



The BBC Talks of E.M. Forster, 1929-1960: A Selected Edition

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Mesdames Lago, Hughes, and Walls, in their excellently edited volume of E.M. Forster's radio-talk scripts, take us back to a golden age of low-key, quietly thoughtful, and gently mind-broadening book talks: no celebrity-driven ratings and sales desperation here. E.M. Forster (1879-1970), with his quintet of enduring novels behind him, became a BBC contributor, presenting books over three decades; some seventy fifteen-minute book-talk scripts from 1929 to 1960 are presented here. They have the charm and immediacy of a personal chat to a group of like-minded friends—an unhurried catching-up on the book-news of the day. Forster was a humanist of refined sensibilities, a friend of meritorious but under-acknowledged work, and fully engaged in the thought, the economy, and social and political worlds of the day.

Forster's greatest strength is acuity of intellect combined with perception. In discussing the prophetic, didactic element in D.H. Lawrence's novels, the refugee-host tensions that drive Arthur Koestler's *Scum of the Earth*, or the debunking biographies of Lytton Strachey, Forster brings us refreshing insights. His reach is broad: India (where he had lived), art, music, and the contexts of literary creation all are grist to his mill. This book is worth a dozen Comp. Civ. or Lit. Crit. courses—it is to be savored.

PETER SKINNER (January 9, 2009)

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