Lawrence the novelist has overshadowed the writer of short stories to such an extent that a large corpus of critical opinion subscribes to the view that his short stories are merely the byproduct of his main literary activity as a novelist. His short stories as many critics believe merely accommodate the leftovers from the novels. But the fact is that regardless of Lawrence’s performance as a novelist, his short stories are also major achievements which can by themselves put Lawrence among the greatest writers—not merely among the memorable but among the great. In fact Lawrence tested, explored and analyzed the same themes in his short stories as he did in his novels. They are commonly judged as great artistic successes.

The stories can best be seen in relation to the solid range of his longer works. There is an early group of stories (they mostly appear in the Prussian Officer volume) very closely connected with *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers*, both in themes and treatment. There is second group collected under the title of “England My England,” all written during the war, showing a similar but less intimate connection with *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love*. A third group is formed by the three long stories, “The Ladybird,” “The Fox” and “The Captain’s Doll,” written about the time of *Aaron’s Rod*. Mexico gives us a fourth series—“St. Mawr,” “The Princess” and “The Woman who Rode Away,” and the last years in Europe a miscellaneous collection—a good long story “The Virgin and the Gypsy” and the unique “The Man Who Died Away,” the one a foretaste and the other a supplement to *Lady Chatterley Lover*. However, not all but only some of them are taken for consideration in this chapter.
“THE THORN IN THE FLESH”

“The Thorn in the Flesh” makes a step forward in Lawrence’s treatment of the conflict in man-woman relations. There is a sense of failure in “The Prussian Officer” as “The Thorn in the Flesh” attempts to balance the opposites and the soldier Bachmann and Emilie achieve fullness of being through their physical communion. (Delavenay 198)

Bachmann, who is a soldier, is a man of instinct. His fear of heights makes him nervous during a scaling exercise. In the beginning of the story, he is under great “strain” while he is writing to his mother. He is not his whole self and feels as if no “word” would come “out of the knot of his consciousness.” He only writes a few notes “mechanically.” (22) Bachmann is divided in his self because of what is lying ahead. The strict military discipline enforces him to take up the task which his spontaneous inner self feels incapable of coping with. Throughout his marching and scaling exercise, there is a split. Lawrence has beautifully presented the contrast between his inner state and the natural surroundings. The latter are harmonious, “all free with air and sunshine,” whereas Bachmann was “bound in very dark enclosure of anxiety within himself.” (23) At times, his movements are purely controlled by mechanical intelligence, “a mere presence of mind.” (23) The description of the soldiers divided self reveals Lawrence’s disapproval of the brutality of the military automatism which reduces a human being to a “mechanical thing.” (24) The soldiers go about their jobs at the command of the sergeant like machines, with no independent will of their own. The body is made to submit in the dictates of the mind. But in Bachmann’s case, his body could not be made a slave of this automatism for long. When he was climbing the wall, intuitively he realized that some unknown have impelled him forward “blindly.” (25) If he continued in that state, he would be through. The moment his mind interferes and makes him conscious of what he is doing, he fails. The imbalance between the instinctive consciousness and the mental consciousness hampers his moment and he falls down. He was at a loss for some time with “deep shame
and ignominy”. He could not restore himself. He was trying to “obliterate himself.” (25) Then the sergeant made his presence felt. The sergeant stands for the life of the mind and fixed rigid principles. When the soldier “forced to look” into his eyes, the “brutal” force of the officer “violated” the youth. (26) The repression of the instinct by the conscious mind seemed to destroy him. Lawrence emphasizes it again and again that when “mental consciousness” comes into being and tries to dominate the instinct, it obstructs the flow of the “primitive consciousness” and thus destroys it. But Bachmann could not be suppressed by his spontaneous self which rises with all its blind, unknown force in the act of rebellion against the rigid military discipline half accidentally but instinctively in self-defense he knocks the sergeant from the top of the earthworks into a moat far below. Instinctively, he walked away with a “relief” from the “great strain.” (26) He wanted to “escape” from the world of “rigid” order, and be “free” (26) of that automatic life of the military system.

In his instinctive flight from the exercise to Emilie, Bachmann was not only escaping from the rigid automatism of the military life, but also from the shame of having exposed a weakness which he would have preferred to keep secret. Because of this humiliation he was not his true self. Only when he puts himself in Emilie’s hand gives himself to his “second will,” (34) driving him to make love to her, could he fully become himself. He was restored and completed. Emilie was a maid-servant in a German Baron’s house near the barracks. She was a fondling, probably of some “gipsy race, brought in a Roman Catholic Rescue home”. She was a “religious being” and lived a spiritual life, denying physical pleasures. She led a mechanical life taking orders from above and felt free. On her part, by giving herself to Bachmann, Emilie also experiences piece of satisfaction and recovers her balance and self-assurance. She emerges as a new spontaneous “being” and feels “complete.” (35) Both of them are “transfigured” with happiness. (34) She attended to her work spontaneously and effortlessly as if her own was involved as a “delicious outflow.” (36) Lawrence believed that it is through a fulfilled life of our bodies that we make vital contact with others and with our
surroundings. The Baron discerns in Emilie’s “unseeing eyes” the “dark, naked soul of her body” (38) and the same “naked soul” “exposed” in Bachmann’s eyes that has attained his manhood through this physical communion. The fulfilled love between Bachmann and Emilie testifies this. “Transfigured” (34) by their love-making, “they relate to each other more deeply than at the level of human personality.” (Cushman 198) Both of them have achieved “individual being” which is the highest goal of life, and can face life on their own. Bachmann is captured by solider, but he remained “true to himself” and did not lose his balance. The commander could not violate his wholeness. Lawrence held that sex is a great “mystery” and the fulfilled sexual relations bring about “a mysterious metamorphosis” in man and woman giving them a “new terrible power” which can never be explained. (FU 113) A proper sexual relationship releases the source of pent up spontaneity by dissolving the destructive will of man which exercises a stultifying influence on man’s soul.

“DAUGHTERS OF THE VICAR”

“Daughters of the Vicar” is the longest and most complex story of this volume. It reveals Lawrence’s genius touching the heights of his maturity. The story is Lawrence’s first published work built around the two sisters motif. It seems to have grown out of Lawrence’s plan earlier announced to Jessie that the usual plan for writing was “to take two couples and develop their relationship.” (Personal Record 103) “The sisters in question are the realistic Louisa, who rejects the stifling atmosphere of her father’s household and ultimately marries a miner and the beautiful Mary, who sells herself to financial security in carrying a willful, little clergyman. The same two sisters’ motif was repeated in Women in Love. The two sisters represent the two modes of living. Mary’s life is governed by “idea” and “will” which destroy her virtual life, whereas Louisa lives a life of instinct and achieves fulfillment.

The story also concerns “class distinction” represented by the proud class-superiority of the impoverished vicar’s family. This pride of class -
superiority proves hostile to life, starving, thwarting and denying contact with
the people and surroundings breeding hate and ugliness as a result thereof. The
vicar was not accept ed by the colliers, probably because they were unable to
understand his ideas. They were contemptuous of him. The vicar’s wife tried to
assert her superiority among the working classes in the face of poverty. When
she tried to be “impressive” she was ridicule d. With wounded pride, she found
herself “isolated” in an “indifferent” community. (41) The idea of superiority
proves disastrous as it blocks the “human flow,” that “vital vibration” (SLC 4)
with the working communities which Lawrence so much desired. Humiliated,
Mrs. Lindley was entrapped in her isolation and raged inwardly. The intensity
of her rage resulted in the hatred of her husband. She felt that she was
becoming a destructive force for him as well as for herself. Lawrence has
written in Fantasia that any idea which is “introduced from outside into a
man’s mind, and which does not correspond to his own dynamic nature” is a
“direct obstruction of his dynamic activity. In such a case the true individual
activity is stopped” causing “derangement” of the “psychic being.”( FU 84)
Mrs. Lindley stops living from her “spontaneous centers” (FU 85) as she
suppresses her natural feelings of anger and hatred. Her life with her husband is
only mechanical. Lawrence believed that when a woman starts acting in term s
of “an idea,” her womanhood is destroyed forever. (FU 85) By suppressing her
“anger,” “misery and disgust,” Mrs. Lindley becomes an “invalid.”(41)
Dominated by the same ideal of superiority, the vicar hardly meets people in
the indifferent collier commun ity who have “no use for him.” His “conscious
hatred of the majority” results in the “unconsciousness hatred of himself.”(41)

Even the children are born “unwarmed and rigid,” because the
relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Lindley was only mechanical. They kept
their children away from the common people and made them “very proud and
genteel.” So they are “isolated.”(41) The cold, gloomy vicarage is contrasted
with the miners’ home full of natural warmth and affection. The “passion” and
“warmth” are the true qualities which Lawrence always associated with the
working classes. They are less cramped by ideas, are less mental and live
whole lives. The middle classes, Lawrence believed, were so dominated by ideas and mental consciousness that they were cut off from the life-giving qualities. Devoid of all vital contacts with other human beings, the middle classes lead a sterile life. The Lindleys imposed wrong value on their children and inculcated the same pretensions of superiority in them “urging them to ambition, weighing them with duty.”(42) All their superiority comes to nothing. The eldest daughter with “a proud pure look of submission to a high fate” served as a governess to “a few little daughters of tradesmen.” Louisa, the second one, had “more enemies than ideals,” gave lessons on piano to the collier’s daughters at thirteen shillings for twenty six lessons. (42) Their contact with different classes of people also affects their lives. T.S. Eliot was the first one to point out the role of this class distinction in Lawrence story. He wrote that “no man was even more conscious of class distinction” (Quoted by Leavis, *Novelist* 85) than D.H. Lawrence. Eliot was right. Leavis also believed that class-distinctions are an important part of the theme. But this is “wholly incompatible with snobbery or any related form of class feeling.” This distinctions play “a sinister” part in the story, and “this theme is their defeat—the triumph over them of life.”(Quoted by Leavis, *Novelist* 86) This triumph of life is shown in Louisa’s marriage to Alfred without caring for the gulf in the classes. The ugliness bred by the thwarting of life takes its sinister from in Mrs. Lindley’s and Mary’s life.

The ideal of class superiority governs the lives of characters in the story. Even religion has become merely an ideal, a mere pretension and a mean of livelihood. The vicar coldly performed his Christian “duties,” preoccupied with the sordid details of material life. He feels irritated by the forced contact with the parishner’s. Dominated by the Christian ideal, the vicar denies his natural desires. When he visits Durant’s house, he does not take beer because “he must set the example in a drinking perish.”(43) Even the character of Mr. Massey, the new vicar is a valid incarnation of a cold and theoretical form of Christianity which manifests itself in everyday life by the “mathematical” applications of guiding principles dictated by the mind. The vicar’s religion
consisted in what his scrupulous, abstract mind approved of. (50) Lawrence always disapproved of religion which is reduced merely to a mental concept and is cut off from the vital sources of life.

Mr. Massey is an incomplete character living only through his mental centers. He appears to be “a little abortion.” (48) His arrested physical growth testifies to his withered centers of vitality. Mr. Massey had a strong philosophical mind. He could rarely get into any human contact. All his life was governed by a “sense of duty.” (49) When he helped people, he had “no sense of any person” whom he was helping. It was only a solving of “given situation.” (50) To Louisa, he appears to be “an inhuman being.” (53) Mary also feels that “there is something lacking” in him, (55) and yet Massey’s income and his moral qualities persuaded Mary to accept a union repugnant to her deepest feelings. Her desire for status and money results in the suppression of her vital physical self. In marrying him, she tried to become “pure reason” without feeling or impulse as he was. She was “a pure will acquiescing to him.” Now she feels that she has got a “new freedom” as she had “got rid of her body”—“a lower thing” for a “higher being.” She has “brought her position” in the world and paid with her body” (56) and now will direct her activity towards charity and high-mindedness. She started living an incomplete life by denying the life of the body.

Mary starts living by an ideal “love will” which results in the abrogation of the “great spontaneous mode.” (FU 143) Her denial of the vital life ultimately recoils on her resulting in a split within. She has made “the word,” the “beginning” of her life, whereas Lawrence believed that the word is the “dead end of life.” And given the alliance of the will, it automatizes “the whole life” (PU 217) till the vital centers are fully starved. This was Massey’s life too—all idea and will controlling the whole life like “a great dynamo.” (PU 247) And by subjecting her own life and body to this great “dynamo,” Mary subject everything spontaneous to “certain machine principles called ideals and ideas,” (PU 248) but she soon realizes that her life was a burden and she wanted to escape it. However, there was no going away from it. Ego becomes
the keyword in Massey-Mary marriage. Mary is not like a person but a will in command and Massey becomes a separate “distinct will” that they could not “controvert.”(56) She herself was responsible for the destruction she had brought upon herself. Marriage based on spiritual consideration and charity proves to be sterile. Louisa’s hatred of Massey and her irritation at Mary’s submission to the life of ideals reveal her own attitude to life.

In Louisa’s relationship with Alfred, a frank and healthy physical attraction plays the major role, although the possibility of the spiritual contact between the two is not excluded. The contact between them is established when Louisa washes Alfred’s body. It “fascinated” her: “there was this living centre. Her heart ran hot. She had reached some goal in this beautiful clear, male body.”(73) Alfred’s body offers revelation of radiant but impersonal mystery at the heart of life. It is a revelation that passes beyond class awareness, as it passes beyond human awareness as well. Louisa feels “strange and pregnant,” pregnant with the possibility of fulfillment in life. The “white impersonal heat of love” (73) indicates that the relationship will take place on a deeper level than the conscious one. Lawrence believed that “the body’s life is the life of sensation and emotions.” He maintains that “all the emotions belong to the body, and are only recognized by the mind.”(PhS 334) The body represents the deep spontaneous life over which the consciousness has no control. Any attempt to control, or thwart it results in frustration of life, the death of vital centre as happened in the case of Massey and Mary.

In contrast to Mary’s sterile life, Louisa’s firm and deep attachment to Alfred is an expression of “vitality” which is much more than a physical matter. She distrusts Mary’s high spirituality without a “grain of love.”(58) She is determined to have love, whereas others denied it and believed it did not exist. She declares: “I will love—it is my birth right. I will love the man I marry—that is all I care about.”(59) In her heart the “purpose was fixed.”(66) Louisa appears to be deliberate in her love in which her “will” is engaged, but in her case, the will does not represent the “mental idea” stubbornly seeking to impose itself on spontaneous life. Rather it involves the wholeness of being in
which the conscious mind truly serves the life that transcends it. Then she comes into contact with Alfred her will melts, the conscious self dissolves. The whole thing takes place far beyond into the regions deeper than the “old stable ego” of the characters. (Delavenay 205) They meet not as two personalities but as essential selves. The lovers experience “rebirth.” The transcendent and radiant harmony of their coming together is indicated by the silence that engulfs it. In this silence they come in contact with the mysterious and impersonal otherness. Alfred appears to her as “eternal” and “inscrutable” beyond the comprehension of the conscious mind.

Like Paul, Alfred is also abnormally attached to his mother. To form a successful and fulfilled relationship with Louisa, he must be free from the bondage of excessive attachment to his mother. Unlike Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*, the power of Louisa’s genuine physical love overcomes the barrier created by the love of Alfred’s mother. By taking the initiative which Miriam fails to take, Louisa gives herself willingly and fully to Alfred and thus brings his release from this bondage. In his passional fulfillment with her, Alfred attained his manhood and was “himself.” (82) Death was “transfigured into desire” for life of fulfillment. He is now a man with greater contact with the unknown. One can see that by this time Lawrence has discovered his meaning, realized his vision that only through the intense experience of physical passion can fulfillments be achieved. It is only possible when the lovers are capable of transcending their egos, their conscious selves, their ideas and class differences and lose themselves in the greater reality which is impersonal. They emerge from such an experience newly-created, refreshed in the fullness of their being.

“ENGLAND, MY ENGLAND”

“England, My England” is a complex story and has rightly invited misrepresentation and distortion. Leavis suggests that the story deals with “the impossibility of making a life.” “The impossibility is reflected in Egbert’s failure with Winifred.” (Leavis, *Novelist* 321) Some critics read this story in
terms of class struggle in England. (Alasatair 84) John B. Vickery views the gradual transformation of the “passionate idyll” of marriage into a “savage combat” that “culminates with World War I and Egbert’s death is Lawrence’s version of the myth of the dying gods.” (Modern Fiction 71) The interpretation given by Vickery is interesting and important, but it ignores the deeper aspect of the story. In this connection, Weldon Thornton’s interpretation of the story is closer to the truth. Thornton believes that basically the story represents a tension between the two modes “the aesthetic and the pragmatic.” (Review 251) Egbert represents the former mode which takes life to be an end in itself, a gift to be enjoyed, whereas the Marshalls represent the pragmatic mode in so far as they treat life as a means to some end. And the end for them is material possessions. The conflict between the two modes causes the collapse of the aesthetic mode in Egbert.

Egbert and Winifred had been married for seven years. The temperamental differences between the husband and wife have made him “worried.” (7) A conflict goes on in his mind. The cause has been hinted at by emphasizing the glamour of their early married life. In the early months of their married life, Egbert was a man of instinct. He had a “delightful, spontaneous passion for his wife.” Winifred also valued his spontaneous love and passion. The relationship is described quite positively as being “wonderful” (7). The “flame” of their fulfilled love is reflected in the description of the garden that “flame with flowers.” He had “recreated” it (5). In their married life they had the primitive passion of the bygone times. Egbert “loved his wife, his cottage, and his garden. He would make his life there as an epicurean hermit.” (13)

However, the life of passionate love soon comes to an end. Although Winifred is happy, she feels that Egbert’s mode of life is lacking something. He had no intention of coming to grips with life. However, he did not want to make his way in the world by working hard. Engaging himself in any profession was like being in bondage. Egbert took life casually without any “purposive activity.” (FU 109) He was not bothered about earning money and was reluctant to fulfill his domestic responsibilities. Lawrence believed that
“when man loses his deep sense of purposive, creative activity, he feels lost.”
And if a man makes “woman” the “great centre of life and of life's significance, he falls into the beginning of despair.” (FU 109) He held that man can achieve his “fullness” when he submits his “sex passion” to the “great purposive activity.” (FU 110) For “men, being themselves made after the action of coition, wish to make the world new.” (FU 108) “The creative motive,” that is the “pure disinterested craving of the human male to make something wonderful,” is the “first motive for all human activity.” (FU 18) And if love and sex is accepted as the one “prime motive, the world drifts into despair and anarchy.” (FU 110)

There is a feeling of growing estrangement between the husband and wife. After the birth of their first child, the relationship between them is never the same. The reason can neither be traced to their incompatible personalities, nor to his indolent nature, although they are contributory factors. The source of this estrangement lies in a virtually “inevitable change in the structure of their world.” (Vickery 73) Winifred finds in the child “a new centre of interest,” so that “without anything happening,” Egbert “was gradually, unconsciously excluded from the circle.” (14) She has “what the modern mother so often has in the place of spontaneous love, a profound sense of duty towards her child” (14) which goes deeper than her love for her husband. The “sense of duty” shows the domination by the ideal. Lawrence wrote that the mother never gives her child the “unthinking responses from the deep dynamic centers.” She goes about her duties ideally and mechanically “til l the little organism develops like a mushroom to stand on its feet.” (FU 142) The child is never free from the “imposition” of the “love-will” which he found detestable and destructive. (FU 143) This domination of the “ideal” can be seen in Winifred’s attitude towards Egbert whom she loved as “a higher being” — a higher being and “not a deeper one.” This somewhat elevated view of Egbert shows that she does not want to consider him a real man of flesh and blood. Soon her passion for Egbert changes into “higher” love which is spiritual. After the second child is
born, Winifred begins to resent and despise the physical love which has already become a thing of secondary importance.

The gulf between the husband and the wife slowly widens. The reason is not their material dependence on her father, as may look on first sight. One of the reasons is the domination of Winifred’s father over his children. Egbert stands for the qualities opposite to those of Winifred’s father. Egbert lacks her father’s “will to power,” “the single power of… blind self.” Winifred was overpowered by her father’s authority:

She loved Egbert with a passion. But behind her was the power of her father. It was the Power of her father she referred to, whenever she needed to refer (12).

If Egbert had greater male power and authority he could have detached her from her father. But Egbert does not possess this power and thus he slowly loses his place in her eyes. Egbert could not liberate her from her father’s influence by making her “believe” in his own male power, “as a real man, a real pioneer.” (FU 192) Egbert’s failure can be traced to his incapability of combining the two modes of life - sympathetic and voluntary. He could not break the domination of ideal in his wife and “make her yield to her own real unconscious self;” (FU 191) for he had not attained his own manhood. Lawrence affirmed that until a man possesses “his own soul in strength within him” (FU 123) and “makes the great resolution of aloneness and singleness of being” he cannot achieve individual being. Egbert lacked the courage “to be himself.” He could not “fight” his wife out of her own “self-conscious preoccupation with herself.” (FU 191) This ruins their married life.

Winifred’s total rejection of physical life thwarts the spontaneous life within Egbert and results in the frustration of his self. He locked up his “own vivid life inside himself.” (20) The suppression of his passional self produces a “derangement in the psyche.” (FU 209) Lacking faith in himself, Egbert becomes “the living negative of power, “even of “responsibility.” (20) This is because there is no true polarity between the husband and wife. Lawrence urged “you have got to base your purposive activity upon the intense sexual
fulfillment.” (FU 111) Physically unfulfilled, Egbert fails to act responsibly; whereas dominated by the ideal spiritual will, Winifred assumes the role of Mother Mater.(23) She starts living from the negative mode denying all physical contact; “She was closed as a tomb.” (28) Guided by the Christian ideal to spiritual love, she had rejected sensual love and lived a sort of half life. She looked at her husband as some “higher being.” Egbert appeared to her nun-like soul “an erect, supple symbol of life, the living body.” She was aware of his vital being. She thought if she “watched” “the supple living idol” and responded to his vitality she would be “damned.” (31) His own phallic life was sacrificed on the altar of spiritual love. That is why Lawrence rejected Christianity because it ignored the “blood life.” The thwarting of his passional impulses leads to the disintegration and devitalization of the vital self. This was the tragedy of the couples who lived lives in conformity with ideas only.

The process of disintegration and dissolution of the self continues till Egbert decides to join the army when the war broke out. Instinctively he was against the war. Joining the army means going against his instinct and thus the act virtually amounts to suicide. Ironically enough, his wife is ready to “serve the soldier, when she repudiated the man.” (35) But Egbert yields himself to the “drift towards death.” He thought it better to die, for there was nothing left for him of “life” in the Laurentian sense of the word. The process of the dissolution of the self is completed by his death.

Thus, the failure to achieve proper balance between the passional and purposive life results in the disintegration of the self. Life lived from any one mode proves disastrous. Egbert’s inability to combine the two opposite modes destroys his married life ultimately leading to his own death. The same failure to combine the sensual and the spiritual modes can also be seen in Winifred. Her denial of the passional physical love is responsible for Egbert’s disintegration. Lawrence held that the denial of sensual love hinders the spontaneous being impossible. Therefore, it is essential to maintain proper balance between the passional and the spiritual love to achieve fullness of being.
“THE WOMAN WHO RODE AWAY”

The Woman Who Rode Away is clearly “an off shoot of The Plumed Serpent.” (Hough 112) The Indian religion which attracted the woman appears to be devoid of all humanity and tenderness. The Chilchui tribes in the story are supposed to have Aztec descendents amongst them who still keep up the ancient rites and offer human sacrifice. This may probably mean that death as a sacrifice is necessary for bringing in new power and the new life. The deadness and hollowness of our modern industrial civilization is revealed in the heroine’s reaction to the kind of life she is leading and her flight from that dull routine. Like Kate, she is a modern self-conscious woman with a strong sense of individuality. All her conscious development stops with her marriage, for her husband “a little dynamo of energy” (45) keeps her in moral subjection. He was an “idealist” who hated the physical side of life. “Work was everything for him.” (47) Instead of bringing a sense of fulfilment, her marriage to an idealist creates deadness in her life. The denial of physical life results in the devitalization of the dynamic centres. The dullness of the routine life affects the woman’s nerves and deranges her psyche. Mechanically she went about her duties, but her spontaneous centres were drying up. The squalid deadness of her environment brought upon her a kind of death. The Spanish town looked dead, for it represented the alien civilization unable to keep itself alive among the blank mountains. Even the Church appears to be dead, for it can no longer give her a sense of meaning in life. Like Ramon in The Plumed Serpent, the woman believes that the Christian Church has lost the mystery. She experiences “deadness within deadness.” (46)

Her husband is responsible for this sterility of life. The deadness of daily life, as well as religious faith, is a grim symbol of modern western civilization withering among the terrifying powers of nature with which modern man has lost connection. Fascinated by Indian gods, she starts in search of a new faith which can restore the vitality of life. Her flight from her house in her husband’s absence symbolizes the flight of human soul from the mechanical life. It is a
flight into the unknown where she can come in contact with the mystery of life. Her riding away also represents the sacrifice of her old life — a kind of psychic death.

Among the tribal people, she is ignored as an individual. It shows that she has ceased to exist and is already dead. Indians believe that they have lost the sun, the life-giving object. In Fantasia, Lawrence wrote that every individual is “polarized” with “the quick of the sun” that maintains the sun alive. It is the “dynamic relation between the solar plexus of the individuals and the sun’s core, a perfect circuit” that really sustains the sun. (FU 153) But all our knowledge and mental consciousness have broken this dynamic connection which has resulted in the disintegration of life. The tribal people believe that the connection with the sun can be re-established by sacrificing the white woman. In her search for a new god which will restore life and living connections with the cosmos, the woman even agree to sacrifice her. Her consent shows her sickness of mechanical life which has devitalized her dynamic life. From here onward, a new consciousness dawns upon her. She goes into “that other state of cosmic consciousness.”(74) In a trance, she suddenly becomes responsive to nature — the air, the flowers, the stars, the moon, the snow and the birds. She feels herself obliterating in the ceremonial dance: “Her kind of womanhood, intensely personal and individual was to be obliterated again, and the great primeval symbols were to tower once more over the fallen individual independence of woman.”(69) The nervous consciousness of the white woman was to be destroyed again in order to cast womanhood into “the great stream of impersonal sex and impersonal passion.”(69) The white woman’s self consciousness, her egos were to be replaced by another kind of power and consciousness which will bring her in contact with the mystery of the unknown. The death of the woman is symbolic. It is the death of mental consciousness which has alienated man from the life of the universe in which he lives. Unlike Cathcart’s, the woman’s search is successful. “She does seek mystery, find it, and submit to it.” (Turner, Review
By her sacrifice, she wants to restore the sun for the coming generations to save them from disintegration.

“The ROCKING HORSE WINNER”

“The Rocking Horse Winner” is more than a psychological tale. Lawrence describes the disturbance due to loneliness in the psyche of a small boy. Young Paul could never afford to relax and lose himself in the play. Turner describes his rocking horse as “the symbol of a mind fixated, orgiastic and inconsolably unhappy.”(Turner, Review 1983, 262) In fact, it is much more than that. Paul is obsessed with the idea of placating his mother’s anxieties. The domination of idea obstructs his “dynamic activity”, and cause a “derangement to his psychic being.”(FU 84) The same domination of the ideal can be seen in his mother who married for love. Love for her is only an idea in the head and not some natural spontaneous flow. Instead of forming vital connections with her husband, she aspires for money and social position. Her husband’s inability to supply luxuries demanded by the family reduces him to a non-entity. He is considered unlucky and fails to assert his phallic divinity. Materialism has taken the place of love and affection. Hester’s sexual disappointment results in an inordinate and destructive craving for “luxuries” as a substitute for love and luck. Lawrence wrote to Murry in a letter that “a woman unsatisfied must have luxuries. But a woman who loves a man would sleep on a board.”(Quoted by Snodgrass, Critical Essays 118) Hester resents her children as being “thrust upon her.”(81) She adores them but has no natural warmth and affections for them.

Paul’s frenzied rocking satirizes the insanity of existence in a mechanically organized environment as opposed to the real living. As Lawrence described in Apocalypse: “What we want is to destroy our false, inorganic connections, especially those related to money” and re-establish a “living contact with the cosmos, mankind, nation and family.”(A 110-111) The father, the mother and the son, each has vital emotions and affections for the
family. They deny their vital needs by committing themselves to external reality, to money and luck, but the externals are beyond control and cannot be known. Deprived of his mother’s love, Paul tries to cover this “want” with the knowledge of external world which will bring him fortune and affection. The attempt to control an external with the power of mind destroys him. Symbolically, money is a substitute for love and affections. It is a way to win his mother’s affection, “compel her attention” (84) and show that he is lucky though his father is not. His failure is obvious when a present of five thousand pounds on his mother’s birthday does not lessen her problems. Paul hears the voice in the house screaming in a sort of ecstasy. “There must be more money… more than ever.”(92)

Lawrence has shown in a fine manner the destructiveness of the love of materialism. Money as a symbolic substitute has only sharpened the craving it meant to satisfy. The family has set up a “vicious circle” (FU 130) which will finally close upon Paul. W.S. Marks rightly comments that Paul’s preconscious universe, as Lawrence explains in Fantasia, should have been hastily discouraged. (Modern Friction Studies 1965, 391) “A child mustn’t understand things. He must have his own way. His vision is not ours. When a boy sees a horse, he does not see the correct biological object we intend him to see. He sees a big living presence of no particular shape…” (FU 89)

The symbolic meaning of Paul’s rocking horse depends precisely on the fact that it is not “a big presence,” but an artificial object. To his mother’s remonstration- “surely you are too big for a rocking horse.” Paul explains “Well, you see, mother, till I can have a real horse, I like to have some sort of animal about.”(93) Snodgrass suggests that “sexual area is more basic to the story.” Reading the story in the light of Lawrence’s essay “Pornography and Obscenity” he finds that “Paul’s mysterious ecstasy is not religious, but sexual” and that is Paul’s “secret of secrets.” (Snodgrass, Essays 121-126) We should not forget, as Mark Spilka points out, that “the tale concerns a pre-adolescent child who is deprived of normal maternal affection and exposed to monetary “whispers” who take to “riding.” The essay deals with young adults deprived of
sexual love and exposed to pornographic “whispers” which somehow foster the money lie.

Paul is a symbol of the civilized man whipping himself on in an endless nervous mechanical gallop in chase of something which will destroy him if he catches it. All the time he is determined by an idea to know about the outside world so that he can manipulate it to his own advantage. Ironically such knowledge comes to him in isolation, in withdrawal from the physical world so that his brain can work on it unobstructed. It is not only that he has chosen wrong ways of knowing or wrong things to know. The evil is that he has chosen to know, to live by intellection which destroys him. Lawrence believed that “intellect is only a bit and bridle,” (CL 180) a great indicator and instrument. “The mind as author and director of little is anathema.”(PU 249)

“THE MAN WHO LOVED ISLANDS”

“The Man Who Loved Islands” is the “greatest story” in what may be called the fable or parable form. (Moynahan, Deed of Life 185) It is a tale about a man “who needed solitude but who lacked the capacity to be alone.”(Turner, Review 259) The action of the story represents the process of the disintegration of the self. This fate is brought on by the hero’s steadily accelerating withdrawal from these relationships with surrounding world which determine the health and integrity of any human being. Lawrence’s words: “We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos. I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea.”(A 110)

Cathcart, the man who loved islands, had a will to live alone. He had lost his “life flow” and “some living connection with the cosmos.”(CP 610) Sick of the crowds of people, the man wanted an Island which could be “a world of his own.”(97) He could fill it with his own idea, his own “personality.” He wanted to make the island the “perfect place, all filled with his own gracious, blossom -
like spirit.” (100) His will to recreate his own paradise in isolation turns out to be a process of his own disintegration. The withdrawal from the cosmos is like a willed reduction of the varied experience to the flat whiteness of death-in-life. It is that “simulacrum” (LCL 314) of being in which the isolated ego dissolves into pure abstraction. He failed because he tried to replace the phenomenal world by an idea and imagines himself as the god of the self-contained world. But he always disavowed his destructiveness. His apparent self-image, the ego-ideal is a device to shield himself against it. “He was a delicate sensitive, handsome Master who wanted everything perfect and everybody happy.” (101)

Janice H Harris draws similarities between Cathcart’s and Clifford’s idealism. “On his first island, Cathcart acts out Clifford’s dream of being the benevolent overseer of a perfectly run enterprise.” (Review 302) However, each fails to take into account the independent existence of other human beings. Both derive energy and motivation from their will. But the joy of creation, of running a farm is soon followed by a kind of death and destruction. It is recoil of disillusion that breaks the Islander’s spirit and drives him from the first island to the second and then to the third island. Instead of being his world, the island gradually becomes a “sort of refuge.” (111) The islander is succumbing to a subtle defeatism, a dissolution of the ego in time and space.

As he ruminates: “I am turned into a dream. I feel nothing or I don’t know what I feel.” (111) Each withdrawal was compounded of the wish to deny the past and the wish to make a fresh start. His affair with Flora — the housekeeper, gives him the final opportunity to link himself with the living beings. But the failure of this relationship makes him sever himself from the world and its people. Lawrence believed that “the old fulfilment of the Ego…the as suming of all power and glory unto the self, the becoming infinite through the absorption of all into the Ego, this gradually became unsatisfactory.” (TI 71)

Dissatisfaction also comes from his failure in sexual relationship which is the closest of all touches. On both sides it was a willed relationship, not a spontaneous one. Each intended to have power over the other — “automatic,
and driven from the will.”(113) Flora pursues her employer with all the force of her will, and he succumbs to her out of pity. She believes that such a husband will be talisman to secure her happiness, and a house, a baby and an income all go along with the husband to make up the charm. With her subservience which is nothing but the latent will, the housekeeper becomes the mistress of her master’s house. Now “she thought she had got him.”(116) But Cathcart in his struggle to free himself from this burden of relationship offers her a cheque book with the amount of her credit duly entered. She became interested. Lawrence has compressed into three pages a devastating portrait of contemporary courtship and marriage, in which the possibility of achieving fulfillment is stifled behind the stultifying subservience and conventional decency.

By breaking away all connections with the phenomenal world, and living beings, Cathcart has chosen suicide. The mind isolated from living truth, can create only deadness. And for Lawrence, the living truth involves the recognition that the only marvel is to be alive in the flesh, and to be vitally connected with the universe which is organically alive. The next and the last story of Lawrence “The Man Who Died” can be read as the reversal of the adventures of Catchart — the man who loved islands. The attempt at resurrection is presented through reestablishing organic connection with the phenomenal world teeming with life.

“THE MAN WHO DIED”

The genesis of The Escaped Cock was closely bound up with Lawrence’s visit, together with Earl Brewster, to the Etruscan tombs in April, 1927. The later title, The Man Who Died, derives from the Etruscan symbol of egg, which Lawrence interprets thus:

It seems as if they too are saluting the mysterious egg held up by the man at the end; who is, no doubt, the man who has died, and whose feast is being celebrated… He holds up the egg of resurrection, within which the germ sleeps as soul sleeps in the
tomb, before it breaks the shell and emerges again. (Etruscan Places 40)

“The Man Who Died” is the masterpiece of the final phase of Lawrence’s creative career in which he conceived the new “reciprocity of tenderness” through “the resurrection of the body.” (Spilka, Life Into 297) No study on Lawrence’s concern with wholeness of being is complete without taking into account “The Man Who Died.” The story centers around the painful recovery of the god in the body. Lawrence’s concern with Christianity begins with the insistence on pure altruistic love as the chief tenet of its faith. He believed that Christian emphasis on purely spiritual love with its teachings of meekness has drained life of its vitality and joy. Lawrence has seen the failure of the “love-mode” and is inclined to find the alternative in “a new tenderness”, a fleshly tenderness. “The Man Who Died” “explores its relation to Christianity.” (Hough 246)

Of all the Christian symbols, the one which meant most to Lawrence was the “resurrection”. Resurrection had been a primary theme of Lawrence’s ever since The Rainbow. “The Resurrection is to life, not to death.” (R180) He left that the great mistake the Christian church has made was to attach so much importance to crucifixion and so little to resurrection. “By stressing Christ crucified” Christianity had emphasized “the lesser half of the tradition.” He says that “to Christ risen belongs the positive side of Christianity, the Christ of the body as well as the spirit.” (Karl and Malanger, Readers Guide) Lawrence was not against Christ or Christianity. He wrote that “I worship Christ, I worship Aphrodite. But I don’t worship hands nailed and running with blood upon a cross.” He wanted to “serve in real love” and believed that “if I take my whole passionate spiritual and physical love to the woman who in turn loves me, that is how I serve God.” (P 307)

“The figure of Christ” deeply attracted Lawrence. He was one of many writers “intrigued by the personality of Christ and keenly aware that the Christian myth must be revitalized.” (Leslie Thompson, Review 28) To Lawrence, Christ represented the halfness or living through mind, will and
spirit. It was a symbol of man’s day times self and a complete denial of equally important night -consummation without which “we are like trees without roots.” (FU 185) Lawrence did not believe in living through sensual centers alone, but in maintaining proper balance between the upper spiritual and the passional lower centers. He justifies Jesus denial of the woman to pursue the higher “supreme activity” beyond woman. (FU 100) A man, Lawrence held, “must carry forward the banner of life, though seven worlds perish, with all the wives and mothers and children in them. Hence Jesus, ‘woman, what have I to do with thee?’ Every man that lives has to say it again to his wife or mother, once he has any work mission in hand, that comes from his soul.” (FU 101)

Jesus’ fault, according to Lawrence was in not keeping polarity essential for the fullness of life. Day was the time for man’s activity, but “no man is a blooming marvel for twenty four hours a day.” Jesus should have realized that after the day -activity, he should come back to his woman, to “the world of love, of emotion, of sympathy.” At night he should give himself to his “woman and her world.” He is “not to give up his purpose” (FU 101) but to pursue it with greater vigour. Jesus, according to Lawrence was a failure for he completely denied this other aspect of life. “The Man Who Died” made Jesus realizes the blasphemy of half-life. Lawrence makes his Jesus lead a life in the wholeness of body and soul together.

The crowing of the “resplendent” bird “with arched and orange neck” (125) whose “body, soul and spirit were tied” (126) miraculously recalls to life the man who had died. He wakes up to a new mode of “consciousness.” (127) “It meant full awakening.” (128) Though “numb and cold” and half dead even now he realizes the limitation of the life he was leading and awakes to the new reality of the body. Pained and disillusioned, the man discovered that the cock crows from the world that he had denied as he had denied “the greater life of the body.” The cock symbolizes the physical awakening of the man.

Throughout his creative career, Lawrence has shown that resurrection is “a very painful experience for the consciousness” and “the way to fullness of life involves the most dreaded self -renewals.” (Hoffman, Death and Imagination
42) His aliveness to the nature comes gradually. He realizes that he had sacrificed his life in vain. His death had made no difference. Life goes on as smoothly as ever. He realizes:

   The world, the same as ever, the natural world, thronging with greenness, a nightingale winso mely, wistfully, coaxingly calling from the bushes beside a runnel of water, in the world, the natural world of morning and evening, forever undying, from which he had died. (129)

The man who died realizes that he was indifferent to the beauty of the phenomenal world. He was so lost in his mission that he had no time to look “nakedly on life” (133) and admire its beauty. He realizes the vanity and futility of his own mission. He had tried to the bigger than what he was. Preaching others, he realizes, was only an expression of his “self important ego.” He thought himself greater than others. He understood that “they executed me for preaching to them.”(144) The spiritual relationship offered by him was proved unsatisfactory by Judas who “feeling betrayed, betrayed in turn.”(Thompson, Lawrence and Judas) Lawrence held Christ responsible for the betrayal. He attributed Judas betrayal to a lack in Jesus rather than to a weakness in Judas. The salvation Christ sought was only partial as it failed to take into consideration the physical side of life. Judas betrayed him because he offered to him love devoid of body, “only the corpse” of his love. A “vivid shame” goes through him as he realizes that if he had “kissed Judas with live love, perhaps he would never have kissed” him “with death.”(166) Salvation is seen as the opposite of destiny. To be saved means to be cut off from life. In giving more than he took, Christ had falsified the true balance, the mutuality and spontaneity of love and turned it into a sort of bullying. “And whoever forces himself to love anybody/begets a murder in his own body,” (Spilka, The Art 218) writes Lawrence in “Retort to Jesus.” Lilly has expressed the same opinion in Aaron’s Rod: “A Jesus makes Judas inevitable. A man should remain himself, not try to spread himself over humanity.”(AR 120)
The man who had died realizes his mistake that he had forced love on others as a matter of “principle” and “ideal” which proved disastrous. Lawrence believed that “love is a spontaneous thing, coming out of the spontaneous effectual soul. As a deliberate principle it is an unmitigated evil.”(FU 79) He makes his Jesus realize his mistake in trying to “lay the compulsion of love on all men.”(146) In his own mind he had realized, that he who had “never truly embraced even one” had yet tried to “embrace multitudes.”(136) What he had offered them was only the wilful half love of the spirit. Love as a spontaneous warm flow was something unknown to him. He realized that he himself was responsible for his crucifixation. The man does not see it as a triumph and thus renounces his mission. Lawrence looked at “crucifixion” and “martyrdoms” as “a most deadly chain of Karma” to “tangle up the human family.”(CL 1164) His decision to dissociate himself from his old self and Madeleine does point to a new beginning. The “teacher and the saviour were dead in him.” His public life, the life of his “self-importance” was over. He wanted to take his “single way in life.”(136) When Madeleine comes to him to be saved, he rejects her entreaties saying he must “ascend to the Father.”(141) She could not understand the meaning. But the readers know that for Lawrence, Father was the flesh. In her life, Madeleine was a sinner and “wilful Eve” who had caught “men at her will.”(137) She had “taken” more than she “gave.” And now she wanted to “give without taking” and that is denied her. (137) Like Jesus, she also spoils the balance of mutuality and spontaneity of love. Lawrence believed that to want to give without taking is also a mode of egoism which is disastrous.

The man awakens to the new life of the body when he realizes that the peasant woman desires him. He politely rejected her, because for her, sex is a form of greed:

Risen from the dead, he had realized at last that the body, too, has its little life, and beyond that, the greater life. He was virgin, in recoil from the little, greedy life of the body… the body rises again to give and to take, to take and to give, unreadily. (140)
With the desire awakened, he goes in search of the woman of his own choice who would “lure” his body and yet leave him his “aloneness.”(144) The first act of his reborn existence is to let the cock fly free. Its new found freedom is a symbol of the release of his own sensuous faculties, imprisoned during the years of his mission and almost extinguished during his passion and death. In him, the desire had failed, but in the cock there is “the necessity to live, and even cry out the triumph of life.”(133) He starts his voyage alone in the phenomenal world.

The Priestess of Isis has her temple “facing south and west, towards Egypt.”(146) Egypt, for Lawrence, stood for civilization where men led life of fullness—“the previous sympathetic era” when “the flower of the universal blossomed in the navel… our lower man, our dark, devouring whirlpool was once the creative source, in human estimation.”(PU 235) The priestess discovers in wounded stranger “the other kind of beauty,” “the sheer stillness of the deeper life.”(154) The intuitive perception that he is her man shows that the whole thing is taking place at the unconscious, non-mental level. The priestess is the living representative of Isis in search of Osiris who had died and come back to the world, but dreads its contact. As the priestess anoints the man’s body, it “gradually gathered power.” “Warmth began to take the place of the cold terror.” The man who had died feels he was going to “be warm again,” and going to be “whole.”(167) The ritual of anointing the man and the revival of strength in him shows the vivifying and healing power of touch. Awakened to a new mode of life, the man gradually responds to “her tender desire for him, like sunshine, so soft and still” full of “woman’s mystery.”(163) They unite in sexual union which gives them a sense of fulfillment. They achieve not only the satisfaction of a long denied bodily hunger, but it also gives their life a new meaning. It is a consummation for each of them of a solitary life of spiritual exploration which is incomplete until it has reached carnal fruition. He feels connected with the whole universe. Christ now is truly resurrected “I am risen:” he exclaims, for he has been reborn into a new, whole self. (168) The point to note is that “what is usually seen as a descent into physical desire is
here seen as an ascent.” (Harris Faces of Lazarus, Review 297) He has conquered the earlier fear of contact. He has ascended to the Father, which is the world of desire, and can now enjoy the closest touch of all:

All changed, the blossom of the universe changed its petals and swung round to look another way. The spring was fulfilled, a contact was established, the man and the Woman were fulfilled of one another. (170)

The man who had died has entered the “greater day” by actively accepting life. Having fully accepted life—both physically and spiritually, he had nothing to do with common people “mad with the egoistic fear of their own nothingness.” (146) Sexually fulfilled he does not stay with the women. The man who had died has to depart for the purposive activity in man’s world to complete the circuit of fullness. The ultimate planting of the seed in the woman’s womb is important as it will represent the revival of the man’s body and at the same time it will foreshadow the birth of an individual who will combine both the body and the spirit.

Rounding off the discussion on Lawrence’s fiction, it is pertinent to emphasize that Lawrence wanted men and women to live a life of fullness in their integrated whole selves by combining the purposive activity and the passional sexual activity. He wanted people to live fully, not only through their mental spiritual selves, but also realizing the sacredness of the body.

Sexual communion between man and woman for Lawrence was a means to come in contact with the unknown reality which lies beneath the wakeful consciousness. His concern with life in its totality urged him to break the hard shell of our egos and liberate the spontaneous passional self. By living spontaneously in the great consciousness of the mind as well as the intuitive blood consciousness, man can know the mysterious unknown which leads to wholeness and fulfillment. Indeed, the resurrection or destruction of human soul, within the living body was central to his works; and by resurrection, Lawrence meant no more — and, in all fairness no less than emergence into greater fullness of being.