Forster work; it was also the second movie the screenplay of which was based (though very loosely) on the play written by Santha Rama Rau in 1960. The eight earlier TV movies (also called TV dramas), six of which were broadcasted in Forster's lifetime, were produced between 1958 and 1977 for the two British TV stations: the BBC and the ITV<sup>2</sup>.

These TV adaptations, one of which is now commercially available, were only a small part of Forster's continuous presence "on the air". The writer's involvement with the BBC as a broadcaster is generally known; two selections of his radio talks – one edited by Jeffrey M. Heath and the other by Mary Lago, Linda K. Hughes, and Elizabeth MacLeod Walls – were published concurrently in 2008. The collaboration, however, greatly exceeded the talks as the BBC broadcasted also Forster's literary works, initially mostly short stories but later on also excerpts from the novels which were read either by the author himself or by actors. At a still later stage they were presented as radio plays, individually or in instalments. This part of Forster's presence "on the air" is generally omitted by Forsterian scholars, it is relegated to footnotes at best<sup>3</sup>.

Ultimately, Forster did not object to having his works adapted for the stage. The first play adapted from his novel, Stephen Tait and Kenneth Allot's *A Room with a View*, was produced and then published in 1951; three more such plays were written and performed by 1970. The present paper concentrates on the appearances on the radio and TV of three of them: Santha Rama Rau's *A Passage to India: A Play*, Elisabeth Hart's *Where Angels Fear to Tread: A Play in Two Acts*, and *Howards End* by Lance Sieveking and Richard Cotterell.

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2 The most complete presentation of various adaptations of Forster's works is Fordoński 2020. The article includes also a list of radio and TV adaptations.

3 The editors of *The BBC Talks...* summed up the issue in seven words "additionally his fiction was adapted for presentation" (Lago, Mary; Linda K. Hughes and Elizabeth MacLeod Walls (eds.), 2008, 4).

The paper will attempt to show how radio and TV adaptations kept Forster's popularity as a writer alive in a period when he no longer wrote fiction, introducing his works to still larger audiences, paving the way for the Academy Awards winning movies in the 1980s and 1990s. Besides Forster's radio talks they were an important part of the process which "established him as a well-known figure in households across Britain" (Lago – Hughes 2008, 1). We will also try to point out how the various types of adaptations could come together, continuously adapted to different media. The best example here is Rama Rau's play performed on the stage both in London and New York, then first made into a TV drama, then, a radio play, and, finally, used as the basis of Lean's script.

The present paper is based on the limited available material (most of the early TV films and all of the early radio sound materials are apparently lost or hidden away in the archives of the BBC), radio listings of the BBC available online, criticism, as well as relatively few Forster's own comments and recollections. It is based on published sources; consequently, possible further fields of research will also be pointed out<sup>4</sup>. The time frame is between 1927, when the first Forster's short story was read on the air, and 1984 when the first feature movie, *A Passage to India*, was released.

It is good to start by taking stock. The available listings of the BBC are quite probably incomplete (both in number and in more specific details, the details of the broadcasts of the Overseas Service are not available online) so what follows is an account of what we are certain existed. Forster made four readings of his own texts – three short stories and "Entrance to an Unwritten Novel" (broadcast on 23 January 1949 by the Third Programme). Most probably the latter was the first chapter of *Arctic Summer* that he had read at the Aldeburgh Festival. Between 1931 and 1976 eleven shorter texts were read by single actors – six short stories and five excerpts from the novels. In addition to these broadcasts five novels were abridged and presented in instalments, however, still read by a single actor. Ultimately, there were at least twelve radio plays: four novels (some of them in a number of instalments) and seven short stories were adapted. Their number was probably somewhat bigger; Mary Lago claims that in total there were 36 radio adaptations of various kinds between 1932 and 1963 (1990, 134).

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4 Possibilities and limitations of archive research are discussed by Monk (2021, 152-153). The research is carried out at the moment by Dr Aasiya Lodhi who presented her findings in the paper "My Selfish Love: Forster, Has India Changed? and Post-War BBC Radio" during the IEMFS Conference in Olsztyn in June 2024.

The TV adaptations started in 1958 with *A Room with a View*, directed and written by Robert Tronson, produced by Granada Television and broadcasted as an ITV Play of the Week. Forster was, apparently, more attractive to the BBC TV and it was this TV station that went on to produce seven more films: five based on Forster's novels (in three instances stage adaptations were used as the source material) and two based on his short stories. The standard development for the four best-known novels was presentation of excerpts in the 1940s and the 1950s, an abridged presentation in instalments from 1952 on, a radio-play (whenever available based on a stage adaptation), and, finally, a TV drama in the Play of the Month series (also with a preference for the available stage adaptations as the basis). *The Longest Journey* was presented only as a radio-play in 1957, while *Maurice* was broadcasted as a radio-play only in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Twelve short stories and one essay – some of them twice – were presented. In two cases as TV adaptations mentioned above, five times read by actors, five times as radio-plays, and in four instances, read by Forster himself. It should be, perhaps, mentioned here that Forster's only opera, *Billy Budd*, was broadcasted live four times in his lifetime, including a performance conducted by Benjamin Britten on 19 January 1969. In some instances Forster's recorded talks were re-broadcasted during the breaks in these performances or other operas which were aired live. With such a variety of the original material and its adaptations a chronological presentation of the most interesting cases seems the most advisable choice.

It all began on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1927, mere five months after the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation, when "in Mr. E. M. Forster, the list of notable writers who have broadcast from the London Studio gain[ed] a distinguished accession." Forster, presented in *Radio Times* as "one of those self-critical writers who publish very little" (BBC N.D.), read one of his short stories; sadly, the title is unspecified in the available listings. It was a year before Forster's first radio talk, "Railway Bridges", but once Forster joined the company of such eminent broadcasters as H. G. Wells and Desmond McCarthy, the interest of the BBC in his original literary works decreased. Only two more short stories were broadcasted by the London Regional Service in the 1930s<sup>5</sup>. A letter written by Leonard Cottrell (1913-1974) on 9 September 1942

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5 On November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1931 Robert Harris read Forster's short story "The Road from Colonus". Walter Allen read "Mr Andrews" on 9 June 1934. All the BBC listings are quoted after BBC Programme Index available online.

to the Copyright Department suggests that the limited number was at least in part Forster's own decision as "in the past he has not always given permission to be adapted and broadcast" (letter quoted in Lago 1990, 141).

The collaboration with the BBC moved on to a new stage in 1942 when the first radio play, *The Celestial Omnibus*, adapted by Cottrell, was broadcasted on September 1<sup>st</sup>. Forster's involvement in the production included a trip to "the refugee studio in Manchester to advise during rehearsals". When the BBC tried to refuse reimbursement "for rail fare and an overnight hotel bill, Cottrell urged the Copyright Department to pay because Forster's help had been valuable" (Lago 1990, 141). Cottrell went on to prepare two more such radio plays in 1947<sup>6</sup> when he returned from the Mediterranean, where he was a war correspondent, and he joined the BBC again. Cottrell left the BBC in 1960 to become a writer and later on he gained fame for his books popularising archaeology of ancient Egypt. The BBC Written Archive Centre includes only one Forster's letter addressed to Cottrell dated 15 May 1948 (Lago 1985, 68), probably one of many as Cottrell was in charge of the department responsible for radio-plays.

During the war years when Forster was quite busy broadcasting, mainly through the India Service, only three excerpts of his novels were read on the air. The third of these instances was certainly the most interesting – Rosamond Lehmann, the well-known novelist (somewhat notorious as the author of *Dusty Answer*), read "the kind of passages she chose when reading to her family and friends" in the series of programmes called "Family Reading" (BBC N.D.). Her choice on 2 November 1943 was a passage from *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.<sup>7</sup>

Philip Gardner (2011, 246) mentions in a footnote radio versions of *Howards End* and *A Room with a View* prepared by Lancelot de Giberne (Lance) Sieveking in 1942 which Sieveking finally produced in the 1960s. It is probable that such radio-plays were written as in the 1940s Sieveking was drama script editor. It is quite doubtful, however, that they were actually produced in Bedford or Manchester, where the offices and studios of the BBC were evacuated during the war. It is also quite telling that Sieveking's lively correspondence with Forster (41 letters bequeathed to the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana) starts only in May 1946. Gardner probably mixed up Sieveking's adaptations with those of Cottrell mentioned above.

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6 "Two Fantasies" ("Co-ordination" and "Other Kingdom") and "The Story of the Siren".

7 The other two were "Chandrapore" (the opening chapter of *A Passage to India*) read by James Langham (Home Service, 29 September 1942) and "The Fifth Symphony" (extracts from *Howards End*) read by Pamela Kelly (Home Service, 27 August 1943).

Lago comments that “Forster kept an even sharper watch, if that were possible over his copyrights and particularly over permission for dramatic versions of his work. He was extremely cautious about the choice of adapters ... he seems to have trusted particularly Leonard Cottrell and Lance Sieveking” (1990, 141). His patience was soon put to a test. The BBC prepared a more elaborate radio-play, “The Eternal Moment” adapted by Alex Macdonald and broadcasted it on 25 February 1945. Forster was rather angry when he read in the *Radio Times* about the adaptation he had not been told about before and which was to be broadcasted that very evening. He wrote to the producer Howard Rose, mentioning the collaboration with Cottrell three years earlier. In a letter dated 16 March 1945 and addressed to Val Henry Gielgud, the elder brother of Sir John and the Head of Productions at the BBC at the time, who had personally apologized for the blunder, Forster wrote:

What puzzles me ... is not the official slip-up but the aesthetic obtuseness. It seems so strange that educated people should handle a writer's work without constructively wanting to communicate with him, in case he could help them. Why did none of you *want* to do this? (Lago -- Furbank 1985, 210).

As it soon turned out the BBC had “legally behaved correctly”, as Forster wrote in a letter to Elizabeth Trevelyan (Lago 1990, 142), securing the copyright from the publisher who gave their permission without consulting Forster's contract. Lago adds that “Forster soon relented with respect to future adaptations. Obviously, it was the apparent lack of courtesy and sensitivity to writers that troubled him more than himself being slighted” (1990, 142).

On Sunday, 28 July 1946 the Home Service broadcasted a radio-play entitled “Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties”. According to the listing in the *Radio Times* it “concerned the conflict of principle between Mr. Abbey, tea-broker in Cheapside, and his four ungrateful wards, John, George, Thomas, and Fanny, during the years 1814 to 1821” (BBC N.D.). The description itself is quite clever, as it manages to obfuscate the fact that the essay and the radio-play were, actually, about the poet John Keats, his siblings, and their guardians. It was adapted by Douglas Cleverdon (1903-1987), later on the producer of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* (1953). It was for Cleverdon that Sylvia Plath wrote *Three Women: A Poem for Three Voices* in 1962.

The Third Programme of the BBC, “the youngest and maybe the trickiest cherub of the air” as Forster called it in the fifth anniversary talk (Lago et al. 2008, 410), addressed to a more elite (“highbrow”) audience, the “alert and receptive listener who is willing ... to make an effort” (Haley 1946 quoted in Lago et al. 2008, 30) debuted on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Forster had some reservations as to his place in this new arrangement as the “high standards for the Third meant that, ironically, he thought he was unfit to broadcast for it” (Lago et al. 2008, 31). Despite his initial doubts he gave twenty-two talks on the Third between August 1947 and December 1958.

The first adaption prepared by the Third took place earlier than the first talk written for this service. “The Story of the Siren” read by Laidman Browne and adapted by Cottrell was broadcasted on 29 January 1947. On 29 May 1947, the Third presented “Two Fantasies” – short stories “Co-ordination” and “Other Kingdom” – adapted jointly as radio plays and produced by Cottrell – with original music composed and conducted by the young Antony Hopkins (1921-2014), composer, pianist and conductor, later on also a well-known radio broadcaster. The Third also rebroadcasted the radio-play “Mr. and Mrs. Abbey’s Difficulties” on 19 January 1948.

At this point the adaptations for the Third ended. Forster read only his own short story “Mr Andrews” (10 August 1948) and “Entrance to an Unwritten Novel” (23 January 1949) (most probably *Arctic Summer*). Peter Fifield’s comments on Forster’s position in the Third shed a light on this turn of events:

Although his prestige was growing as a speaker, Forster’s standing as an author appears to have been far less secure at the BBC. For example, [he was] invited to give the Third Programme’s Fifth Anniversary talk in 1951 – which he delivered on 29 September – [while] his short story ‘The Machine Stops’ had passed through the hands of a reader in the Drama Scripts Department earlier that year (16 March). The very story that engages so perceptively with technology within domestic and public spheres was dubbed ‘rather Wells in barley water’. In 1953, a similarly stark contrast can be seen. [He was] asked to deliver that year’s Reith Lectures – which he turned down – [while] his story ‘The Curate’s Friend’ was reviewed by script reader Mollie Greenhalgh. Her report of 23 September listed the requirements for radio drama and found Forster’s

story wanting in every category: 'Construction: Conventional. Dialogue: Quite unreal. Characterisation: Never escapes from literary. Remarks: A piece of whimsy which cannot stand dramatisation, especially of the elementary kind' (Fifield 2016, 72-73).

The situation remained the same through the 1950s – Forster wrote and recorded his talks but the Third was not interested in his literary work except when, on 29 July 1964 the Third Programme presented Forster reading his short story “The Road from Colonus” “on a gramophone record” which suggests an earlier recording. Ironically, Forster outlived the Third Programme which was closed down in 1967.

Forster moved back with his literary work to the Home Service. The cooperation restarted with an adaptation in a new bigger format – abridgments of novels broadcasted in instalments. The first novel to be treated in this way was *A Room with a View* abridged by Arthur Calder-Marshall (1908-1992) and read by Gladys Young in fifteen weekly instalments from 20 February 1952. The adaptation proved so successful that it was recorded once more and broadcasted in September 1972 on BBC Radio 4, this time read by Gabriel Woolf as “A Book at Bedtime” at 11:00 p.m.

The task was then taken over by Lance Sieveking (1896-1972) who adapted further Forster’s novels as multi-episode radio-plays. The surviving correspondence proves that all these adaptations were prepared under Forster’s supervision. The radio-play “Between Two Worlds *A Passage to India*”, dramatized by Sieveking and presented on the Home Service on 24 October 1955, was preceded by an exchange of at least eight letters<sup>8</sup> including one dated 14 Sept. 1955 beginning with the following words “Many thanks for the script of the dramatization...” (Lago 1985, 158). Sieveking is the only adapter mentioned in the *Locked Diary*. On 8 October 1963 Forster wrote: “But now to my own unwelcome job which only I can do. It is to go through Lance Sieveking’s meritorious radio-script of *Howards End*” (Gardner 2011, 151).

Sieveking continued the cooperation with *The Longest Journey* (4 March 1957) which was followed by a break of seven years after which he prepared *Howards End* adapted in thirteen episodes (broadcasts starting from 14 June 1964), read

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8 The whole correspondence with Sieveking has been preserved in the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana.



through by Forster in April that year, apparently once more. The 1967 adaptation of *A Room with a View* was a more modest affair in a single episode. The correspondence continued until April 1969 while the final stage of the co-operation was the TV drama *Howards End* (BBC Play of the Month Season 5 Episode 7) directed by Donald McWhinnie (1920-1987, known for the series *Love in Cold Climate* from 1980) with the screenplay written by Sieveking and the director and translator Richard Cotterell (1936-) and based on the play they had staged in 1967. It was broadcast on 19 April 1970, two months before Forster's death. Claire Monk commented on the continuous recurrence of the same people involved in these adaptations:

This practice reflected the culture of the mid-twentieth-century BBC and its ways of working – but it particularly reflected Forster's close relationship with the BBC, and the control he exerted over adaptations of his work (2021, 151).

*Howards End* directed by McWhinnie was actually the fifth TV drama made of Forster's work. Oddly enough, it was not the BBC that produced the first of them, *A Room with a View*, written and directed by Robert Tronson (1924-2008, later known as the director of the series *All Creatures Great and Small*), and broadcasted on 2 July 1958. The movie was produced by the Granada Television in Manchester and presented as the ITV Play of the Week (Season 3 Episode 43). Granada was the regional ITV company most renowned for its quality TV drama (Monk 2021, 151).

The BBC "reacted" by sending their TV crew to Cambridge where Forster was (as he put it) "televised" in early December 1958. The programme (available on YouTube) was "administered to the viewers" on 4 January 1959, three days after Forster's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He did not find the experience pleasant: "Five men were in my room for two and half hours, taking shots which will be over in two and half minutes. I came. I sat. I wrote. I looked up to indicate inspiration. I took a book out of a book case. I read" (Forster's letter dated 6 December 1958 quoted in Leggatt 2012, 34). Some months later Forster was "televised" again, this time for the American CBS series *Camera Three* (Season 4 Episode 38). The 45 minute long episode entitled *E. M. Forster and The Longest Journey* consisted of a dramatised scene from the eponymous novel and an interview with Forster. It was broadcasted on 24 May 1959.

The successful stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* by Santha Rama Rau was first produced in 1960. Forster was satisfied with the result, he called the play an “excellent and sensitive dramatic version” (Stape 1993, 138). The play brought a sizeable income – on 30 April 1961 Forster wrote to Leggatt “My wealth is enormous, part of the comfort in the present illness is having no worry about finances. Coming on to the stage has done it” (Leggatt 2012, 74). Frank Hauser, the first director of the play, recollected in 1984, however, that “only on the subject of [a movie adaptation] was [Forster] heated. Later, Santha Rama Rau was to receive a slew of offers from film companies. One of them, Paramount, ignored her repeated ‘Mr Forster has the film rights and he will not allow the work to be filmed’, and spent two hours talking its offer up from \$50,000 to \$250,000 without any success” (Stape 1993, 131). Forster was adamant – he rejected even the offer of a film directed by Satyajit Ray (Stape 1993, 149).

Forster did not object, however, to yet another TV adaptation. *A Passage to India* was broadcast on 16 November 1965 (as the BBC Play of the Month Season 1 Episode 2) directed by the Indian-British Waris Hussein, the play was adapted for TV by John Maynard<sup>9</sup>. The cast included Zia Mohyeddin (who had played the part of Dr Aziz both in the London and the Broadway premieres of the play) and Dame Sybil Thorndike. Santha Rama Rau wrote in 1986:

Strangely enough he did not have the same aversion to television. Forster readily gave permission to the BBC though he knew the program would be recorded on film – or videotape. I think this was partly because he felt that the TV version would be, in essence, a film of the play, and, broadly speaking, he was right. A few scenes were included – the meeting of Mrs Moore and Aziz in the mosque, the train journey to Marabar Hills and so on – where the TV cameras gave us a wider scope than the stage allowed but largely the TV adaptation stayed very close to the play. Another factor that made the TV arrangement attractive was that Sybil Thorndike, whom he greatly admired, was to play Mrs Moore ... one of her last [parts]” (Stape 1993, 149).

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<sup>9</sup> Although the movie has never been commercially released it is available on YouTube. It “was screened and discussed at BFI Southbank in 2018 as part of a season of Hussein’s work” (Monk 2021, 152), and broadcasted in 2024 to commemorate the centenary of the publication of the novel.

Three years later the same play (and in the same adaptation by Maynard) was broadcast again, this time as a radio-play, also with Sybil Thorndike as Mrs Moore on 30 December 1968 BBC Radio 4.

Forster participated also in the adaptation of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* for the stage prepared by Elizabeth Hart (Berg Collection holds over 60 letters from Forster to the American playwright). Leggatt (2012, 88) quotes a letter in which Forster mentions an “American, Mrs Elizabeth Hart [who] made a good dramatization of *Where Angels...*” (letter dated 15 December 1961). The play, which premiered in 1963 and was published in the same year, was immediately picked up by the BBC Television. The first movie was directed by Glen Byam Shaw (1904-1986) and it was broadcasted on 29 October 1963, it was only 45 minutes long. Ultimately, a much more complete (120 minutes) and lavish TV version directed by Naomi Kapon (1921-1987, later famous for the TV series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 1970) was broadcasted as the BBC Play of the Month (Season 1 Episode 5) on 15 February 1966. It was, apparently, successful enough to justify a further radio adaptation which was first broadcasted on 29 August 1968 on the Home Service in the series “Saturday Night Theatre” (and repeated by the BBC Radio 4 on 9 November 1969 as *The Sunday Play*).

The year 1966 saw two TV adaptations of Forster’s works. The second, after *Where Angels Fear to Tread* mentioned before, was *The Machine Stops* broadcasted as the opening episode in the 2<sup>nd</sup> season of the TV series *Out of the Unknown* on 6 October. It was directed by Philip Saville (1930-2016) with the screenplay by Kenneth Cavander and Clive Donner (1926-2010, the director of *The Caretaker* – 1963). The film won the main prize at the 1967 Trieste international science fiction film festival and it is now the only pre-1984 movie adaptation of Forster commercially available in a 7-disc collection of the TV series released in 2014.

*Woman’s Hour*, the brain-child of Janet Quigley, whom Forster met in the late 1930s<sup>10</sup>, and Norman Collins, a programme which has been broadcasted continuously since 1946, originally on the BBC Light Programme and now on BBC Radio 4, has included a literary section since the 1950s (currently called “Woman’s Hour Drama”). Forster’s work first appeared on *Woman’s Hour* in October 1955, it was a rebroadcast of the 1952 adaptation of *A Room with a View* in fifteen instalments by Arthur Calder-Marshall. *Woman’s Hour* “rediscovered” Forster in 1969 when *Where Angels Fear to Tread* abridged by Quigley herself and read by Gabriel Woolf was broadcasted in 11 instalments in November and December.

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10 There are six letters to Quigley in BBC Archives written between 1938 and 1945 (Lago 1985, 147).

It was followed by *Howards End* abridged by Virginia Browne-Wilkinson and read by Rosalie Crutchley in October 1971 (15 instalments), “Ansell” abridged by Myra Beaton, read by John Moffat (remembered for his performance as Hercules Poirot in a BBC TV series) on 30 August 1976, and, finally, *A Room with a View* abridged by Ann Rees Jones and read by Helen Ryan (11 parts) in December 1984<sup>11</sup>. The show, which still attracts up to 4 million listeners (in 2016), gave Forster’s works a radio audience incomparable to any other before.

The BBC Television remained committed to adaptations of Forster’s works in the 1970s although their number gradually decreased. There were two more TV film adaptations, both with the teleplay written by Pauline Macaulay: *A Room with a View*, directed once again by Donald McWhinnie (BBC Play of the Month Season 8 Episode 7) in 1973 (the movie was partly shot on location in Florence), and *The Obelisk*, directed by Giles Forster (BBC Premiere Season 1 Episode 4) in 1977.

Forster’s presence on the BBC radio was limited in the 1970s and early 1980s to the Radio 4 which broadcasted one short story “The Curate’s Friend” read once more by Gabriel Woolf on 4 April 1975 the BBC Radio 4 (in the programme Morning Story), and another short story “The Eternal Moment”, dramatized by Penny Leicester on 2 June 1983 (Afternoon Theatre). Finally, a new serialized adaptation of *A Passage to India* abridged by Elizabeth Bradbury in 15 20-minute long instalments was read by the Bombay-born British Indian actor Sam Dastor (1941-) from 31 October 1983 (Story Time).

Between 1927 and 1984 Forster and his works were available to the British listeners and viewers on a fairly regular basis. The numbers - 145 radio talks, at least 32 radio and 8 TV adaptations - do not give us a complete picture as many of these programmes were broadcasted several times over a longer period on various programmes of the BBC at a time when the number of available channels on TV and the radio was still very limited. The variety reached different groups of listeners and viewers, attracting even science-fiction fans. It is quite safe to say that when David Lean presented his vision of *A Passage to India* the name, works, and even the voice of Forster were perfectly familiar to a large part of the British public. The Merchant and Ivory movies which followed also capitalised on the popularity which had been built over the years by the efforts of Forster himself and the BBC (with a little help from ITV).

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11 The adaptation was originally prepared for the BBC Radio 4 “For Schools” programme and broadcasted in November/December 1984.

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