

**Heather Green and J.C. Green, 2020. *Forster in 50*.
Dorking: The Cockerel Press, pp. 28.**

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Dorking Museum, located just a few miles away from West Hackhurst, where Forster lived with his mother from 1925 to 1945 in the house designed by his late father, had been planning an exhibition in 2020 to mark the 50th anniversary of E.M. Forster's death. The exhibition was intended to concentrate on the time Forster spent in the region, his involvement in local initiatives and politics, including writing pageants for local societies and running the Dorking Refugee Committee during the 2nd World War. The opening of the exhibition was first postponed to 2021 though and then it has had to be postponed once again on account of the new Covid restrictions.

The museum did publish, however, a short book in tribute to Forster entitled *Forster in 50*. The title is an allusion to the anniversary the book commemorates but at the same time it reveals the idea behind the publication. The plots of five of Forster's best known novels are retold here in 50 words and four illustrations each. As the author, Heather Green, explains in the Introduction, "fifty words is often cited as the maximum word count for a museum object label," the book is thus intended to "bridge the gap between museum label and story." We are invited to experience the book as we do experience a museum exhibition, brief introductions on short panels of text are matched with collections of four striking images for each novel.

The black-and-white illustrations, combining in a collage-like manner original drawings with short cut-out fragments of texts (of the novels but not exclusively) and snippets of historical illustrations such as maps, represent single scenes taken from the five novels.

J.C. Green chose from each of them four crucial moments. They may be represented by crucial objects such as the umbrella which opens the section dedicated to *Howards End*, or by a characteristic location such as the British Museum where Maurice and Alec meet, and sometimes by vast panoramas such as the vista of Florence, broad but at the same time somewhat claustrophobic, in *A Room with a View* section. They are all a testimony of a very personal and creative reading of Forster's fiction.

The book is addressed to seasoned Forsterians who will certainly enjoy the creative approach to well-known stories. It may, however, be equally attractive to all those who have yet to discover Forster for themselves as the very first introduction to his fiction.

Copies of the book are available through the museum website www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk