Forster and Adaptation:
Across Time, Media and Methodologies

Claire Monk
De Montfort University, UK

Abstract: This essay advances the conversation around the subject of Forster and adaptation – or Forsterian adaptation – by appraising the current state of Forster/ian adaptations scholarship and proposing conceptual and methodological tools for advancing the study of this field. As a cross-disciplinary scholar of film, adaptation, literature, popular and critical reception, and digitally enabled participatory culture, I write with the more specific goal of heightening and extending transdisciplinary awareness of the materials available to be studied, the available methodologies, and their merits and limitations, while identifying issues and challenges for the development of a Forster/ian Adaptation Studies.

Structurally, the essay proceeds by identifying ten 'themes' – or important considerations – for the study of Forster/ian adaptation. The ten themes look substantially beyond 'page-to-screen' adaptation studies to demonstrate the roles and impacts of institutions, institutional practices, personal relations, the successive 'new' media of the past century and their advancing technologies and practices, commercial forces, and Forster's literary estate (as the rights-holders and royalties beneficiaries for his works); while also calling for a closer, evidence-based, attention to film and media adaptation and production processes and their adaptational consequences; and foregrounding the importance of the visual and unscripted – performed, embodied, intangible and even accidental – elements and determinants of audio-visual adaptation.

Temporally, the essay conceptualises the field by proposing that there have been three phases of Forster/ian adaptation. Phase 1 (1942–1973) comprises those adaptations of Forster's stories and novels written and produced (broadly) during his lifetime, always for non-cinematic media. Phase 2 comprises the 1984–1992 era of the Forster feature-films cycle, instigated by a (widely disregarded) institutional shift which brought a step-change in the nature of Forster adaptation: for the first time, the development of *new* adaptations of Forster's novels, going back to the source, became the norm. Phase 3 comprises everything that comes after the 1984–1992 Forster feature films, plus certain earlier adaptations which fall outside the 'classic adaptation' category. This third

(and current) phase is characterised by its heterogeneity: adaptation to a range of media, across a range of forms and aesthetic approaches, by creators with varied interests, but, I propose, spanning four main areas Sci-Fi Forster, Queer Forster, The Revisionist or Condescending Forster Adaptation, and twenty-first-century Forsterian Bio-Drama, Bio-Fiction and 'Literary' Paratexts.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, Adaptation Studies, Transmedia Adaptation, Transtemporal, Reception Studies, Popular Reception, Participatory Culture, Film, Radio, Television, Theatre, Digital Media, Digital Theatre, Production Studies, Literary Estates, Media Rights, Cultural Value, Institutions, Literary Paratexts, Unofficial Sequels, Fan Fiction, Publishing Industry, James Ivory, Merchant Ivory Productions, Visual Adaptation, Film Performance, *Photogénie*, LGBTQ+, Queer Forster

Introduction

This essay seeks to advance the conversation around the subject of Forster and adaptation – or Forsterian adaptation – both in an exploratory sense, to stimulate further discussion, and more concretely by proposing conceptual and methodological tools for advancing the study of this field. Approaching this task as a cross-disciplinary scholar, I particularly want to heighten transdisciplinary awareness of the materials available to be studied, the available methodologies, and their merits and limitations, while identifying issues and challenges for the development of a Forster/ian Adaptation Studies. My perspective draws on my background as a scholar of British film, the 1984–1992 "Forster films" cycle, wider Forster adaptations, and the wider oeuvre and practices of the Merchant Ivory Productions partnership (producers, adapters and makers of three of the five "Forster films"). Methodologically, my work spans, applies and mixes adaptation studies, empirical textual and production histories, reception studies, and the study of digital participatory and fan cultures, with a particular interest in the life of *Maurice* across time and media and its place in post-millennium digital popular and fan culture (Monk 2011b, Monk 2016, Monk 2020).

   Originally delivered as a keynote talk to the 2021 International E. M. Forster Society conference *E. M. Forster: Shaping the Space of Culture*, this essay is also written in dialogue with Krzysztof Fordoński's recent and (by definition) ongo-

ing efforts to definitively list and survey the ever-open field of Forster/ian adaptations and transtexts (Fordoński 2020). Rather than adopting a survey or list approach, however, my contribution is concerned with broader, more reflexive and strategic, questions of Forster – and Forster*ian* – Adaptation *Studies*. How can we best conceptualise and study the field of adaptational and remediation responses to Forster's works (and life) at the present 2020s moment: 143 years after Forster's birth, just over five decades after his death, and a century after the birth of BBC Radio, where the first documented transmedia dramatisation of a Forster work, *The Celestial Omnibus*, was broadcast 80 years ago in 1942? And in a century when (on the one hand) digital technologies and transnational participatory internet culture, and (on the other) the corporate consolidation of English-language publishing as global big business – and of adaptation itself as (to quote Simone Murray 2012) an "industry" – have transformed commerce and culture, personal relations, and the conditions of creation and reception? In the face of this long timeline and these radical transformations, the history and field of Forster adaptations to other media remain only partially studied – both in terms of the adaptations and media, which have received the bulk of critical and scholarly attention (overwhelmingly, the Forster feature films "cycle" of 1984–1992), and the approaches applied.

In this essay, I bring my particular cross-disciplinary mix to bear on these issues with the aim of prompting reflection on the current state of Forster/ian adaptations scholarship and how we might develop it going forward. Structurally, I do this by means of identifying **ten "themes"** – or important considerations – for the study of Forster/ian adaptation. Temporally, I conceptualise and order the unruly field of Forster/ian *adaptations* by proposing a model: **the three phases of Forster adaptation**.

Delineating the field of Forster/ian adaptation

This field most obviously encompasses – and is most conventionally identified with – the dramatised adaptations of Forster's work to other media or artistic forms: audio (initially, radio), live performance (theatre, joined since the 1990s by opera and musical-theatre examples), audiovisual (the televisual and feature-film adaptations). However, Fordoński's survey reaches beyond these to capture a broader, and proliferating, Forsterian transtextual field – of predominantly literary works – in which the relationship to Forster's writings and/

or life is one of "inspiration," "dialogue," extension, forms of same-medium adaptation, or (occasionally, as in Di Canzio 2021) outright textual recycling. In Fordoński's words, this less determinate transtextual field comprises works "inspired by Forster's oeuvre or biography" or "which enter into a dialogue" with Forster (Fordoński 2000, 11). Given that such works have proliferated in the decades since Forster's death – since the 1980s, and more extensively since 2000 – it should be noted that this "dialogue" is generally one-way.

What Fordoński's list excludes are (for the most part) amateur Forsterian transtexts, and (more decisively) Forster fanworks. Enabled by the participatory internet, the latter especially have become visible since the mid-2000s, strongly inspired by the Merchant Ivory film adaptations and their actors – particularly *Maurice* (James Ivory, UK, 1987) – and deploying a range of forms and media (from written fanfiction, via analogue and digital art, to various genres of fanvid/fan video). For a fuller scholarly account of these productive fan practices; Forster's and *Maurice*'s recontextualised reception within participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2009); and *Maurice*'s transtextual enmeshment in transnational fan cultures, global British actor fandoms, and contemporary genres (from young-adult fiction to – more longstandingly, since the 1980s – Japanese *shōnen-ai* [boy love] and related genres), see Monk 2011b, Monk 2016 and Monk 2020. The list's focus on documenting professional and industry-produced, industry-distributed, Forster/ian adaptations and paratexts is wholly understandable. However, the digital era's transformed opportunities for user-generated content, spreadable media (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013), self-publication and self-distribution significantly challenge the distinction between professional/commercial/industrial and DIY creative works, a shift which researchers need to be aware of. Below, I discuss two examples: filmmakers' self-uploads of their work onto YouTube or other platforms; and the several *Maurice* sequels published as books and sold on Amazon.

Fordoński's list includes a number of short films made since 1998, and posted by their makers on YouTube or Vimeo, whose industrial-versus-DIY status is not immediately self-evident. *Desire* (1999), written and directed by Jorge Torregrossa (AKA Jorge Torregrossa García), is a very effective US geographical translation of Forster's posthumous queer short story *The Obelisk* (1939, published 1972), shot in Battery Park, Lower Manhattan. It is filmed and acted to a professional standard, but was made by the Spanish (not US-Hispanic) Torregrossa during his Masters in Directing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. *The Obelisk* had first been adapted for the screen as early as 1977 for

BBC-TV's *Premiere* series of short dramas, itself a showcase for first-time direc-
tors – here, Giles Foster. The script was by Pauline Macaulay, an experienced
adapter of Forster, who had also scripted BBC-TV's sole adaptations of Forster's
novels during the 1970s: *Howards End* (1970) and *A Room with a View* (1973),
both for the BBC's *Play of the Month* strand. The 1998 animated short film *Plug*
(scripted by Meher Gourjian, directed by Gourjian and James Waese) is one of
several digital, live-action or hybrid short film adaptations of Forster's *The Ma-
chine Stops* (1909) shared directly by their makers on YouTube. It could easily be
taken for accomplished DIY work – but the Armenian-American Gourjian is, in
fact, a Hollywood visual effects specialist, married to Pixar Animation Studios
producer Katherine Sarafian.

Conversely, two of the three unofficial sequels to *Maurice* published in book
form since 2005 and sold on Amazon (Carrier 2005, Spickett 2016) were, on
examination, self-published by their authors with "vanity" publishers in the
US and UK respectively. The third, John M. Bowers' *End of Story* (2010) – the
most ambitious and sophisticated of the three, though far from Forsterian in
tone – was published by a US small press (Sunstone, based in Santa Fe). In his
acknowledgements, Bowers (in his professional life, an academic specialist in
Medieval literature at the University of Nevada Las Vegas) thanks Forster's lit-
erary executors at King's College Cambridge for "hosting me to dinner" (2010,
227). However, his recourse to renaming his heroes "Martin" and "Alan" (the
novel's conceit is that they are the real-life couple from whom Forster steals his
inspiration for the fictional Maurice and Alec) suggests that the Forster estate's
generosity stopped short of a formal endorsement, and Bowers' current online
profile refers to *End of Story* as "his 9/11 novel" – an accurate description in that
it reflects *End of Story*'s historical and geographical reach, intertwined storylines,
and ending. The fact that these earlier efforts were joined, in summer 2021, by
William Di Canzio's *Alec: A Novel*, the first "retelling" of Forster's *Maurice* to be
sanctioned by the Forster estate – this time, commissioned from an American
creative-writing tutor, backed by America's most prestigious literary publisher,
and promotionally endorsed by Forster's 2010 biographer Wendy Moffat, who
shares the same publisher ("Heartfelt, sexy ... I loved it!") – prompts further
questions – rather than providing answers – about the institutional determinants
and cultural economics of literary "legitimacy."

In the light of these and wider examples, I propose an approach which pushes
beyond the notion of a relatively orderly Forsterian forcefield of transtextual "in-

fluence" and "dialogue" to emphasise instead the textual flux, instabilities and unknowns of both Forster's works themselves and their best-known cross-media adaptations. Such an emphasis is notably – though not uniquely – pertinent to *Maurice*, a novel with a complex, palimpsestic, pre-publication history (textual, circulatory and dialogic), later echoed in the unusually circuitous adaptation and script-development journey (Speidel 2014) and gruelling production (Monk 2019) of James Ivory's 1987 film. Back in 1986, the behind-the-scenes processes of Ivory's *Maurice* were shaped by an unquestioned pressure (both external and self-imposed) to "improve" and "modernise" Forster's supposedly inferior novel,[1] coupled with a challengingly tight timescale, a budget of only £1.5million, and a location shoot which spanned Cambridge, multiple London and suburban locations, six further English counties, and around 70 Edwardian-styled interior and exterior sets (Ivory 1986a).

Maurice's production files held in the James Ivory Papers at the University of Oregon document many further difficulties, including that, by November 1986, *Maurice*'s 54-day shoot (which had started on October 6) was unable to meet its intended schedule (Ivory 1986a). The 1986 shoot wrapped on December 9, but with filming not complete, and had to be followed by a second shoot in May 1987: the source of several shots and scenes which would prove integral, even iconic, to the released film as a visual adaptation (Ivory 1987). During May 1987 yielded, for example, the close-up of Maurice (James Wilby)'s and Clive (Hugh Grant)'s clasped hands during their pivotal day of escape from Cambridge into the Fens, and close-ups of Maurice's and Alec (Rupert Graves)'s rapt faces. In addition, following a process during which the scene order was – literally – reshuffled using a set of small filing cards devised by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (Ivory 1986b), the eventual released cut of Ivory's *Maurice* removed the shooting script's non-linear, flashback opening

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1   The external pressure to "improve" Forster's *Maurice* for the screen came from Forster's own literary executors at King's, and was explicit. One of them, George Rylands, '"never thought it was a good book … I said 'please [film] *Where Angels Fear to Tread* instead'"'; but was "converted" and "persuaded" by Kit Hesketh Harvey and James Ivory's first-draft screenplay – markedly different from the eventual film – that '"it could be made into something better than the book, which [is] what we expect"' (Rylands, quoted in Lelyveld 1986a). Hesketh Harvey's own comments confirm both the tight adaptation timescale and his facetiousness towards the source: "We had eight weeks, from treatment to first day's shooting, and many Forsterian knots to untie. Broadly, however, the brief was this: to restore *Maurice*'s candour and power of 1913 and to quell the titters of 1971" (Hesketh Harvey 1987, 30).

sequence – itself a remnant of earlier more extensive experiments with story order at the script-development stage (Speidel 2014) – to restore, and *almost* replicate, the linearity of Forster's novel. Ironically, in the face of this fraught and complex genesis, on its release Ivory's *Maurice* was routinely praised – or derided – by critics as the kind of "faithful" (or "too-faithful") adaptation routinely expected of Merchant Ivory, but one which improved upon a supposedly inferior Forster novel. Even today, barely any reviews attend fully to the released film's significant adaptational changes and decisions: David Leavitt's tirade against Merchant and Ivory for casting James Wilby as a blond-haired Maurice, in his introduction to the Penguin Classics edition (Leavitt 2005, xiv), is a rare exception.

Considerations for Forster/ian Adaptation Studies: ten themes (1–4)

My consideration of the example of Ivory's 1987 *Maurice* and its unseen adaptation and production processes yields several insights for how we might aspire to approach and develop Forsterian Adaptation Studies. First, **Theme 1a: The need for evidence-based/archival methods** and, allied to this, the need to attend to the processes, conflicts, complications and (as I shall return to later) contingencies and accidents which shape an adaptation rather than merely the outcome. The case of Ivory's *Maurice* illustrates how much the once-standard textual-comparative approach to studying book-to-film adaptations – in which the materials studied are the published book and the released film – conceals, and how far it may mislead. Yet the book-to-film comparative approach remains widespread, despite the development of contemporary adaptation theory (from McFarlane 1996 onwards) on the one hand, and the advancement of the fields of screenwriting studies and empirical film-production studies on the other. One core complaint is that such textual-comparative work is "practiced in a theoretical vacuum" (Leitch 2003, 150), "without the support of any more general theoretical account of what actually happens, or what ought to happen, when a group of filmmakers set out to adapt a literary text" (Leitch 2003, 149). The adaptation scholar Thomas Leitch attributes this persistence to "the institutional matrix of adaptation study – the fact that movies are so often used in courses like 'Shakespeare and Film' as heuristic intertexts, the spoonful of sugar that helps the Bard's own text go down," while "fundamental questions in adaptation theory [are left] unasked, let alone unanswered" (2003, 150).

As Leitch observes, "Everyone knows, for example, that movies are a collaborative medium, but is adaptation similarly collaborative[?]" (2003, 150). The answer is, of course, yes – but book-to-film textual comparison is both empirically *and* theoretically unequipped to reveal the complexities, tensions (and failures) of process and agency, or the collaborative, negotiated aspects of adaptation. For this, evidence-based methods which draw on (or, at minimum, take account of) empirical, primary sources – screenplays, wider materials in film/media production archives and publishing archives – are needed. Novel-to-film approaches do not usually even study the adapted screenplay, let alone its process and evolution, and typically stop far short of engaging with the wider dimensions of film (or media) production, or considering crucial determinants such as the attitudes, motivations and demands of rights-holders or the detail of film/media rights negotiations and agreements (pivotal for the adaptations produced – or approaches refused – since Forster's death). While documentation of the latter tends to remain confidential and closely guarded, the published gleanings – when media reports quote the Forster estate or individual executors at King's, and in the many (and consistent) testimonies of "Forster film" producers and directors about zamienić na the "rigours of their "examination" by these gatekeepers (producer Derek Granger, in Rees 1991)" – confirm the importance of the estate's attitude (and its executors' sometimes idiosyncratic judgements and tastes) as a force shaping Forster/ian adaptations. (For testimony from both sides, see Rees 1991 as well as Lelyveld 1986a and 1986b.)

Theme 1b: the value of mixed methods. Despite this limitation in textual approaches, however, not all page-to-screen scholarship is inadequately rigorous or untheorised. In relation to the Forster feature-film adaptations, there are some excellent models of close textual, visual and narratological analysis which we can valuably follow. I am particularly thinking of the late Forster scholar June Perry Levine's analyses of Ivory's and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *A Room with a View* (1985) (which Levine judged a successful Forster adaptation, in contrast with her view of David Lean's *A Passage to India* [1984]) and Ivory's *Maurice* in terms of their expressly visual and cinematic adaptational strategies (Levine 1989, Levine 1996). Both essays combine close attention to the specifics of film technique and/or screenwriting and structural decisions with a sensitive depth knowledge of Forster. The former focuses on *A Room with a View*'s strategies for translating "the Forsterian voice" and "literary tone" to film (Levine 1989, 70); the latter on how *Maurice*'s cinematography (by the eclectic French

veteran Pierre Lhomme, whose roots lay in the *nouvelle vague*) works to convey the novel's (notably unmarked) slippages between character point of view and authorial commentary.

Theme 2: Evidence-based methods (should) give us better Forster adaptations criticism. Despite exceptions such as Levine's work, the myth of mechanistic "too-faithful" "heritage" adaptation nonetheless persists, repetitively, in many literary-critical responses to the Forster feature films – albeit often as a ritual, or residual, gesture. Thus Robert K. Martin and George Piggford, in their "Editors' Introduction" to *Queer Forster* (1997, 27), discharge this obligation in a 33-line footnote. Martin and Piggford make wholly valid critical points (about David Lean's oversimplified, de-eroticised *A Passage to India* [1984], and the – more peculiar – tone-deafness to same-sex desire of Charles Sturridge's otherwise "faithful" *Where Angels Fear to Tread* [1991]) alongside the routine warnings against "complicit ... aestheticism" and "nostalgia," but this is not always the case. One especially absurd example can be found in the McGraw-Hill textbook *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature* (Desmond and Hawkes 2006). In a section titled "The failed adaptation," the authors dismiss the three Merchant Ivory Forster films – collectively – for their "wooden characters, conventional storytelling, a want of emotion, and a lack of verve," but then instantly backtrack to name two of the three (*A Room with a View* and *Howards End*, but not *Maurice*) as "exceptions" and "quite good" (Desmond and Hawkes 2006, 242). This homogenising myth of *excessive* – "wooden," "conventional," detrimental – fidelity can only really flourish where there remains a relative dearth of – or indifference to – evidence-based work which engages in detail with the adaptational evolution of screenplays and wider production processes. On the Screenwriting Studies side, the scholarship of Suzanne Speidel (2014) and Laura Fryer (2017, 2020) – parts of which, at the time of writing, remain yet to be published – has made important strides in relation to the Forster films; Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's wider screenwriting *oeuvre* as adapter and self-adapter (Jhabvala remains the only person in history to have won both the Booker Prize and – twice – the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay); and Andrew Davies' 2007 television adaptation of *A Room with a View* (directed by Nicholas Renton for ITV, UK).

Both the existence and the bombastic revisionism of Davies' re/adaptation of *A Room with a View* – by a veteran television writer who (since his 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* for the BBC) has become widely regarded as the UK's classic adapta-

tions superstar, but is also robustly heterosexual – alert us to **Theme 3: It is useful to compare adaptations with other adaptations**. The intertextual relations *between* adaptations should not be overlooked and, as Thomas Leitch highlights, raise a deeper question:

> Given the myriad differences, not only between literary and cinematic texts, but between successive cinematic adaptations of a given literary text ... what exactly is it that film adaptations adapt, or are supposed to adapt? (Leitch 2003, 150)

Comparison of different adaptations of the same "source" text (whether within one medium or across several) foregrounds, and can valuably clarify, the adaptational decisions that were made in each case and what could have been done differently. A comparison of Ivory's 1987 film of *Maurice* with its later but less widely known English-language stage and radio adaptations (the former by Roger Parsley and Andrew Graham, first staged in 1998, in the UK; the latter by Philip Osment, produced in 2007 as a two-part BBC Radio 4 *Classic Serial*) – whether focused purely on the scripts, or taking account of the audio/visual and performative elements of adaptation – confirms that multiple "faithful" adaptations of Forster's *Maurice* are possible. This comparison draws attention, for example, to how many of the novel's episodes and characters the film omits (a point almost never discussed by critics); to the commutation effects of casting differences (Bertie Carvel's 2007 radio Clive conveys earnest "simple manners" [Forster 1999, 24] which would lie beyond Hugh Grant's emotional repertoire; Joseph Kloska's 2007 radio Alec is raw and tearful at the hotel); and to the film's mimetic visual influence on the staging of some scenes in virtually every production of Parsley and Graham's play.

On the other hand, because Parsley and Graham's adaptation – originally written for the educational SNAP Theatre Company, which specialised in taking "literary classics" to the stage for school-age audiences – was conceived for small-scale, small-cast (and even amateur) stagings, it omits two of the novel's pivotal, and most cinematically memorable, scenes: Maurice and Clive's abscension to the Fens, and the cricket match. The retention of Clive's beautiful speech from Chapter 13 of the novel ("Let's get right outside it ever so far…" [Forster 1999, 60]) – absent from Ivory's film – stands in for the former. Structurally, Parsley and Graham use Maurice's hypnotism sessions with Lasker

Jones as a framing device. Like Ivory's film, their play combine a long running time with many adaptational omissions despite the relative brevity of Forster's novel. Interestingly, despite a running time of only two hours, it is Osment's 2007 radio dramatisation which comes closest of the three to adapting Forster's novel in full. Adapting *Maurice* to a purely audio medium, Osment can and does make extensive use of Forster's third-person narration (by John Bowe), but also includes numerous scenes absent from both Parsley and Graham's play and the released cut of Ivory's film: Maurice's upset at the dismissal of George the garden boy, his childhood fear of the dark, his schooling at Sunnington and adolescent development, the Gladys Olcott and Dickie Barry episodes, and Maurice's first sighting of Alec with the maids.[2]

Departing from all of these treatments, 2014–2018 brought a Brazilian, Portuguese-language, starkly contemporary staging of *Maurice* (by the Disclosure Theater Company, written by Andreane Lima). This Brazilian *Maurice* (which – reflecting the fragility of such work – could be viewed on YouTube in 2021 when I was preparing the live version of this paper but has now gone) used large-scale visual projection, contemporary and popular music (including, for instance, The Smiths' *Girlfriend in a Coma*), and confrontational performance to reassert *Maurice*'s political power as a text with continuing relevance in the present: one which speaks, and is adaptable (both aesthetically and transculturally), to a range of cultures and contexts.

Such examples draw our attention to the living rather than fixed nature of texts, and also to the senses in which adaptation is an act of reception, and a societally, culturally and geographically conditioned one. Thus, in the 21st century, the "dated" *Maurice* Forster worried about in his lifetime, and the "embarrassing" *Maurice* belittled by the 1970s British literary establishment, is from other perspectives a politically powerful – or even dangerous and seditious – text in the numerous local and global contexts where homophobia is resurgent – or official policy – and the fights against conversion therapy, homophobic violence, or merely for the right to be, are real, current and not hypothetical.

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2   A composite episode which juxtaposes Maurice's contrasting responses to Gladys and Dickie, and Alec with the maids, both featured in Ivory's shooting script and are among the film's deleted scenes released on DVD/Blu-ray. Gladys Olcott (played by Serena Gordon) can be glimpsed fleetingly in *Maurice*'s final cut, most notably in the subjective montage which conveys Maurice's dream in the Russet Room following his first hypnotism by Lasker-Jones. Dickie Barry was played by Adrian Ross Magenty, whom Ivory re-cast as Tibby Schlegel in *Howards End* (1992).

Theme 4, not unrelated to this, is that **We need a temporally and conceptually extended model of "adaptation"** which reaches both back and forward, to encompass, on the one hand, Forster's own (pre-publication and wider) "adaptations" of his own texts; and, on the other, what Timothy Corrigan names as adaptation scholarship's "third perspective": "adaptation as an act of reception" (Corrigan 2017, 23) – to which we might further add reception as an act of adaptation. In considering adaptation as an act of reception (and vice versa), we need to attend to transcultural adaptation, the field of post-publication *popular* reception, and – cutting across the transcultural and the popular – the extensive, yet still widely disregarded, further work of re/adaptation and reimagining done by audiences/readers and fans (of Forster's works and Forster/ian adaptations).

The remainder of this essay will revisit some of these themes and introduce others, while placing them within a second sense-making framework. Here, I propose that the field of Forster/ians adaptation can be conceptualised in (loosely temporal) terms of three phases.

The three phases of Forster/ian adaptation (and themes 5–10)

Phase 1

Phase 1, extending from 1942 to 1973, comprises those adaptations of Forster's stories and novels which were written and produced broadly during his lifetime, always for non-cinematic media: as BBC Radio plays or radio drama serials (from 1942), or for the stage (from 1951), followed from 1958 onwards by TV adaptations – which, in practice, were very often re-adaptations of the radio or stage scripts for the newer medium, at a time when British television drama remained overwhelmingly studio-based and the "filmed play" remained an acceptable format. The features of the Phase 1 adaptations underscore the importance of approaching Forster/ian adaptations with an awareness of **Theme 5,** namely **Media History**, in which **medium-specificity matters, and so do institutions**.

The Phase 1 adaptations were, for the most part, scripted by a recurrent set of names – presumably with Forster's direct approval. And (as Fordoński notes) they were transmedially migrant: this "early period of adaptations" were "repeatedly recycled in various media" (Fordoński 2020, 13–14), with existing scripts adjusted, rather than Forster's works being adapted afresh with medi-

um-specific considerations in mind. Given that Santha Rama Rau's 1960 stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* was a huge success first in London's West End and then on Broadway, with the eminent British–Pakistani actor Zia Mohyeddin originating the role of Aziz on both sides of the Atlantic at a time when he also featured in David Lean's 1962 epic film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) (albeit only briefly, as Tafas, the Arab guide shot dead by Omar Sharif's Ali for drinking from the wrong well), it is wholly unsurprising that the 1965 BBC-TV *Play of the Month* version (directed by Waris Hussein, one of the first British-Asian directors) re-adapted Rau's play, and again starred Mohyeddin as Aziz. However, this Phase 1 practice of using a recurrent coterie of approved adapters and re-working the same adaptations across different media (Radio–Stage–TV) went wider, and needs to be understood in institutional terms.

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. We might anticipate, therefore, that this pattern would change after Forster's death – and indeed it did. With the sole exception of the short adaptation of Forster's queer short story *The Obelisk* for BBC2's *Premiere* series in 1977 (directed by first-timer Giles Foster), there would be no further TV adaptations of Forster's novels between the BBC's *Play of the Month*: *A Room with a View* in 1973 and Andrew Davies' revisionist adaptation of *A Room with a View* for ITV (the UK's independent television network, supported by advertising revenue rather than the UK television licence fee) in 2007. Interestingly, the very first TV adaptation of a Forster novel, in 1958, had also been an ITV production of *A Room with a View* – written and directed by Robert Tronson for Granada Television's *Play of the Week* strand – a fact which is institutionally significant on a number of fronts. Produced at a period when ITV's quality drama production was in the ascendant – overtly seeking to compete with the BBC, and at times outdoing the BBC's output in innovation – by Granada, the regional ITV company most renowned for its quality TV drama, Tronson's 1958 *A Room with a View* proves to be one of only two *television-specific* new adaptations of Forster's fiction during Forster's lifetime. The other was BBC-TV's 1966 The Machine Stops, screened as an episode of the sci-fi series, screened as an episode of the sci-fi series *Out of the Unknown*, which was likewise produced from a new, original-to-TV script, by the Czech-born screenwriter Kenneth Cavander and British film-industry veteran Clive Donner (neither of whom were part of the BBC Establishment old guard close to Forster).

A further point of note is that all of the 1958–1973 Forster TV adaptations were single television plays. In the heyday of the BBC-TV Classic Serial (and, from 1970, the BBC's transatlantic co-production and distribution arrangement with Masterpiece Theatre in the US, following the UK's first colour productions on BBC2 from 1967), not one of Forster's novels was adapted to the TV Classic Serial format. Indeed, the first *episodic* TV Forster adaptation would not arrive until 2017's four-part adaptation of *Howards End*, and this was the product of a commercial, institutional and technological TV ecology which had been transformed beyond recognition since Forster's death: co-produced by the BBC and the US Starz Network, and scripted consciously (by the Bronx-born US film director and playwright Kenneth Lonergan, the screenwriter of Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*) as a fresh adaptational response to Forster's novel without reference to the 1992 film.

Theme 6: Archives, availability and access. Plainly, one priority for the development of Forster/ian Adaptations Studies is that we need more scholarship grounded in a broadened transmedial awareness of the full spectrum of Forster adaptations, and more work which directly studies past Forster adaptations across media forms. (One welcome example is Mihaela Cel-Mare [2021]'s application of a "transmedia perspective" to some of the theatre adaptations of Forster's novels scripted and staged during his lifetime.) However, the advancement of such work on the "Phase 1" Forster adaptations is constrained by the limitations of archival preservation, availability and access, and these limitations apply to the adaptations for television as well as stage.

While the post-1980 Forster feature films (and their peripherals) are widely available on home media or online to study, the 1950s–1970s British televisual adaptations of Forster's works are not. (The one exception is the 1966 BBC-TV *The Machine Stops*: the complete sci-fi series *Out of the Unknown* was released in 2014 as a 7-disc DVD box set.) The British Film Institute (BFI) national archive collections include some of these dramas (notably including the Waris-Hussein-directed 1965 BBC-TV *A Passage to India*, which was screened and discussed at BFI Southbank in 2018 as part of a season of Hussein's work), but not all. Both productions illustrate – in their different ways – the studio-based production practices and aesthetics of British television drama in the 1960s (and throughout "Phase 1"). Telecine or filmed inserts or backdrops were used to convey *A Passage to India*'s exterior settings; while *The Machine Stops'* entire premise lent itself brilliantly to the craft skills of hermetic, subterranean pro-

duction, costume and sound design juxtaposed with filmed sequences when Kuno reaches the earth's surface. (The same contrast served the Ulster-based theatre company Big Telly well in their 2020 *The Machine Stops*, one of the first dramas to be staged remotely via Zoom, by home-bound performers, during the UK's first Covid-19 lockdown.)

However, the high costs of broadcast-standard videotape and archive storage meant that recordings of TV programmes were only retained – even by the broadcaster – if deemed (at the date of retention or culling) to be of particular value for posterity. In consequence, so much past British television drama is "wiped, missing and lost" that the BBC Archives have a webpage with that title. In further instances, relevant materials may be archived but are hard to locate or access. So, while I particularly want to highlight the importance for adaptation – and production, and publishing – studies of methods which draw on empirical, archival sources, we know that (for varied and complex reasons) these sources are not always accessible.

Phase 2

Phase 2 comprises the 1984–1992 era of the Forster feature-films cycle. The films themselves might, at first glance, seem all too familiar. But here too there is a need to attend to the *institutional* context which gave rise to this step-change in the nature of Forster adaptation – a context largely disregarded in the dominant critical narratives around the films, which have been shaped more by the anti-fidelity turn in adaptation theory and criticism, and by counter-reaction to the cultural–political climate and culture wars of 1980s Britain.[3] While the former has popularised hostility to "fidelity adaptations" (see the Desmond and Hawkes 2006 textbook example cited earlier), with little care for cases where "infidelity" becomes problematic (for example, and clearly pertinent to Forster, in adaptations which straighten or neuter queer works and authors), the critique which denounced the "Merchant–Forster-Ivory" "heritage films" as ideological (and, by inference, somehow official) products of the Thatcher era conveniently ignores the films' actual, more nuanced, institutional origins.

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3   For a fuller account of the connection between Thatcher-era policies, Britain's 1980s culture wars (largely manufactured, then as now, by the right-wing press) and the critique of "heritage cinema" – which was notably preoccupied with the Merchant Ivory Forster films – see Monk 2011a, Chapter 1, 10–28.

Theme 7, then, is that in Phase 2, **institutions remain important, but *different* institutions and relations are important for the "Forster films"** from those which governed the Phase 1 Forster/ian adaptations and shaped their characteristic features (namely, the culture and practices of the mid-twentieth-century BBC, the technologies and practices of 1950s–1970s television drama, and the preferences, control and personal and institutional connections of the living Forster). The emergence of the 1984–1992 Forster feature-films cycle at that particular moment was prompted and enabled by two "institutional" factors in particular: the arrival of an entirely new TV institution in the UK – the 1982 launch of Channel 4, the UK's new fourth television channel, with a remit and ethos which transformed UK independent film production, the relationship between film and television, and the image of British cinema internationally – coupled with the Forster estate's new willingness, by the early 1980s, to invite and consider bids for *cinematic* film rights to Forster's novels.

Innovative and institutionally distinct from both the established BBC public-service-broadcasting model and commercial television – it combined a public-service remit to serve minorities with initial funding from ITV advertising revenue – Channel 4 was launched expressly as a "commissioning" channel – in contrast with the mid-century and 1980s BBC – with an explicit remit to support independent producers. This model brought the huge (indeed, near-legendary) transformative impact of Film on Four (later Film4) for British film production and creativity. Under the leadership of David Rose, Channel 4's senior commissioning editor for drama, Film on Four was initially tasked with producing 15 to 20 low-budget films per year, financed and produced in partnership with other companies, with a cinema release for selected productions initially envisaged merely as a promotional tool.

In practice, "between 1982 and 1998 Channel 4 directly funded over 270 [film] productions" (BUFVC n.d.), with game-changing success.[4] With the exception of Lean's *A Passage to India*, all of the 1984–1992 Forster films were either produced with varying degrees of Film on Four involvement and financial backing or were products of the wider impact of Film on Four's success, which prompted other British TV companies/broadcasters to venture into feature-film funding and production (including the BBC, which launched BBC Films in 1990). Ivory's *A Room with a View*, *Maurice* and *Howards End* (1992) were all Film on Four co-pro-

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4   For a full survey of Film on Four's first decade of production, see Pym 1992.

ductions. So too was Merchant Ivory's earlier *Heat and Dust* (1983), adapted by Jhabvala from her own novel, and a consciously Forsterian project: unsparing towards the British in India, concerned with transgressive desire (Olivia, the young wife of a 1920s colonial official, has an affair with the local Nawab), and borrowing two characters from Forster's life, the Nawab himself (Shashi Kapoor), and his homosexual secretary Harry (Nickolas Grace), based on J. R. Ackerley.[5] By the early 1990s, *Howards End*'s backers also included Japan Satellite Broadcasting and the Japanese Sumitomo Corporation investment group.

Where Angels Fear to Tread (Charles Sturridge, 1991) was, chronologically, the fourth film in the five-film 1984–1992 Forster cycle. Modestly budgeted, it displayed conscious efforts to distance itself from "heritage" filmmaking – and the (by 1991) virulent criticisms thereof – via a relatively drab realist aesthetic and satirically physical, almost slapstick, performances (centrally from Judy Davis and Rupert Graves as Harriet and Philip Herriton) which mocked early-1990s English Europhobia and xenophobia as much as their 1905 iterations. These efforts were, however, little appreciated by contemporary critics, and occluded by the higher profile (and sweepingly cinematic widescreen aesthetics) of Ivory's *Howards End*, which premiered in competition at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival, where Ivory won the 45th Anniversary Prize (and was nominated for the Palme D'Or), followed by three Academy Awards (including Jhabvala's second win for Best Adapted Screenplay, on both occasions *in absentia*) and numerous nominations.

Where Angels Fear to Tread, in contrast, only reached US cinemas at all as a double-bill second feature with *Howards End*, and (despite a Royal Charity Premiere, organised by the HIV charity Crusaid) received lukewarm reviews in the UK. However, its genesis was, again, rooted in the move of British TV companies and teams already associated with quality TV drama into feature-film production. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* was made by Stagescreen Productions, formed in 1986 by the veteran British TV drama producer Derek Granger (who turned 100 in 2021) and others, with London Weekend Television (LWT), the privately owned ITV franchise-holder for London and the Home Counties at weekends in tandem with the weekday Thames Television. More specifically, it was made by the producer/screenwriting/director team (Tim Sullivan and

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5 Channel 4 contributed 10% of the budget of Ivory's *A Room with a View* (total budget £2,259,000), 24% of the budget of *Maurice* (total budget £1,577,000) and 10% of the budget of the earlier *Heat and Dust* (total budget £1,100,000). Source: Pym 1992, 185, 166, 153. The budget of *Howards End* was around $8 million.

Granger, Sturridge) behind Granada Television's 1981 adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, today still widely cited as one of the greatest TV drama series of all time. LWT's late-1980s move into feature-film production, in partnership with Stagescreen, was prompted by a complex context of competitive franchise renewal (in 1982, LWT had had to re-apply for its franchise for the first time in its history), ownership and leadership changes, and cost-cutting, against a backdrop of pro-competition, profit-focused shifts in UK broadcasting policy during the Thatcher era.

Under pressure to demonstrate (a 1980s neoliberal conception of) "quality," LWT responded in the most literal way possible, by hiring the *Brideshead* team. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* was Stagescreen's/Granger and Sturridge's second LWT-funded cinematic feature film following their (more critically successful) film of Evelyn Waugh's satirical 1934 novel *A Handful of Dust* (Sturridge, 1988), chronicling the demise and tragic end of an upper-class marriage. In its media coverage and at the box office, *Handful* benefited from the swift re-casting of James Wilby "opposite" Rupert Graves immediately after Ivory's *Maurice* – even though, as Edmund White, interviewing the pair for American *Vogue*, conceded, "Although Wilby and Graves played lovers in *Maurice*, in *Handful* they're rivals for the same woman"[6] (White 1988). By 1991, as anti-heritage-film criticism gained ground, the cycle's repeat-casting practices ceased to be viewed kindly. Instead, they became routinely decried as proof of "incestuousness" (Craig 1991, 10) or worse, rather than the films' critics acknowledging acting skill or the significant pleasures of performance, persona and intertextuality for audiences.

The Phase 2 Forster adaptations, emerging from a new set of institutions and circumstances, and exhibiting different production, adaptation and aesthetic practices from Phase 1, are significant for two further reasons. First, Phase 2 marks the first time that the development of *new* screenplays adapted from Forster's novels, going back to the source, becomes the norm (rather than an occasional exception to the recycling of old Forster-approved scripts across media). There are caveats: Lean was contractually required (by Forster's decree) to use Santha Rama Rau's existing script for *A Passage to India*, but butchered it; Sullivan and Granger's screenplay for *Where Angels Fear to Tread* credits Elisabeth

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6   Wilby played Waugh's dull upper-class squire Tony Last, Kristin Scott Thomas his wife Brenda, Graves the shallow John Beaver with whom Brenda embarks on a trite affair.

Hart, writer of the 1963 stage adaptation. Two of the wholly new adaptations – *A Room with a View* and *Howards End* – were, of course, the work of Jhabvala (via a collaborative process involving Ivory's input; Jhabvala, conversely, was routinely involved in Ivory's editing-suite decisions), and both won Jhabvala Academy Awards for Best Adapted Screenplay (in 1987 and 1993). A third, Kit Hesketh Harvey and James Ivory's newly adapted screenplay(s) for *Maurice* – the first adaptation of *Maurice* in any medium – also benefited, in its final form, from Jhabvala's (by choice) uncredited involvement. Second, the Forster feature films of Phase 2 were the first instance of Forster's works being filmed using all the visual tools and language of cinema.

However, Phase 2's opening up of the possibility of (and, in theory, also the possibilities for) cinematic Forster adaptations was dependent on the approval and agreement of the executors of Forster's literary estate. As Jasper Rees rightly noted in the *Observer*, "no one can make a film of a Forster novel without seeking the permission of a committee of King's College [Cambridge] Fellows" (Rees 1991). And (as already evidenced), this process subjected – and presumably still subjects – would-be filmmakers, their proposals and their script drafts to detailed scrutiny. **Theme 8**, then, is that the post-1980 new wave of **Forster filmmakers and adapters seeking rights must negotiate with an exacting gatekeeper, the Forster estate and its Cambridge executors**. Feature-film adaptations of Forster's works were made possible for the first time by a shift in stance which would have been unthinkable during his lifetime: "Morgan said after he was dead we could do what we liked," one executor, the 89-year-old George Rylands, stated (Rees 1991). But the decisions about which of Forster's works were most worthy (or, in the case of *Maurice*, unworthy) of film adaptation, and which rights should be offered to whom, lay wholly in the power of the executors at King's; and their (strongly held but sometimes capricious) views and judgements of value and taste conditioned and constrained the kinds of adaptation that could and can be made. Moreover, as the Forster estate at King's profits from royalty income in perpetuity (including, for example, more than 40 years of worldwide home-video/DVD/Blu-ray royalties from Ivory's *A Room with a View*) as well as the direct sale of film rights (while substantial film-location fees form a further income stream for the colleges), it is vital to understand that the estate's decisions are also shaped by financial and commercial considerations. As the Pulitzer Prize-winning US journalist Joseph Lelyveld, reporting from the 1986 *Maurice* shoot at King's, confirmed:

> King's College – which enjoys royalties from the movies and the greatly enhanced sales of Forster's novels that they inspire – had a direct interest in turning itself into a movie set. ... Over lunch, Dr [Donald] Parry [biologist, in 1986 the vice-provost of King's and one of the estate's executors] reacted quickly upon learning that a video cassette of *A Room with a View* would soon be marketed in Britain. "Do we get a piece of the action?" the don asked. "Of course, of course," said the producer [Ismail Merchant]. (Lelyveld 1986b)

Beyond the control of the dons lie the medium-specific qualities – and intangibles – of film and film performance; and, entwined with these, the distinctive sensibility and set of collaborative, creative, aesthetic and directorial practices for which Ivory and the Merchant Ivory partnership became known, and which thereby came to epitomise the "Forster film." In a sensitive recent appraisal, the Delhi-based film scholars Nildeep Paul and Madhubanti De reflect on the "fascinating history" and uniqueness of the transcultural Ivory–Jhabvala–Merchant collaboration: not merely "the longest-running [in] the field of independent cinema," but one which was able for almost 50 years to "maintain a relative autonomy over the form and subject of their cinema" even in their studio collaborations (Paul and De 2021). For Paul and De, the defining features of Ivory–Jhabvala–Merchant's oeuvre lie in the trio's "attempts to depict onscreen complex transcultural negotiations marked by concerns [with] identity and capital," raising a "maelstrom of issues [which] their films often found themselves at the centre of." The films themselves share a "narrative ambiguity" and "an emotional charge entirely peculiar to [Ivory–Jhabvala–Merchant]", traits which Paul and De attribute to the trio's exceptionally "wide sphere of influences" and "many cultural intersections" (Paul and De 2021).

There is, in short, a persuasive case for regarding Ivory–Jhabvala–Merchant (along with their fourth long-term collaborator and friend, the composer Richard Robbins) as collaborative cinematic auteurs whose concerns dovetailed felicitously with Forster's. **Theme 9** is that **we should attend to the cinematic and visual aspects of adaptation**, and to its intersections with cinematic authorship. "Authorship," however, implies control – but I propose that **we should attend equally to the less "controlled" aspects: the embodied and performative, the intangible – and even accidental – aspects of adaptation**.

"Visual adaptation" encompasses a film's visual, cinematic, performed and embodied – but non-verbal/non-dialogue – adaptational strategies. I will first explore examples of the use of controlled, highly considered, cinematic adaptation strategies in Ivory's *Maurice*, before turning attention to the more elusive matter of how casting, performance and embodiment contribute to screen adaptation, including in ways which may be unscripted, improvised and even visceral.

Examples of *Maurice*'s use of purely cinematic adaptation strategies include the use of subjective shots and superimpositions to express Maurice's interiority in the sequence conveying his restless dream (or nightmare) just before Alec climbs to him in the Russet Room; and the film's visual expression of Forster's ending, or rather twin endings: Maurice and Alec's kiss and embrace at the boathouse versus Clive closing his bedroom window shutters one by one, shutting out nature and the past, watched covertly by his concerned wife Anne (Phoebe Nicholls). Levine (1996) explores the ways in which further significant scenes find cinematographic equivalents for Forster's "elusive narrative technique" in *Maurice*, in which shifting character point of view is combined with "frequent though cryptic authorial intrusions" (in the words of Claude J. Summers 1983, 149).

In the first of these examples, a complex subjective montage stands in for Forster's passage towards the end of Chapter 37:

> He had paid a doctor two guineas to draw the curtains tighter, and presently, in the brown cube of such a room, Miss Tonks would lie prisoned beside him. And, as the yeast of the trance continued to work, Maurice had the illusion of a portrait that changed, now at his will, now against it, from male to female… (Forster 1999, 165)

In Ivory's visualisation, James Wilby's Maurice tosses and turns in bed, with his subjective dream/nightmare represented by a montage of layered, transparent moving images: a replay of Maurice's first hypnotism by Lasker-Jones earlier in the day gives way to images representing the hypnotism's intended result, heterosexual marriage. The sequence substitutes Gladys Olcott for Miss Tonks (the latter was never a scripted character in the film), and Gladys lies "prisoned" next to Maurice in a punt-like boat on the Penge/Pendersleigh[7] lake, both of them dressed

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7   For unexplained (though guessable) reasons, the film aggrandises, or romanticises, Forster's Penge to "Pendersleigh".

in bridal white, but laid out as though dead in a coffin. The white costuming and watery setting recall the tragic/drowned women of Pre-Raphaelite art, Millais's *Ophelia* (1851–2) or Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott* (1888). In Ivory's visual adaptation, the "solution" Maurice clutches at by undergoing hypnotism – closeted straight marriage – is not merely a "prison" but a living death, for both parties.[8] (The ambiguous significance of water and drowning of course recurs, this time in dialogue, in the following scene when Maurice and Alec talk together in bed following their night of sexual passion and release: Alec, suggestively, equates getting one's head wet with "drowning before your day.") Forster's "illusion of a portrait that changed, now at his will, now against it, from male to female" is expressed visually by the boat-as-coffin dissolving into the "objects" Maurice "had never seen" (yet which have penetrated his unconscious): a shot of Alec from above, sitting bare-legged in the boat, bailing out rainwater.

In my second example, the film's ending again uses a subjective shot – this time to convey Clive's not only entirely subjective but transtemporal vision – but with no use of superimposition. Instead, the subjective shot is sharp-cut into a shot/reverse-shot sequence: an out-of-kilter use of this tool of classical film grammar. Shot/reverse-shot's usual function is to establish or reinforce spatio-temporal unity, and spatio-temporally coherent character point-of-view, within the continuity editing system: shot one shows a character looking; shot two shows what they are looking at, normally within the same cinematic space and time. Ivory's subjective insert, however, overtly disrupts space–time unity, in a scene where audiences are already experiencing the unease of witnessing two unhappy, lonely people: one (Clive) putting on an act, unaware that the other (Anne) is observing him anxiously. This sense is heightened by the camera holding on Anne's reflection in the dressing-table mirror for a very long take, her hands clasped as if in prayer, inviting audiences to speculate on the thoughts and emotions behind her shifting expression.

Ivory's inserted shot attempts to address by visual means the challenges Forster's penultimate paragraph presents for any adaptation of *Maurice*:

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8   In the shooting-script version of *Maurice*, this image would have been counterposed with an earlier scene, within the post-title sequence, in which a game of charades exposes Maurice's deeply awkward performance of heterosexual courtship with Gladys. (The charades device contributed to the shooting script's adaptation of Forster's Chapter 8.) Wilby's Maurice mimes "marriage" by putting an antimacassar on Gladys's head, then "marries" Dickie by placing a curtain ring on his finger and, in his over-enthusiasm, falling onto Dickie.

> To the end of his life Clive was not sure of the exact moment of
> [Maurice's] departure, and with the approach of old age he grew
> uncertain whether the moment had yet occurred. The Blue Room
> would glimmer, ferns undulate. Out of some external Cambridge
> his friend began beckoning to him, clothed in the sun, and shaking
> out the scents and sounds of the May term. (Forster 1999, 214)

Thus, before closing the final pair of shutters, Clive pauses, leans and looks sadly out of the window; but instead of cutting to what he would objectively see (the grounds of Penge/Pendersleigh), Ivory cuts to a shot of a gowned Maurice, "beckoning him" from a Cambridge quad, literally calling "come on!," then smiling and waving as he retreats. The film's final shot cuts back to Clive, still framed by the window, where he is joined by Anne. In place of Forster's stinging last line ("...to devise some method of concealing the truth from Anne" [1999, 214]), the film has Anne asking: "Who were you talking to?" (outside, during Maurice's final showdown with Clive), to which Clive replies with a lie: "No one. No one. I was just trying out a speech." As Adam Mars-Jones has observed, 'in another sense' Clive's lie is "no more than the truth" (Mars-Jones 1987). However, the sequence's long-take observation of Anne has established that she already knows something in her marriage is wrong, inviting audiences to speculate on what she might already suspect or know, and casting doubt on Clive's ability to "conceal the truth."[9]

As will be apparent from these examples, acting, casting decisions, and matters of actor appearance, persona and embodiment are further elements which need to be considered when studying film adaptation. The impact of performers and performance is particularly crucial in Ivory's films. Paul and De (2021), like many commentators before them, draw attention to Ivory's distinctive reputation, and unusual approach, as a director of what they term "actors' films." In every Merchant Ivory film, actor selection, the director–actor relationship, and the "essence" of the chosen performers are key: "Whether in appearance or personality they have to have some kind of individual distinction. I don't want actors who aren't very much themselves" (Ivory in Long 2005, 15). Ivory

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9   The long-held shot of Anne in this final scene mirrors an earlier, and more unusually framed, long-held shot which interrogates Clive's emotional (non-)reaction when Anne announces her "private notion" that Maurice is "in love".

has long been renowned for his exceptional degree of trust in his actors and as the least interventionist of directors, though claims that he gives his performers "free reign to flesh out their own characters" (Paul and De 2021) are often overstated. The effectiveness of this approach in Ivory's three Forster films was greatly helped by the use of one of the UK's leading casting directors, Celestia Fox, enabling him to "take [the shortlisted contenders'] talent for granted in most cases" (Ivory in Long 2005, 15).

On the other hand, Merchant Ivory's low budgets and tight shooting schedules – with no rehearsal time – and the role of personal relations and informal networks in their casting choices introduced risks, contingencies and a need to improvise. These forces can be felt in Ivory's *A Room with a View* and especially *Maurice* (less so in the more generously budgeted *Howards End*), with consequences for adaptation, including the adaptational impact of circumstances the director cannot control. On location in Italy, *A Room with a View's* crew strove to artificially create Forster's field of violets where George first kisses Lucy, but could not achieve this convincingly – so the scene was instead filmed amid the field's real vegetation of poppies and grasses.

Maurice, dramatically, lost its lead actor weeks before filming was due to start when Julian Sands – George Emerson in Ivory's *A Room with a View*, re-cast by Ivory as Maurice Hall – fled the project. James Wilby, the replacement Maurice, had initially been cast as Pippa Durham's comically dull fiancé Archie London, and stepped up into the title role with only "eight days to prepare, but … absolutely no reservations" (Clinch 1987, 44). A disconcerting number of the creative inputs into *Maurice* as an adaptation can be traced to the web of connections around Sands. Hesketh Harvey, hired by Ivory as *Maurice's* novice co-screenwriter, was (at the time) Sands' brother-in-law. Oxford graduate Hugh Grant was cast as Clive backed by a strong recommendation from Hesketh Harvey (Cambridge); the two knew each other well because both were performers on the Oxbridge live comedy revue circuit. Catherine Rabett, cast as Pippa Durham, was Hesketh Harvey's wife. Lasker-Jones was originally to have been played by the American actor John Malkovich, a close friend of Sands, but Malkovich was lost to the production when Sands went, and had to be replaced very late – by Ben Kingsley – after the shoot had started. Amid these complications, even at replacement stage Ivory persisted in casting a blond rather than black-haired Maurice, on the pragmatic (and some would say facile) grounds that "I'd already cast the dark-haired Hugh Grant as Clive, [so] I decided on the blond

James Wilby" over Ivory's other choice, the dark-haired Julian Wadham (Ivory in Long 2005, 213).

While casting substitutions provide one lens for thinking about the role of casting decisions in shaping film adaptations, attention to the details of film performance, and equally to the more elusive matter of screen presence, provide still richer material for an analysis of what performers bring to the Forster films as screen adaptations. Given the nature of naturalistic screen acting (as less acting than "being"; or, more minimally still, as an essence whose effects depend upon its "capture" by the camera and the subsequent shot selection and editing) these lines of analysis need to attend not merely to acting "craft" but to the effects of the actor's screen body, physicality, persona, gestures, and face, particularly at moments of *photogénie*.[10] To push this observation further, there are moments in some of the Forster films where face, body and even viscerality – and unscripted, extemporised and "fluffed" performance elements – become central and are now indelibly part of the cinematic adaptation.

For instance, the haptic qualities of the scene in Ivory's *A Room with a View* where Lucy, having returned soaked by rain to the *pensione* following George's kiss, reacts with sulky defiance to Charlotte's reprimands, make it feel canonic that *Lucy* (rather than only Helena Bonham Carter) has a huge cloud of hair. Hugh Grant's combination of beauty, natural arrogance and seamless ad libs ("Featherstonhaugh, I think I'm going to eat one of your apples") imbue the Clive of Ivory's *Maurice* with a glamorous self-assurance which the TV Tropes wiki rightly identifies as an instance of "Adaptational Attractiveness" (TV Tropes 2022). Indeed, this effect fed directly into Andrew Higson's response to the film in one of the founding texts of heritage-film criticism: because he found Grant's Clive Durham "a far more attractive and fascinating character than Maurice," Higson concluded that these pleasures of performance undercut Forster's critical intentions, and extended this argument to the Forster films collectively, not solely *Maurice* (1993, 120–1). A difficulty here is that Higson's

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10 The early twentieth-century film theorist and filmmaker Jean Epstein elaborated the concept of *photogénie* in complex terms across a number of essays – "Magnification" (1921), "The Senses I" (1921) and "On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie" (1924) – culminating in the small-print-run book *Photogénie de l'impondérable* (1935). The concept is simultaneously aesthetic, cultural and theoretical; but, "[a]t its heart, *photogénie* seeks the essence of cinema" (Farmer 2010). *Photogénie* stands in opposition to narrative drive, and is "variously associated with transformation, expression, the close-up, movement, temporality, rhythm, and the augmentation of the senses" – in particular, the power of the close-up, "in which subtle movements of the face are revealed" (Farmer 2010).

personal reaction to Grant's Clive (as a heterosexual male academic) is neither universal among *Maurice*'s audiences nor particularly representative of audience reactions (especially among the film's intended queer constituencies). I have sat in many cinema screenings of *Maurice* where audience members hissed or laughed at Clive towards the end, most of all during Maurice's powerful '"The Reason You Suck' Speech" (a further TV Tropes classification), where Clive first comically fails to understand Maurice's news that he has "shared" (sexually) with Alec ("Sh-shared what?"), then recoils fastidiously.

On the matter of adaptation and accidents, one prime example is the "creaky-chair scene" in Ivory's *Maurice* (Cambridge: "Summer Term 1910"), immortalised as such because the – unplanned – creaking of the wicker armchair where Maurice and Clive first tentatively embrace provides almost the only sound in an otherwise near-silent scene, underscoring the drawn-out, sublimated, erotic tension of the moment. Anecdotes about the creaky chair are a long-established part of the film's promotional setlore. A second example from *Maurice*, in contrast, has gone un-noted and remains unexplained: Rupert Graves' saliva-slurred adaptation of Forster's closing words of the novel's penultimate Chapter 45 following Maurice and Alec's reunion (and, in the film, their visceral close-up kiss) at the boathouse: "Now we shan't never be parted – it's finished" in place of Forster's "And now we shan't be parted no more, and that's finished" (Forster 1999, 209). Ivory's annotated shooting script faithfully replicates Forster's words, which are not altered in his handwritten annotations (Hesketh Harvey and Ivory 1986, 134), implying that the change was extemporised on set and actor-led: an example of Ivory giving his actors free reign. The reason for the changed line is therefore undocumented; and the change may have been spontaneous, and the reason practical: Graves' version is easier to speak than Forster's, particularly at the height of performed passion as he pulls out of a deep kiss with James Wilby. The change nonetheless has adaptational effects: "never be parted," with its promise of eternal love, feels more swooningly romantic than Forster's more practical "now we shan't be parted no more."

The same scene's close-up kiss and embrace is also, of course, the film's supreme moment of *photogénie*, in which the lovers' embodiment by the actors, their rapturous faces lit and shot in chiaroscuro close-up, and the wet, face-eating viscerality of the kiss itself (unprecedented in cinema in 1987, and still startling today), come together in an act of visual adaptation. There are, however, other scenes in which Ivory's *Maurice* adapts, makes meaning and provokes

affect pre-eminently through the power of the actors' faces: perhaps most strik-
ingly in Wilby's astonishing silent performance when Maurice is forced to brave
out the Reverend Borenius's unexpected (and, for both Maurice and the absent
Alec, highly threatening) appearance at Southampton Docks.

Phase 3

Phase 3 of Forster/ian adaptation comprises everything that comes after the
1984–1992 Forster feature films, plus those earlier adaptations which fall outside
the "classic adaptation" category. In contrast with Phase 2, his third (and, at
present, final) phase is characterised by its heterogeneity: adaptation to a range
of media, across a range of forms and aesthetic approaches, by creators with
varied interests. This heterogeneity can be mapped (I suggest) in terms of four
lines of development which, for convenience, I label A to D. A common – but not
universal – feature across all four is the impulse to rediscover, and adapt or re-
adapt, the Forster who is not "heritage," raising welcome questions of genre and
aesthetics and – often, but not always – extending public perceptions of Forster
and his works beyond notions of "heritage" aesthetics or "classic" adaptation.
This is particularly true of lines A: Sci-Fi Forster and B: Queer Forster, but less
true in, for example, certain twenty-first-century US attempts to adapt Forster's
novels (centrally, *A Room with a View*) as musical theatre, which try to simulate
the mise-en-scene and perceived "prettiness" of the 1984–1992 Forster films,
with kitsch results. Indeed, a further feature of Phase 3 is the great diversity of
twenty-first-century "Forsterian" aesthetics and production design.

Post-*Howards End*, the 1990s proved to be a fallow decade for realised Forster
adaptations. (Michael Burge's 1993 screenplay *Other Kingdom*, based on Forster's
eponymous short story, remains unproduced; and two theatre projects scripted
in the 1990s, Scott Sickles' bio-drama *Nonsense and Beauty* – about Forster's re-
lationship with Bob and May Buckingham – and Simon Dormandy's *A Passage
to India*, were both eventually staged in 2018–19, in the US and UK respective-
ly.) For this reason, my Phase 3 examples date predominantly from the period
since 2000, reflecting a proliferation of new productions – amid wider evidence
of proliferating interest in Forster – in the twenty-first century. **Line A: Sci-fi
Forster** comprises the field of cross-media adaptations of Forster's 1909 story *The
Machine Stops*. This essay has already noted three examples, each (fittingly) making
cutting-edge use of the current, "new" or mixed media of their time of production,

beginning with the 1966 black-and-white, studio-based, BBC-TV version produced for the sci-fi series *Out of the Unknown*. Significantly the TV version has been followed by more than one wave of post-digital rediscovery of Forster's story in a global(ised) rather than UK-specific context, with each wave responding both to new socio-cultural developments (the rise of the Internet, the 2020–22 Covid-19 pandemic) and available new technologies, yielding a proliferation of "small" adaptations across media (radio, short films, animations, stage).

The first post-digital wave of *The Machine Stops* adaptations began, as far as we know, with Gourjian and Waese's 1998 animated short film *Plug*, which (it turns out) is already old-new-tech history: a 2020 YouTube upload by a third party (not the makers themselves) curates it as "an old short film that used computers from the late 90's [sic]" (c:\90s_tech 2020). The second wave kicked off with one of the first dramas to be expressly conceived conceived for both performance by socially-isolated perfomers and reception by home-bound audiences, via the video-conferencing platform Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic: Big Telly's *The Machine Stops*, produced by the Ulster-based theatre company in partnership with the Riverside Theatre, University of Ulster, Coleraine, in June 2020. In contrast with the futuristic aesthetics of the 1966 BBC-TV version, however, Big Telly's production was distinguished by a steampunk aesthetic, enabling them to comedically marry loosely Victorian/Edwardian costumes and character personae with the "new" technologies of Forster's own age.

Line B comprises works which adapt the posthumously outed **Queer Forster** across a range of media and forms. This line was instigated by BBC2's 1977 TV adaptation of Forster's posthumous queer short story *The Obelisk*, but has proliferated apace since 2000. Notable examples include Jorge Torregrossa's US cultural and geographical translation of *The Obelisk* in his short film *Desire* (2000), and Philip Osment's new 2007 Classic Serial adaptation of *Maurice* for BBC Radio 4, both already discussed; and a new stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* (2002) by the London-based gay Jewish US playwright Martin Sherman which – significantly – was developed and staged by the company Shared Experience, pioneers in the fusion of physical and script-led theatre. In addition, the period since 2010 has brought a proliferation of revivals of Roger Parsley and Andrew Graham's 1998 stage adaptation of *Maurice* on both sides of the Atlantic. In 2010, it played for two sell-out runs at the Above the Stag pub theatre, London's only dedicated LGBTQ theatre venue; followed by its 2012 US premiere in San Francisco; its 2013 UK amateur premiere Norwich; in Autumn 2018, a new staging at

Above the Stag's expanded new premises in south London, directed by James Wilby, the 1987 Maurice of Ivory's film; and, in February 2020 (just before the pandemic struck), a Cambridge University student production at the ADC Theatre. The last two stagings each, in different ways, attest to the (pragmatically driven) limitations and conventionality of Parsley and Graham's script (to which Wilby wisely made dramaturgical adjustments). In the global south, the same period also brought the Disclosure Theater Company's separate, contemporary, more radically staged version of *Maurice* in Brazil, already discussed. In a further radical development, the 2019 RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts) Festival in London brought an experimental, short-run production of Simon Dormandy's *The Point of It*: a sparsely staged, highly effective, loose adaptation which fuses *The Other Boat* (1957-8, published 1972), *The Story of a Panic* (1904) and *The Point of It* (1911). In its creators' words, the production

> takes three overlooked stories by E. M. Forster – stories of great power and theatrical potential – and weaves them into a single drama set today and in 1912. No one writes better about the tragic collision of convention and desire – between the comfortable life that we cling to and the violent urge to be free – but there is nothing especially Edwardian about such a conflict, so we have updated and reshaped the stories to make Forster's vision of the human spirit struggling to be free available to a new audience in a highly theatrical staging, reframing his vision in the light of contemporary gay and intersectional experience. *The Point of It* will be performed by an ensemble of six, doubling and trebling roles in a style that combines physical theatre with naturalism. Though the action covers a century and spans the globe, it takes place in a single setting, which is transformed by the actors as they go. (RADA 2019)

As both illustrated and elaborated by *The Point of It*'s website synopsis, and materialised in the production itself, the diversity of twenty-first century "Forsterian" aesthetics and production design is a significant feature of Phase 3 adaptations, evident across strands A and B, and already more widely evidenced in this essay. The aesthetic range in theatre adaptations alone spans minimal, expressionistic stagings and physical-theatre performance styles, the steampunk props and styling (and corresponding larger-than-life performances) of Big Tel-

ly's *The Machine Stops,* and the use of multimedia and eclectic contemporary music in the Brazilian *Maurice.*

Alongside these fresh and refreshing contemporary approaches to Forster, however, the post-2010 period has also brought instances of kitsch Edwardian pastiche, amid a (perhaps surprising) prevalence of cross-media Merchant Ivory copyism. Marc Acito (book) and Jeffrey Stock (music and lyrics)'s US musical-theatre adaptation of *A Room with a View* – first staged in San Diego in 2012, then in Seattle in 2014, and billed as "the new romantic musical comedy" – exemplifies both tendencies. Acito and Stock's *A Room with a View* was praised by the US media for the sophistication of its score ("lushly orchestral ... includes lovely arias and choral pieces, and draws knowingly on Italian opera, popular period music and the oeuvres of Broadway masters Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim," according to the *Seattle Times* as quoted on Stock's own website [Stock 2021]). But despite sophisticated sets and illuminated location backdrops, its "period" production and costume design were conservative, while the staging of individual scenes has the look (in stills) of a kitsch simulacrum of Ivory's 1985 film. Indeed, the 2014 Seattle staging of Acito and Stock's *A Room with a View* expressly sold itself on its on-stage emulation of the Sacred Lake skinny-dipping scene from Ivory's 1985 film, while simultaneously claiming to be inspired by *Downton Abbey*. Adding to the sense of kitsch, the original 2012 production was staged at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego's Balboa Park, a roofed-in 1935 copy of another American copy of Shakespeare's Globe.

However, the tendency for twenty-first century Forster adaptations to mimic Ivory's films – most commonly, by restaging Ivory's shot compositions – is not limited to kitsch examples. A striking number of the post-2010 stage productions of Parsley and Graham's *Maurice*, amateur and professional alike, have done the same, mimicking iconic shots or publicity stills from the 1987 film in their own actor direction/staging, and even in their promotional photography. For an example of the latter, see the promotional still for the US premiere of Parsley and Graham's *Maurice* at San Francisco's New Conservatory Theatre in 2012 (posted at Kruger 2012): a three-shot of this production's Clive, Alec and Maurice which copies, in mirror image, the composition and the subtleties of body language and facial expression in one of the best-known publicity stills for Ivory's film.

Line C: The twenty-first century has also yielded two new examples, both produced for television with a global market in mind, which might be termed **The Revisionist – or Condescending – Forster Adaptation**. *A Room with a View*

(2007), newly adapted by Andrew Davies for ITV as a single 93-minute TV movie and directed by Andrew Renton, and *Howards End* (2017) newly adapted (as already discussed) by the US writer and director Kenneth Lonergan as a four-part, four-hour miniseries co-produced by Starz and the BBC and directed by the British Hettie Macdonald (most often a director of contemporary rather than period drama) were (by definition) significantly more lavishly budgeted than the Phase 3 adaptations discussed thus far. Both productions combined high production values (including, in *Howards End*, the use of digital techniques to construct an impression of spatial continuity between the Schlegels' London townhouse and the Wilcoxes' mansion flat) with a determinedly naturalistic, but otherwise conventional, take on classic-adaptation aesthetics.

The two productions were shaped by different adaptational stances and attitudes in relation to their Forster sources. While Lonergan, engaging with Forster's novel as a first-time reader, responded to *Howards End's* modernity (and particularly that of the Schlegel sisters) appreciatively, Davies seemed engaged in a cruder mission to not merely de-romanticise *A Room with a View* but blast the 1985 Merchant Ivory version into oblivion. Davies changed Forster's ending to kill off George in World War I. Less defensibly, he had Mr Beebe seeking out rent boys in Florence, while de-queering everything else (in contrast with Ivory's film). The 2017 *Howards End* made some use of race-blind casting (Rosalind Eleazar, of mixed white British and Ghanaian heritage, was cast as Jackie Bast; the Schlegels were given a black maid). While both adaptations were keen to demonstrate their alertness to the themes of class and classism in the source texts, the 2017 *Howards End* somewhat blunted the force and point of Forster's social critique, in part by casting the bankable but too young, and far too attractive, Matthew Macfadyen as Henry Wilcox. What unites both productions is their revisionist impulse – the belief that Forster needs "modernising" – entangled with commercial imperatives and the eternal drive to attract younger contemporary audiences. This was explicit in Davies' overtly anti-heritage adaptation of *A Room with a View*, but also evident in *Howards End*'s logic in hiring Lonergan and in its youth-facing transnational casting strategies. Hayley Attwell, a US–British dual national known to audiences as Agent Carter in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, was excellent as Margaret; Philippa Coulthard, US-born, London-based and Australian-accented, made a wobblier Helen.

Last, **Line D** consists of the proliferating recent field of **Forsterian Bio-Drama, Bio-Fiction and "Literary" Paratexts**. One telling feature of this field is that, to date, there has been a stark contrast between the fate of biographically in-

spired Forster dramas written for the stage, and the Forsterian paratexts seized as hot properties by the literary publishing industry. (In the theatre, Matthew Lopez's universally acclaimed 2018 gay history epic The Inheritance, inspired by Howards End, stands in a separate class of its own.)

Sickles' stage bio-drama *Nonsense and Beauty* (already mentioned) finally received a premiere in the USA (at the Rep Theatre, St Louis, Missouri) in 2018–19 after reportedly being 'in development' since 1994. Charles Leipart's *A Kind of Marriage* (2016) – on precisely the same theme: the triangular relationship between Forster, Bob Buckingham and Bob's wife May – had a 2017 rehearsed reading in London (with Alex Jennings as Forster and Anna Carteret as his mother), but has yet to receive a full production.

In contrast, Bethan Roberts' 2012 novel *My Policeman*, loosely "inspired" – or, at least, initially publicised as having been loosely inspired – by the same relationship, was published by the corporate giant Random House and has now sold its film rights to Amazon Studios. Filming of the resulting Amazon Original movie was announced in the *Hollywood Reporter* in February 2021 and completed the same summer – amid much UK tabloid interest during the shoot, since *My Policeman* stars pop-star-turned-actor Harry Styles (as Tom Burgess, the loosely-based-on-Bob policeman character) and Emma Corrin, Princess Diana in Season 4 of Netflix's *The Crown* (2020), as Marian (the novel's narrator and May figure). Confirming its positioning as a transnational product packaged for global audiences, *My Policeman* is, furthermore, scripted by Ron Nyswaner, the Oscar-nominated screenwriter of the Hollywood AIDS drama *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) and produced by the prolifically successful Greg Berlanti, director of the hit US gay male romance *Love, Simon* (2018).

Meanwhile, in the wake of almost two decades of online *Maurice* fanfiction – frequently interesting, sometimes excellent – and three prior unofficial *Maurice* book sequels, in Summer 2021 the literary agent Matthew Carnicelli and editor Jonathan Galassi – chairman and executive editor of the US publishing house Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, formerly of Random House – brought to the world (for better or worse) William DiCanzio's 336-page debut novel *Alec*: a "retelling" of Forster's *Maurice* which, in the words of *Publisher's Weekly*, "liberally quotes dialogue from Forster's novel for dozens of pages, creating a satisfying blend of fan fiction and intertextuality" (Anon. 2021). While, as a connoisseur of *Maurice* fanfiction for more than a decade and a fan of Alec Scudder for more than half my life, I was open to being pleasantly surprised by DiCanzio's project, as critical

scholars we might equally view such products as the perfect marriage between corporate publishing, corporate profit, and a more spurious literary elitism.

As **Theme 10**, I end this essay with the reminder that **Publishing, including "literary" publishing, is a business**. For anyone wondering why a twenty-first-century publishing industry powered by literary hype, prize culture (usefully explored in Murray 2012, Chapter 4) and rights sales might prefer Forster/ian paratexts to the works of Forster himself, the answer may simply be that the paratexts are more monetisable – a monetary value the literary publishing business seeks to heighten by projecting them as works of prestige.

To conclude, I want to pick up on a question posed by Nick Cyril Fischer which was central to his own paper at the June 2021 *E. M. Forster: Shaping the Space of Culture* conference ("To whom does Forster beautifully belong?") and adapt it. In my adaptation, I propose that we ask: in the twenty-first century, to whom does Forster belong? To his twenty-first century public(s), readers, fans … and even, among these, to the creators of Forster-inspired and Forster-adapting fanworks? Or to a publishing industry which seeks to capitalise on these forms of popularity? In short, who determines where the boundaries lie between the self-asserted cultural legitimacy and prestige of the "literary" Forsterian paratexts and their publishers, and the self-published Forsterian paratexts created by readers, audiences, fans? To paraphrase Forster in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1972, 6), is one of the "evils of money" that it might blind or distract us from asking such awkward questions?

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