CHAPTER I

THE ARTIST IN THE MAKING: SHORT STORIES

(a) The Background

Eustace's career - if career it can be called - certainly dates from that afternoon in the chestnut woods above Rovello. I confess at once that I am a plain, simple man, with no pretensions to literary style. Still I do flatter myself that I can tell a story without exaggerating and I have therefore decided to give an unbiased account of the extraordinary events.... (CSS,9).

These opening lines of Forster's first story entitled "The Story of a Panic" describe not only the launching of the career of a Forsterian hero, they also literally unfold the beginning of Forster's own literary career, which, ironically, took shape in the very chestnut woods mentioned above, at Rovello in Italy. In the introduction to the Collected Short Stories, he relates the unique moment of this creative process in these words:

The opening item, 'The Story of a Panic', is the first story I ever wrote and attendant circumstances remain with me vividly. After I came down from Cambridge... I travelled abroad for a year, and I think it was in the May of 1902 that I took a walk near Rovello. I sat down in a valley, a few miles above the town, and suddenly the first chapter of the story rushed into my mind as if it had waited for me there. (CSS,5).

The story, as we know now, was a complete success as it demonstrated the author's narrative skill as well as his
gift of breaking fresh thematic grounds. Although Forster was humble enough to tell the B.B.C. interviewer "...I had better add that I am sure I am not a great novelist",1 yet with a robust self-confidence of the narrator of his first story he could declare that he can tell a story without exaggerating and give an unbiased account of the extraordinary events. It is by virtue of these gifts that he became one of the tallest literary figures of the twentieth century. His extraordinary perception of life and its intricacies gave a unique touch of freshness and novelty to his fiction.

The narrator of "The Story of a Panic" subtly betrays the authorial voice, having no pretensions to literary style. And yet the style, as the saying goes, is the man. If one aspect of Forster's fiction has attracted the critics' attention more than anything else, it is his deft style of telling a story with a great penchant for the extraordinary side of things. His style emanates straight from the spirit of his themes and the reader encounters in his fiction not only the physical and ephemeral appearance of life but also has an epiphanic peep into the reality behind and beyond the mundane world, a transcendence into the dark and grim realms of the human heart. It is the 'self' of the author which shows itself craving for perfection by merging itself into the universal 'Self'. Although each work of art is in one sense or the other the expression of the artist's own experiences and perceptions, some artists betray a marked
affinity between their art and their own inner-being. No doubt critics, especially the followers of the New Criticism, focus more on the text of the book of art than the biographical elements that go into the making of the work, there is no dearth of critics who think otherwise. Lionel Trilling, for example, justifies very emphatically the role of the personal experiences of the artist in the following words:

Biography intrudes itself into literary judgement and keeps it from being ‘pure’. As we form our opinion of a particular work, certainly the sole object of our thought should be the work itself. But it seldom is — and although we call extraneous the facts that thrust themselves upon us, they inevitably enter into our judgement. We are always conscious of an author, and the consciousness does not rise only from elements in the work; extraneous personal facts that reach us are never wholly ignored.2

Forster's personal experiences, his growth and development as a young writer, his antipathy towards the female sex and inclination towards homosexuality, all these factors are immensely relevant to a proper understanding of his writings. His total being, his 'self', is the fountainhead of his artistic energies. His whole fiction, in this sense, is nothing but a study in the self, an attempt to comprehend the inner cravings, instincts and intuitions which ultimately make or mar the human personality. Commenting upon the creative process in the artist, Forster observes as follows
in an essay entitled "Anonymity":

Just as words have two functions - information and creation - so each human mind has two personalities, one on the surface, one deeper down. The upper personality has a name... It is conscious and alert, it does things like dining out, answering letters, etc. and it differs vividly and amusingly from other personalities. The lower personality is a very queer affair. In many ways, it is a fool but without it there is no literature, because unless a man dips a bucket down into it occasionally he cannot produce first class work. (TCD, 93).

The lower personality is 'queer' and a 'fool' because in its raw and innocent state, it serves as a base for the growth and development of the upper conscious personality.

Although Forster was a follower of the 'Art for Art's sake' movement, he could not ignore the personality of the author while analysing a work of art. In the same essay he further avers:

The personality of a writer does become important after we have read his book and begin to study it. When the glamour of creation ceases, when the leaves of the divine tree are silent, when the co-partnership is over, then a book changes its nature, and we can ask ourselves questions about it such as 'What is the author's name?' 'Where did he live?' 'Was he married?'... Then we are no longer reading the book, we are studying it and making it subserve our desire for information. (TCD, 94).

While studying the works of Forster we are irresistibly drawn towards those facets of his personality which coloured, characterized and, to some extent, limited his creative
imagination and which, if looked from a right perspective, help us greatly in comprehending his world more fully. The fact for example that Forster never married and was a homosexual, has an important bearing upon the novels and stories he wrote and many of the puzzling oddities noticed in his fiction by some critics can be satisfactorily resolved and interpreted with reference to this aspect of his personality. These revealing facets of his personality directly correspond to the elemental ingredients which formed his 'lower personality' i.e. his sub-conscious 'self'. Forster underlines the primacy of this internal self in the process of creation in the following words:

What about the creative state? In it a man is taken out of himself. He lets down as it were a bucket into his subconscious and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing with his normal experiences, and out of the mixture he makes a work of art....Such seems to be the creative process. It may employ much technical ingenuity and worldly knowledge, it may profit by critical standards but mixed up with it is this stuff from the bucket, this subconscious stuff, which is not procurable on demand. (TCO, 123).

It is the stuff from the self, drawn through the bucket, which precipitates into a work of art. On the surface the principle seems to echo T.S. Eliot's dictum of creative process in which he accords the personality of the artist the role of a catalytic medium. In his famous essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" Eliot says:
The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.*

Emotions and feelings, according to Eliot, are the elements forming this stuff which, Forster points out, is drawn from the subconscious self. While the conscious mind acts as a catalyst, provides the technical ingenuity in the creative process, and stamps the work of art with the individuality of the artist, the subconscious self, which C.G. Jung calls the 'collective unconscious', is the material, the basic stuff that gives to the work of art a universal appeal and takes it towards what Eliot and Forster call 'Impersonality' and 'Anonymity' respectively.

C.G. Jung divides the self into two parts, the conscious and the unconscious. He further divides the unconscious into the 'personal unconscious' - a more or less superficial layer of the unconscious which is undoubtedly personal - and the 'collective unconscious', because this part is not individual but universal; "in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals." This part, according to Jung, "is identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrata of a super-personal
nature which is present in every one of us. The collective elements, handed down by one generation to the next genetically, carry the 'feeling-toned complexes' which Jung calls 'archetypes'. "The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear." Jung, therefore, explains the function of the 'self' in the creative state in psychological terms, while Forster is emphasizing the same process in the layman's language. Self is thus the basic ingredient, the original stuff reshaped and reorganized by the artist. For Forster, the self takes precedence over all other factors, and hence becomes the organizing principle in the making of his stories and novels. Seen in this light his 'self', reflected in his fiction, emits a new translucence affording it a new meaning and a new purpose. Studying Forster, therefore, as an artist in search of his self sheds new light on his life and art.

Although Holland has tried to define 'self' and its 'identity' in very specific terms as mentioned earlier, he has done it by comparing the two in the light of the relative equation between the text of a narrative and its unity. The real nature of self eludes him. C.E.M. Joad underlines the elusive character of self in the following words:

In the first place consciousness is something which is supposed to be possessed by or belong to the self yet this self
in which consciousness resides is a something of which we have no knowledge, and whose very existence is a hypothesis. Try as we may to discover the self, we never succeed in tracking it down; what we do come upon when we endeavour to realize the self, is, as the philosopher Hume pointed out, a something which is willing, a something which is desiring, a something which is thinking, or, in the particular case in question, a something which is wondering whether there is such a thing as a united self and trying to discover it....We meet, in other words, with willing, desirings, and thinking, but never with the self which wills, desires, and thinks.

Quest for self, therefore, is an endeavour on the part of the author to fuse together the conscious and unconscious stuff that makes his personality and to reach some kind of order underlying this chaotic stuff. It is the search of a unity running through the eluding flux of his being. The created work of the author is nothing but an order the artist gives to his chaotic self. Forster's fiction, thus, is an unceasing search for the identity of his own self and each of his books is a link in the series of the order that lies at the back of his work as a whole. His fiction, in short, is the distillation of his whole personal experience through the creative faculty of his self, the faculty at the same time taking an impersonal back seat in the form of what he terms 'anonymity'.

Before attempting a study of Forster's work from the angle indicated above, it will be appropriate to note a few
salient features of Forster the man, and trace their origin
in the psychic make up of his personality. The exhaustive
biography by P.N. Furbank, who has pieced together innumerable
incidents, experiences, impressions and other vital facts
scattered over the author's long life span, provides us
invaluable information on the most personal and secret recesses
of Forster's mind and soul. We know that Forster was a very
shy, self-conscious and physically weak person from his
childhood. ...right up to middle age he thought of himself
as extremely frail and likely at any time to develop
consumption. At school boys called him "a little cissy". In his middle teens, Forster "had become muted and subdued,
timid and buttoned-up in manner, with a queer pedantic trick
of speech. Obviously he was an introverted personality,
"very pale, delicately built young man, slightly towzled and
very shy, with a habit of standing on one leg and winding the
other round it. With frail physical constitution he
suffered from excessive sentimentality and fits of depression
even in his old age. After his mother's death in 1945,
Forster experienced one of these frequent fits of depression:

Intemmently, remembering the loss of
his mother, he was still drowned by waves
of despair. On the day after the Japanese
surrender he woke, feeling that he couldn't
'live to himself', and all through the day
he found himself repenting, 'I cannot go on,
simply cannot', and then 'surely she will
give up being dead now?' In this emergency,
an old instinct came to his aid, and, as
often in the past in times of stress he
deliberately sought relief in erotic fantasies.
The above passage points out two basic features of Forster's psychic frame, one that his mother had a very deep influence on his life and, second, that he was extremely swayed by a deep-rooted sexual complex which ultimately precipitated his homosexuality. In fact these two factors are inextricably inter-related. It was the overpowering personal hold of his mother on him which decisively pushed him into the condition of homosexuality. Sex was almost an obsession with him and perhaps no other single complex has played a more important role in shaping his life and his art than sex. It was also the greatest liability for him which limited his potential as a creative writer. The fact that he did not publish *Maurice* and many homosexual stories during his life time underlines the impact of sex on his art.

One or two more instances illustrate that this introverted and effeminate child was destined to develop later on a queer attraction towards the male sex. When Forster was sent to the boarding school at Eastbourne, he felt lonely and missed his mother very badly. There among his fellow boys he began to learn about the 'facts of life'. When as a young child, he had discovered masturbation and announced the fact to his mother she told him it was 'dirty'. He was confused. "Lily's whole attitude to sex was that it was a dreadful subject and to be thought of as little as possible. She made no attempt at any stage to tell Morgan the 'facts of Life'." Furbank notes in Forster's biography:
Another incident relates to a more puzzling experience he had with a middle-aged man. One afternoon when he was having a walk on the downs, he met a man, urinating in full view. He called Morgan near him and asked him to play with his penis. Puzzled and alarmed, he obeyed.

This experience upset him very much and according to Furbank, it had some significance for his later development.

This sex-encounter had taught him nothing he could understand, and it soon sank out of his daily thoughts, but as a pattern of panic and cross-purposes it evidently left a lasting impression on him. One senses that he returned to the incident and his own reaction during it when writing A Passage to India, and that it became a model of Adela's vengeful and confused behaviour after she imagines herself molested by Aziz.

All these accounts of his childhood and boyhood experiences closely fit into the list of causes which experts say lead to homosexuality. A noted psychologist C. Westwood, for example, gives the list of these factors in his study:

A summary of the theories on the causes of homosexuality would have to include:

- Mother fixation; identification or rivalry with the parent of opposite sex;
- Faulty training; training during elimination learning; emotional excess from maladjusted upbringing; early dominance by one parent;
- Absence of male influence in the home;
- Regression to or fixation at an earlier libidinal level; ignorance in matters connected with sex; seduction during childhood or adolescence.

Paradoxically male sexuality was an area where Forster felt much at home in exploring human relations especially...
Questions relating to morality and social ethos in sex haunted him persistently. The taboos and inhibitions became even more acutely felt because, being a homosexual, he was more inclined especially in his homosexual stories to analyse sexual relationship between man and man and not man and woman. What were the causes that led Forster to live an unmarried life? What factors were responsible to drive him to the 'abnormal' world of homosexuals? How did the man of such a great stature, fame and recognition reconcile himself to the instinctive demands of his private self? These are some of the relevant questions which call for satisfactory answers.

When he wrote Maurice in 1913-14, Forster was undergoing a once-in-life problem, the problem of whether to tread a lone path of private life or to go in for the stereotyped kind of conventional marriage. His meeting with Edward Carpenter and his friend George Merill in September 1913 provided him an opportunity to finally decide in favour of leading a homosexual life. The result of this meeting was the most controversial of his novels, Maurice. It is an exercise in self-analysis through the auto-biographical character Maurice Hall. The novel is a document portraying in all their ferocity the thoughts, feelings and urges lying hidden and suppressed in the subconscious self of the writer. Maurice therefore not only gives us the clues to the innermost
recesses of the writer's self it is also a substantial evidence that the major concern of the writer was a relentless unravelling of the self. Another major element recognised by almost all the serious readers of Forster is his honesty, sincerity and willingness to lay bare his real self in all its nakedness and essence. When the social taboos prevented him from showing his bare 'self' to the outside world, he resorted to private analysis of it in works like Maurice and posthumously published homosexual stories. It speaks volumes of the sincerity of the writer who put down on the paper and circulated among his close friends the feelings and emotions which people fight down doggedly as unmentionable even to the most intimate of their friends.

(b) **Collected Short Stories**

While the novels of Forster are his elaborate exercises in concretising his elusive selfhood, the stories, especially the earlier ones, are the premeditations in a somewhat unrefined form of the same mysterious currents running through his being. The stories, therefore, provide us with some clues to evaluate his novels from the viewpoint of the author's whole selfhood.

Although Forster defines fantasy in a novel as a supernatural mythological element, 'the fourth dimension' or the 'bar of light' (AN, 103) that cuts across all other
elements in the novel, he uses this device in the short stories as a means to escape from reality into the world of his own make-believe, a realm totally alien to the world we have seen and known. The themes of the stories recur in one guise or the other again and again in the novels indicating Forster's primary preoccupation with them. The young writer finds in fantasy an easy vehicle to convey the fantastic ideas and feelings "...when the fantastic is introduced it produces a special effect" (AN, 104). And a fantastic story is different from any other narration of events in that it produces a special effect. The story even in a novel has the same role to play otherwise there would be no difference between history and fiction. The young Forster, trained in classical mythology, manipulated the fantastic to bring the desired effect into his stories and his skill and craft reassured him that he could write with greater confidence longer stories and novels. In his Aspects of the Novel, E.M. Forster says that while in the novel fantasies 'are side-shows inside the main show' (AN, 105) in these stories the side show itself becomes the main show. These short stories reveal as fantasies the mess inside the writer's mind taking recognizable shapes. They express the conscious and unconscious ideas of the young writer who was attempting to pour out something that he could no more contain within himself.

The short stories, therefore, are Forster's first
endeavour in the quest of his inner self. They display
his urge to know himself before he could show his true
'self' to the world.

"The Story of a Panic" is pregnant with more than
one idea, most of which were to recur in his later fiction.
The major Forsterian obsessions: his love of the Greek view
of life, the mystery and powers of the unseen, his love of
human body and its beauty, his devotion to freedom and
spontaneity, his liking for simple, rustic kind of life as
opposed to the sophisticated and hypocritical mannerism of
modern life; all these find symbolic representation in this
story. Eustace, a repressed, dull and Moody boy of fourteen,
is the member of a group of English tourists picnicking at
Rovellc in Italy. On the ridge of a valley, where they rest
in the chestnut woods, his over-worried aunt, Miss Robinson,
tries to involve him into sight-seeing, but the boy shows no
interest in it and instead prefers to make a whistle out of
a piece of wood. Lethargically he takes his lunch when all
others have finished and upsets the whole party by the
excruciating noise of his whistle. Then suddenly with the
blowing of his whistle everybody watches the foreboding
arrival of a stormy wind, "turning the lightgreen to dark
as it travelled" (CSS, 14). Nobody knows what happens next
as all of them run to safety and the narrator, an elderly
tourist, says, "I saw nothing and heard nothing and felt
nothing, since all the channels of sense and reason were blocked" (CSS, 15). The party reaches a safe spot but they are shocked to note that Eustace is missing. On visiting the picnic spot again after the storm recedes they find him lying motionless on his back, unharmed, quiet, smiling. The same evening at the hotel he jumps from his room-window into the courtyard below. The alarmed tourists forcibly return him into his room, but once again he escapes, this time with the help of the Italian waiter Gennaro. And as the two jump off from the window into the courtyard, Gennaro is killed and Eustace escapes forever climbing over the garden wall, his shouts and laughter resounding through the atmosphere.

The symbolism of the story is quite obvious. Most people with all their sophistication and elitism are ill equipped for a direct contact with Nature while the seemingly dullards and naive-looking rustic are better tuned to the earth, even to the mysteries of the unseen. The secrets of nature cannot be known by the rational, empirical reasoning while the man of nature and the natural man may be mysteriously connected to the 'unseen and the unknown'.

The story shows Forster as a gifted story-teller. It not only gives an indication of the shape of the themes of his later fiction, but also shows his romantic love for an escape from the conventional, stereo-typed kind of life. Forster remained a non-conformist and a social heretic.
throughout his life. His very first attempt at concretizing his ideas in story-form put him on a course of search for his own self, and reassured him that further exploration of his selfhood through his writings would be a fruitful exercise.

Two more stories of this collection "The Celestial Omnibus" and "The Other Kingdom" deal with the same theme of escapism into the Arcadian world of classical gods, Fauns, Pans and Dryads. In "The Celestial Omnibus", a young boy finds an omnibus bound for heaven and boards it one morning without caring a bit that he has no money to buy the return ticket. With a crash and explosion, the omnibus lands on the rainbow bridge at the gates of heaven and amid the beautiful colours the boy sees three maidens rising to the surface of a pool, singing and playing. Back home when the boy tells his parents the fantastic story of his journey to heaven, he is reprimanded, locked up and disgraced for telling a concocted tale.

Mr. Bone, a family friend curiously listens to the story of the boy's journey and to test the authenticity of his story agrees to accompany him at sunset the next day. Crying in amazement, "Is it possible...Is the impossible possible?" (CSS, 53), Mr. Bone springs into the omnibus next evening, and with a blast of wind and a shocking jerk the omnibus moves up. Shocked and dumbfound, Mr. Bone cannot get off it. Presently the beauty of the night, the summit of
a moonlit hill and finally the rainbow look romantically fine but the adult in Mr. Bona would not appreciate it. He meaningly wants to return, but is helpless. To his shock and surprise the driver of the omnibus is found to be none else but Dante, the author of the many books in his library. At the heavenly gate stands Achilles, with his shield, as the sentry. As the boy jumps out of the omnibus and is carried on the shield, Mr. Bona screams to the driver, "I see no one. I see nothing. Save me! Let me stop your chariot. I have honoured you. I have quoted you. I have bound you in vallum. Take me back to my world" (CSS, 57-8). To this Dante replies, "I am the means and not the end. I am the food and not the life. Stand for yourself, as the boy has stood. I cannot save you. For poetry is a spirit; and they that would worship it must worship in spirit and in truth" (CSS, 58). Finally when the dazed Mr. Bona cannot face it anymore, he leaps out of the omnibus and his body is found in the vicinity of the Bermondsey gas-work in a shockingly mutilated condition.

The boy, because he is attuned to the spirit of poetry and truth, is saved. Like Eustace he escapes from the world where poetry is confined to books only. The poet is only a means, not an end. The end is the poetry, the spirit, the truth. Forster here seizes the spirit inside his own 'self' and like the boy, reaches a self-awareness through the fantasy and dreamy world of the story. He prefers the world of imagination and illusion to the dull
drab hard-headedness of the academic world.

"Other Kingdom" is also a story of escape of an earthy and rustic lady Miss Beaumont from the so called sophisticated and elite society of the Worterses. This raw and uneducated lady has been handpicked by Mr. Harcourt Worters from Ireland to be his bride. At a picnic, as the 'tea-things' are spread, the ladies, Mrs. Worters and her daughter Miss Worters, indicate towards the woods in their estate and tell to her that these are her Evelyn Beaumont's] woods. Electrified at this remark she exclaims, "Oh its so wonderful and now a wood - a wood of my own - a wood for ever"(CSS,70), and soon after she finds herself strolling away in her wood as a butterfly counting the beech trees. As the narrator, her tutor, tells Harcourt about her progress in the classics she comes to them and declares that she would not allow her wood to be fenced. When Harcourt insists that he must fence the wood, she protests:

Oh, fence me out, if you like! Fence me out as much as you like. But never in. Oh, Harcourt, never in. I must be on the outside, I must be where anyone can reach me....(CSS,74).

But the wood is fenced one day and Miss Evelyn Beaumont is asked to take its formal possession. Meanwhile a raging storm overtakes them. "It will never go down as long as I am in this house" (CSS,81) bemoans Evelyn pensively and as the Worterses take their lunch, the wind blows fiercer
than ever. Soon after, Evelyn is seen springing up and running out of the dining hall to touch a broken bough. She dances and runs away into the woods shouting, "I am so happy" (CSS, 82). Tripping and singing she "danced away from our society and our life, back, back through the centuries till houses and fences fell and the earth lay wild to the sun" (CSS, 82).

Here Evelyn represents the spirit of the Arcadian earth like Eustace and the boy of "The Celestial Omnibus". The theme of the escape of the earthy characters from the conventionality of the society into the free world of the woods recurs in many other stories of Forster. Even in his posthumously published non-homosexual and homosexual stories, the title story "The Life to Come", for example, the element of saving of the spirit from the bondages of society and law is clearly evident. The man who is turned to the secrets of the earth, is qualified to enter the kingdom of the saved. This desire in Forster's protagonists is the author's own wishful dream. He wants to escape into a world of dreams and fantasies where there are no barriers between the physical life and the life of spirit. Young boys and girls are more given to the unseen world of the spirit, where Pans, Fauns and Dryads are nothing but the externalization of the fanciful images of their desires. The adults on the other hand are incapable of entering such imaginary world of metaphysical
and mystical existence because they are tied down to the
physicality and temporal nature of the daily life and lack
the requisite degree of imagination. Like Mr. Bons and
Mr. Worters they either destroy themselves by refusing to
see the truth of such a fanciful existence of ethereal things
or drive the spirit out of their world by fencing out the
innocence and freshness of their woods.

The escape theme reflects Forster's own desire of
having a close proximity to earth and nature. Through his
protagonists, he searches his own basic instincts, the dormant
cravings of his self. He invests the common prosaic features
of life with a sense of wonder and romance. His successful
handling of the supernatural makes him aware of his potentials
and he pursues the fantastic even more vigourously in the
later tales.

"The Other Side of the Hedge", also has the theme
of escapism where the main character strays into the strange
and fascinating world, the kingdom of the immortals. The
inhabitants of this suprahuman world receive cheerfully the
members of this world whenever they happen to venture through
the hedge. When, through a gate, the narrator, a man of the
mundane world, points towards "my road" (CSS, 37) his rescuer
shuts the gate saying, "But not your part of the road. It is
through this gate that humanity went out countless ages ago,
when it was first seized with the desire to walk" (CSS, 38).
So the road from mankind to the gods, from the earth to the heaven is the same but humanity treads upon it this side of the grave and the spirits hover upon it on other side of it. Ours is the world of common, prosaic, dull kind of life, the other is the world of spiritual existence always new and life-nourishing, the world of eternal bliss. On this side of the hedge lies the beaten path of conventions, mental bondage, human drudgery and meaningless journeys, the other side of the hedge is the path of truth, glory and real romance. The mundane and the ethereal worlds here can be compared to the conception of 'para' and 'apara' in the Hindu mythology. The narrator asks the rescuer to "give me life, with its struggles and victories, with its failures and hatreds, with its deep moral meaning and its unknown goal" (CSS, 39), and the man guarding the gate says, "This is where your road ends, and through this gate humanity — all that is left of it — will come in to us" (CSS, 40).

One is reminded of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken", where the narrator takes the road of his choice but is always pining for the unexperienced mysteries of the road not taken.

The friendship, especially with the males, remained almost an obsession with Forster throughout his life and explicitly or implicitly it has homo-sexual overtones. The attraction in him for the male figure began to manifest itself
from a very early stage and almost every homosexual short story in *The Life to Come and Other Stories* has an incident where the hero overwhelmingly enjoys himself in the male company. In "The Story of a Panic" only Gennaro 'understands' Eustace. The boy in the "Celestial Omnibus" tries to establish rapport with snobbish Mr. Bone but fails because Mr. Bone is too old and too much of a worldly man to understand him. In the "Other Side of the Hedge" the rescuer extends a hand of friendship to the narrator and the two find themselves mysteriously attached to each other.

Of the remaining stories in this collection, two deserve special mention, "The Machine Stops" and "The Eternal Moment". The former is a science fiction on the Wellsian and Orwellian line. It is also perhaps a rejoinder to the 'Brave New World' as conceived by the scientists and an indication, in Forsterian sense, of the unfortunate shape of the things to come. Written in 1909, when science had only begun to imprison humanity into its comforting shackles, when the ghost of the world war and the atom bomb had not appeared on the horizon even remotely, the story affords a prophetic vision into the future. It is indeed curious to know how Forster conceived of the machines and gadgets which, robot-like, performed every function related to human activity, at the time when not even the wireless and audio equipment had been invented.
Vashti, an elderly lady, has become a captive of the luxurious comforts provided by science. She operates all her activities on the control panel fitted in her chamber. She presses a knob and a television-like screen brings before her the audience for her lecture. She is always either busy or isolated, at the press of a button. When Kuno, her son, speaks to her from the other side of the earth, she sees his image upon the screen in her chamber. When the boy says, "I want you to come and see me", Vashti watches his face in the blue plate and exclaims, "But I can see you. What more do you want?" (CSS, 109). "I want to speak to you not through the wearisome Machine," (CSS, 109), protests Kuno vainly before his stone-hearted mother.

And what a brilliant and prophetic commentary this is on the modern way of life where, indeed, it is through the machine that we talk and watch today. People remain content to meet one another through the machine, through the audio and video equipment. The touch of intimacy, of love and concern, is lost in the touch of the button. Machine can convey the messages and images through signals but it can neither breed feelings and passions nor effect healthy human relationships. The story is a masterpiece as far as Forster's disapproval of the over-mechanisation of man's life is concerned. Earlier on 13th January in the same year (1908) when the story was published, while commenting on the early version of the
flying machine in France, Forster gloomily wrote:

...If I live to be old I shall see the sky as pestilential as the roads. It really is a new civilization. I have been born at the end of the age of peace and can't expect to feel anything but despair. Science, instead of freeing man - the Greeks nearly freed him by right feeling - is enslaving him to machines. Nationality will go, but the brotherhood of man will not come... God what a prospect! The little houses that I am used to will be swept away, the fields will stink of petrol, and the airships will shatter the stars. Man may get a new and perhaps a greater soul for the new condition. But such a soul as mine will be crushed out."

When at the fag end of twentieth century we are indeed being smothered by pollution of all kinds, when the air rants with noise and even inter-terrestrial space becomes a dumping ground for the space ships, the prophetic words of Forster remind us of the sheer visionary powers he possessed. His burning desire was to free the human soul from the fetters of the monstrous machine-dominated civilization. The longest of all the stories in this collection, this story brings into relief some of Forster's basic concerns. He is an advocate of order, beauty, civil conduct and spontaneous, organic life. He is vehemently opposed to mechanical life, the life which is the slave of things created by man. Machine, the servant, must not be allowed to become the master.

Although the story, being a kind of science fiction, remains a fantasy tale, its structure and theme make it a
uniquely realistic story. Nowhere else in his fiction does he come down so heavy-handedly on the modern notions of civilization as in this story. In his radio talks and essays, he expresses emphatically his opposition to the advances made by humanity in the name of civilization and progress. His prophetic vision, philosophic outlook and his mystical belief in the supremacy of the soul manifest themselves in the deeper meanings of this story.

Keeping the soul and body together in the present complex world of rapid development and materialistic civilization is the theme of "The Eternal Moment" also. The last and perhaps the most important in the collection, this story is also different from all other stories, because it is not a fantasy, and suits better the tone and tenor of the second collection of Forster's stories The Life to Come and Other Stories. The story develops at two planes, social and personal, as all Forster's novels do. Miss Reby, a writer of modest standing, had brought Vorta, a small Italian village near Austrian border, on the tourist map by mentioning its mysterious charm and beauty in her novel entitled The Eternal Moment. That was twenty years back, and now she revisits this place to see what changes the rapid development of tourism has brought over Vorta and its people. The reason for writing this novel twenty years ago was not only that the place was charming but also the fact that a young
porter, Feo, had unwarrantedly kissed her one day while she was on a walk near Vorta. While outwardly she rebuffed him, in the heart of her heart she had relished the scintillating effect of the embrace, and the moment was celebrated and immortalized in her novel. She could not submit herself to this physical fulfilment at the moment, but ever after she regretted that she could not summon enough courage to give herself away wholeheartedly to the young man.

With the twin purpose in mind, to see the place which her novel had transformed and to meet the man who had transformed her life in that 'eternal moment', she arrives at Vorta — along with her friend Colonel Leyland. The place is now changed beyond recognition as big hotels have come up there and many business establishments mushroomed. To refresh her old fond memories she decides to stay at Hotel Albergo Scions of Signora County, an old acquaintance. But she is shocked to see that this old hotel had been marginalised and overshadowed by the new Grand Hotel des Alps owned by Countu's own son. Commercialism had dehumanized the people so much that a son had disowned his own parents and ruined them in the process. The second and even more glaring incident that shocks her is the complete vulgarization of the man who had given her, twenty years back, her eternal moment. Feo, the porter, in his servility and professional cunningness looks to Miss Raby the embodiment of decayed town. The total impact of
this shocking experience makes her feel that her life had been wasted. She owns the responsibility remembering the Biblical text: 'But woe to him through whom the offence cometh' (CSS, 205). She thinks that she was responsible for the debasement and degeneration of Feo's personality as well as his character. He symbolizes one of the devastating consequences of her novel *The Eternal Moment*. She has a violent longing to confess, before Feo, that she valued the unique moment he had given to her years back. When she reminds him of her first visit and the walk where he carried her luggage, he hardly remembers anything. When she pointedly asks him to look at the hillside and expressly tells him that he had kissed her there, suddenly he pretends to remember, and revealing a feigned emotion, he winks at her. Shocked at the utter degradation of this man she yells, "Don't think I am in love with you now" (CSS, 215). A vivid image of the man, twenty years back, is evoked and she fondly relives that eternal moment:

For she realised that only now was she not in love with him; that the incident upon the mountain had been one of the great moments of her life—perhaps the greatest, certainly the most enduring; that she had drawn unacknowledged power and inspiration from it, just as trees draw vigour from a subterranean spring. She had been in love with Feo, and she had never loved so greatly again. A presumptuous boy had taken her to the gates of heaven; and, though she would not enter with him, the eternal remembrance of the vision had made life seem endurable and good. (CSS, 215-17).
The story subtly conveys the significance of the eternal moments of life. Not only does it portray the moral and psychological complexity of life's basic drives, it also resolves to great extent the dilemma in which Miss Raby is caught. Even one moment well lived enriches the life and makes it worth living. If she could not give herself away at the moment physically, she atones her mistake years later and reassures herself that her life was not after all misspent. "The only thing worth giving away is yourself" (CSS, 192), she reflects. Technically speaking, the story is the most successful of the stories in the collection because of its convincing thematic contents, realistic outlook and succinct style.

The last story of the collection, "The Story of the Siren", again takes the reader to the world of fantasy. Through this story, Forster depicts his inborn anathema to organized religion of the priests and papacy. He considers this kind of faith as direct hindrance to man's desire to get at the reality of the truth. Instead of helping man to seize the truth of life, the organized religion imprisons him into 'silence and loneliness'. Those whom the religion labels as heretics may be closer to the truth as against those who deceive themselves into believing that religion opens their entry into the heaven of angelic blessedness.

Giuseppe, the boatman's brother, once had dived into
the Mediterranean waters to retrieve a two-lira piece that was thrown by a lady tourist for the fun of it. Giuseppe, when taken out almost in drowned condition, became a completely transformed person as he was believed to have been enchanted by the Siren, the nymph of the seas. His life was totally cut off from daily routine and he became unhappy with his existence. "Unhappy, unhappy because he knew everything. Every living thing made him unhappy because he knew it would die. He did no work, he forgot to eat, he forgot whether he had his clothes on" (CSS, 184). He married a girl Maria who, like himself had "gone mad through bathing in the sea" (CSS, 184). As soon as the two were going to have a baby the priests became panicky and an old witch prophesied that the child would always be speaking and laughing and perverting the society. "Then the boy and the Siren would marry, and together they would rule the world, for ever and ever" (CSS, 186). To prevent this misfortune, the pregnant Maria was pushed over the cliffs into the sea by the priests and Giuseppe left his home to die in Liverpool, sad and sick. Giuseppe had become possessed of supernatural power like Eustace in "The Story of a Panic", but unlike him, he cannot escape the shackles of life to move into the mystery of the unknown. He, like Buddha, is struck beyond repair by the naked truth that everything is born to die. "When a child was born [Giuseppe] would cover his face with his hands" (CSS, 184).
The void, emptiness and panic of Mrs. Moore in *A Passage to India* is anticipated here. He experiences a kind of antivision and imprisonment in the "Silence and loneliness" declares that "love is not happiness. We can all get love. Love is nothing" (CSS, 184-5). Yet the story ends on an optimistic note when the boatman says to the narrator. "Silence and loneliness cannot last forever. It may be hundred or a thousand years, but the sea lasts longer, and she [the Siren] will come out of it and sing" (CSS, 187). These raw ideas about 'antivision', 'nihilism', 'silence and loneliness', 'nothingness of love' are developed by Forster in his novels, especially in *A Passage to India* where the 'horror and emptiness' of the universe and the nihilistic 'echo' of the Marabar caves reverberate throughout the novel and 'love' is given its due place to replace logic and reason.

(c) *The Life to Come and Other Stories*

The stories contained in the volume *Collected Short Stories* were all written before the first world war, before 1912 to be precise, except of course "The Story of the Siren" which, though written much earlier, was published in 1920. In the collection, *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, there are five stories which have close thematic affinity with the stories of the earlier collection and so could have easily been included in that volume as none of these stories has any
embarrassing 'indecent element'. Of these, "Albergo Impedocle" was published in Temple Bar in 1903, but the other four stories could not find a publisher or journal to publish them. The remaining nine stories have explicit or implicit homosexual bearing and Forster intentionally suspended their publication during his lifetime. Before we dwell on the reasons why he did so, it will be appropriate to evaluate a few of the five non-homosexual stories and their continuity with the thematic and stylistic vein of the stories of the earlier volume i.e. the Collected Short Stories.

The first story "Ansell" opens with an accidental fall of the narrator's books into the river. While the loss of a note-book in the Mediterranean in "The Story of the Siren" is in a way a desirable thing from the point of view of the author as it was nothing but an instrument of mental and psychological slavery - the falling of books into the river in this story also saves the narrator from the excessive and undesirable dose of knowledge contained in them. Their loss symbolises the meaninglessness of knowledge and information for man unless they nourish the soul and fill up the void that looms large between man and his ultimate goal in this materialistic age.

The narrator, a scholar of Greek lexicology, goes to stay with his cousin in the countryside. To make use of this leisure, he carries with him a box containing books meant for
research. The cart driver, Ansell, is an old acquaintance who had played with him in childhood. Ansell was then their garden boy. The narrator fondly remembers the days when they used to play together as intimate friends to the annoyance of his father who often reminded him of his school work. This was the period of innocent joys and carefree merry-making. It may be mentioned here that a real garden boy, named Ansell, was a great friend of Forster in his boyhood at Rooksnest. Reminiscing this period he writes in Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography that Ansell "probably did more than anyone toward armoring me against life" (MT, 274-75).

Later when he had come to stay there as a grown up boy, Ansell's sturdy body created a sense of physical inferiority in the narrator.

Now the narrator meets him as a young University scholar, with all his intellectual superiority. He is snobbish and self-conscious and finds little to share between himself and Ansell. Ansell, on the other hand is a simple-mannered rustic folk and talks "with total freedom from self-consciousness for being himself" (LC, 27). The critical moment to gauge their respective strengths: comes when the cart tilts over a hedge just as it approaches the steep ravine and sends the box crashing and flying into the swift river waters below. The narrator, who had planned to complete his fellowship dissertation with the help of these books, is
shocked, stupefied as he sees his career ruined completely. His loss is incalculable, but Ansell petrifies him into an idiot by innocently saying, "Them books saved us. They went at the very moment...When I put the seat back again we'll be a deal more comfortable" (LC, 32). While the loss of books spells complete ruin for one, ironically the other feels more comfortable as slippage of these books saves the cart from a tilting too dangerously.

Forster is able to invest the situations with sudden and ironical meanings. While on the surface the story sends the reader into peals of laughter, at a deeper level it reveals the author's concern for finding a better measure of balance between learning through books and learning through simple practical living.

Another story "Alargo Empecdoelo" is more serious and ambitious both in its theme and execution. The story reminds us of the fantasy of "The Story of the Siren" and "The Story of a Panic". Like Giuseppe and Eustace, the protagonist of this story, Harold, becomes possessed of some supernatural power and feels himself transformed into a Greek pagan. The moral of the story is that we, as intellectuals, scholars and academicians, never tire of talking of virtues of imaginative life, of Greek models of cultural attainments, of living a free, uninhibited kind of rustic life, but the moment we come across a person having actual traits of this
kind of life, with ideas different from the norms of our civilized society, we don't hesitate to send him into asylum declaring him abnormal and mad. We, in a way, are excited to meet such characters on the pages of books, but the moment we meet their types in our lanes or homes, we immediately label them as heretics and outlaws.

The story throws into relief two major preoccupations with Forster, one that he considers the Greek model of life as the ideal one and, second, that he always endeavours to look at life from a new angle and new perspective, trying to invest life with fresh meanings and values. This remained a life-long preoccupation with him and his imagination, intuition, instinctual spontaneity, even homosexuality, fit perfectly into this conception of Greek model. He shows that any philosophy that cannot actually be lived out in real life is useless. The clever people always keep life and art apart but it makes them hypocrites too. Sir Edwin's remarks about Mildred, "Thank heaven! she was seldom guilty of confusing books with life" (LC, 45) sounds worldly-wise and practical but this prejudice keeps both of them cut off from the truth of life. Only Harold, who is innocent enough to consider power of love and desire for truth the mainstay of his life is able to see straight into the true nature of things and understand the unseen mysteries of life. Mildred fulfils "beyond all dreaming her cravings for the unimagined and
the unseen" (LC, 49) but only momentarily, because she is incapable of taking her imagination and romantic fancies beyond the covers of the books.

The themes and motifs of these stories recur again in Forster's novels and the elementary characters like Eustace, Evelyn, Kuno, Giuseppe and Harold are the sketches upon which Forster later on develops such memorable characters in his novels as Gino, George, Stephen, Leonard, Helen and Alec Scudder. Forster repeatedly constructs these characters after his heart to reach out to his own unconsciously hidden cravings and desires. Before coming to Forster's homosexual stories, which were admittedly written by him 'after his own heart', one more major story of the earlier category "The Rock" deserves a brief analysis. The story contains some vital clues to his later attitudes, especially his attitude to death.

The author, in this story, tries to assess the importance and meaning of life when looked from the angle of death. We cannot grasp anything in life in absolute terms, because nothing is absolute in the universe. Nothing can be assessed or valued in a vacuum. Only by comparing and contrasting objects with one another we can get any idea of their comparative worth. Life too cannot be truly assessed and appreciated unless we see its worth in terms of death. Only when life has a close brush with death do we suddenly become aware of its meaning, or its absurdity, its worth and
The protagonist of the story is rescued from a boat wreck near the coast of Cornwall by the farmers of a nearby locality when he mistakenly sails dangerously near a bedrock in the sea and his boat capsizes. The shock of this incident is so great that his whole life takes a new turn. The one question that haunts him is how much one would give as compensation for one's life? He wants to compensate the villagers because they had saved his life, but how much he would give for his life? According to the prevailing tariff, he could have been clear of this obligation by paying "two pounds five". But is life worth a mere two pounds and five cents? If no, then how much? Some friends suggest a hundred pounds, others advise gifting of a new boat and so on. What should be the practical approach? But "there are no such things as purely practical questions. Every question springs straight out of the infinite and until you acknowledge that you will never answer it....everything transfigured because he was saved" (LC, 92). Now he lives a new lease of life, appreciating everything anew because the close brush with death has provided him with a new insight into the worth of life. Yet the question remains of compensating the villagers for having saved his life. And one day he decides to do this in a unique way. Declaring that he considered all the things of life worth nothing, he says
"...nothing is my reward to the men who saved me...my gift of nothing shall be all that I have in the world" (LC, 93). He sells off his goods, sets aside some money for his wife and gives away the rest to the poor. Penniless he goes to that village and gives himself away to his rescuers, living among them and working for them. His wife understands him and never complains against what he does. The narrator pays his tribute to the lady for her magnanimity. "This conversation with this lady taught me that some of us can meet the reality on this side of the grave" (LC, 93) concludes the narrator.

The story ends with a note of contemplation. The reader is left with a lot of food for thought and is compelled to reflect on the greatest issue that we face in life, the issue of understanding its meaning and worth measured against the inevitability of death. Everyone has to encounter death sooner or later but can the idea of death bring us closer to the meaning of life? Forster's classic observation in *Howards End* flashes through one's mind: "Death destroys a man; the idea of death saves him" (HE, 223). Contrasting death to love and life, he further says in the same passage: "Men of the world may recoil from the charnel-house that they will one day enter, but Love knows better. Death is his foe, but not his peer, and in their agelong struggle the thorns of Love have been strengthened, and his vision cleared, until
there is no one who can stand against him" (HL,223).

Paradoxically, life draws its meaning out of death.

The remaining stories of the collection The Life to Come carry us into the most crucial phase of Forster's life, where he comes face to face with his naked self. The homosexual stories show the self at its most private level. The instincts and passions become nude and bare and the basic animalistic urge is given vent by unrestrained and unbridled flights of fancy.

Thematically "The Life to Come" is a story which demonstrates the importance of bodily love as opposed to the so-called pseudo-spiritual love propagated by Christianity. At the same time, it also deals with the havoc the organized religion plays with the innocent, natural and rustic life of the unwary tribes.

The chief motive of the story is to expose the hypocritical nature of the organized religion. Vithobai, the chief of the pagan Indian tribe, repeatedly refuses to convert himself and his people into Christianity. A young missionary Mr. Paul Pinmay makes a desperate attempt to convert him. He has to stay one night in a hut enclosed by a thick grove of trees in the forest. But he is delightfully surprised to see the unapproachable Vithobai entering the hut in the middle of the night, all nude and clad only in
scarlet flowers. When this bare limbed young tribal chief expresses his wish to hear about this god called 'Love', Mr. Pinmay only murmurs, "Come to Christ" (LC, 95) and tells him to come to the Mercy Seat. Vithobai, who has never heard anything about Christ or mercy, only comes close to the missionary on the couch saying, "This is the first time I have heard such words, I like them" (LC, 95). Mr. Pinmay incensed by the sweetness of the scarlet flowers and the glow of Vithobai's body, imprints a kiss on his forehead and draws him to 'Abraham's bosom'. The bodily love between them is complete as Vithobai extinguishes the lamp and gladly lies there in his bosom. This, for Vithobai, is what he takes or rather mistakes for Love of God or Love of Christ.

Five years after this incident when both are about to marry their respective girls, Vithobai, now christened Barnabas, gives Pinmay a smart dog-cart as a wedding gift and implores him once more to 'Come to Christ' in the hut. The missionary becomes furious and tells him sternly never to mention it again. He imposes a fine of one hundred pounds on him for his sin of backsliding. Vithobai, who never understands what the missionary means by sin and punishment exclaims: "first the grapes of my body are pressed. Then I am silenced. Now I am punished. Night, evening and a day. What remains?" (LC, 105).

Mr. Pinmay is repentant for having indulged in an
immoral 'sin' and for having implanted the wrong notion of Christianity in Vithobai’s unwary mind. "The dark erotic perversion that the chief mistook for Christianity - who had implanted it?" (LC, 106), he asks himself. In a fit of fury he orders the cursed hut to be pulled down. For Vithobai it is symbolic of pulling down of his 'Church of Love'. The two do not meet each other for years.

It is shortly before Vithobai’s death that Pinmay pays his last visit to the ailing tribal chief. The dying man lies on the roof of his house and recognises his old 'convertor' with great difficulty. Pinmay tries to remove from his mind the wrong notion of Christ’s love. "You and I once sinned together, yes, you and I must now repent together, yes, such is God’s law" (LC, 109), he tells him. The reaction of the dying man is typical of a man having an equivocal attitude to the question of good and evil. Like Godbole of A Passage to India, the tribal chief proclaims: "I repent, I do not repent...I forgive you, I do not forgive, both are the same. I am good I am evil. I am pure. I am foul. I am this or that, I am Barnabas, I am Vithobai. What difference does it make now?...it is deeds, deeds that count, O my lost brother" (LC, 109). When the missionary reminds him that they will not err in the life to come, Vithobai gets some comfort. Stabbing Pinmay through the heart by a knife lying near him, he shouts in ecstasy, "Life to come...Life, life, eternal life, wait for me in it" (LC, 111) and dragging himself over the
parapet jumps to his own death. 

"...love was conquered at last and he was again a king, he had sent a messenger before him to announce his arrival in the life to come" (LC, 111).

The story draws its power from the ironical treatment by Forster of the Oriental philosophy which believes in reincarnation of soul. Reverence and nourishment of the simple but basic passions of the physical body are more true to the plane of nature and God. The pagan and innocent soul of Vithoba is purer and more spiritual than the so-called enlightened ideals of the hypocritical missionary.

The next important story of the collection, "Dr. Woolacot", is more complex at the psychological level. Realism and illusion are so skilfully mixed up here that the reader finds it difficult to distinguish between the claims of reality and fantasy. Cleasant, a land-lord, is a chronic invalid and his family doctor Woolacot advises him to confine himself to the boredom of bed. He is advised strictly to keep his mind off the exciting things like music, passion, love and personal intimacy, things that once gave meaning to his life. But one fine morning, he beckons from his window a boy who is collecting mushrooms from the other side of the yard. The youth enters his room and says that he is one of the farmhands. He is quite attractive and youthful and evokes a sensual desire in his heart. Cleasant is transported into the world of fantasy and dreams himself making love with the youth. The boy advises him to dismiss Dr. Woolacot from his
services because, according to him, he is interested only in keeping him an invalid.

When the boy assures him that he would get well soon Cleasant rebutted him, "To be well and to be better are very different. I'm afraid one can't get well from one's self..." (LC, 117). The boy's seductive grace however is irresistible for the weak Cleasant. "He was attractive - fresh as a daisy, strong as a horse" (LC, 117) and finally 'the warmth and sweetness' of his body begins casting nets around Cleasant. He succumbs to the power of the youthful body and the two entwine more and more closely, their lips touching never to part. And as Dr. Woolacot enters there to examine him, Cleasant is found lying dead on the floor.

T.E. Lawrence, on reading the manuscript of this story remarked in his letter to Forster on 27 Oct. 1927 that it was "the most powerful thing I ever read...more charged with the real high explosive than anything I've ever met yet." The remark may be a slight exaggeration of immediate reaction that he felt after going through it, but this story shows the compulsion of the heart that is torn apart by the opposing forces of sanity and desire. The compulsive homosexual Cleasant indulges in the physical union with the boy despite the doctor's warning that it could lead to fatal consequences.

Homosexual themes continued to create a storm in Forster and the tension could only be released when he
brought his feelings on the paper in the form of one story or the other. Evidently, the stories were the expression of his innermost 'self'. Freud says the release of the tension of the subconscious finds its outlet in the form of a work of art. The artist, according to him,

is one who is urged by the instinctive needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honour, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality, and transfers all his interest, and all his libido too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy. 

These stories, serving as a channel for erotic fantasies, provided him with an outlet for the pent up desires of his self. In his non-homo stories and novels, because of social obligations he had to be extra-cautious in not letting the bare instincts and desires raise their 'unpalatable' heads. So great was the riot caused by these currents of instincts and cravings in his 'self' that he had to rationalize and channelize them into a full length novel *Maurice*.

But homosexuality in Forster is not always a passion free from social stigma or inner guilt. A story which has a great significance in highlighting the guilt-ridden homosexuality is "Arthur Snatchfold". Sir Richard Conway, a businessman based in London, visits his friends...
the Donaldsons in the countryside. But having nothing particular to do there he feels bored. He is in search of some adventure to 'add colour' to his stay. The opportunity comes on a Monday morning when he comes across a young milkman. Conway, determined to 'hook him' cleverly engages him into a conversation and by tactful cues persuades him to share homosexual adventures with him. The 'thing over', he hands him a currency note as a parting gift. The young boy reluctantly takes the money and the two leave the park furtively lest anybody should notice them.

A few weeks after the incident, the host Mr. Donaldson meets Conway in a coffee house in London and by chance mentions a case of moral abuse in his locality in which a young milkman was caught red-handed after having committed an immoral love-affair with a visitor. Conway is naturally unnerved to hear this news and tactfully elicits the details of the case. Donaldson gives the detailed account and says that the boy was sent to jail for the crime. Conway is even more shocked to know that despite the severe punishment, the boy did not disclose that the visitor in question, Conway himself, had stayed with the Donaldsons. He heaves a sigh of great relief that he was miraculously saved from shame, but he is filled with a sense of guilt and remorse for the milkman who went to jail for his sake. Though perturbed badly, he consoles himself by asking Donaldson the name of
the milkman. He notes the name 'Arthur Snatchfold' in his diary and wonders how "little things can turn into great ones.... He recalled his clever manoeuvres for a little fun, and good-humoured response, the mischievous face, the obliging body. It had all seemed so trivial" (LC, 144).

Apart from the irony of the subject matter, the treatment of the theme is equally dexterous. The writer brings into relief, in ample details, the working of the mind of Conway so that the story progresses to its climax in the most convincing way. The narrative is absorbing and the psychology of the characters is unfolded in a deft and witty style.

The next story "Obelisk" likewise shows the master story teller at his best. The touch of irony is the essence of the story in which a couple, Ernest and Hilda, is shown to be on an excursion to an "Obelisk and Landslip". They meet two sailors who promise them to show them the obelisk. The company of the four gets dispersed by chance in such a way that one sailor accompanies the husband and the other the wife. By a deft touch in the narrative, the writer shows them to be enjoying this arrangement and returning to the point of their start, each group claiming that they had visited the Obelisk and enjoyed it, wondering why the four of them could not meet there. The wife, Hilda, buys a snap of the Obelisk from a woman shopkeeper so that she at least can describe the
place roughly in case the husband mentions the visit. But to her surprise the shopkeeper tells her that the Obelisk had fallen down during the previous week's floods. Hilda is taken aback on hearing this. In the bus, when the husband examines the postcard Hilda reflects over the incident:

Hilda sank into a seat nearly fainting. Depth beneath depth seemed to open. For if she couldn't have seen the Obelisk he couldn't have seen either, if she dawdled on the way up he must have dawdled too, if she was lying he must be lying too, if she and a sailor - she stopped her thoughts, for they were becoming meaningless. She peeped at her husband, who was on the other side of the coach, studying the postcard. He looked handsomer than usual, and happier, and his lips were parted in a natural smile. (LC, 161-62).

In reality, each of them has had physical adventure with the sailors among the bushes on way to the Obelisk and while Hilda knows the complete truth, Ernest not knowing the facts about the Obelisk still believes that she will never know the truth of his love with the sailor. The story, written in a humorous vein, exposes the hypocritical life of the people in modern society. At the same time, it also depicts how a man bored and disgusted by heterosexual relationship seeks a change and finds a thrilling and refreshing experience in bodily love with another man. This fact may look queer and odd to the ordinary human beings, but a person of homosexual inclination finds it quite a normal and emancipating experience.
Another story "The Other Boat" is a violent presentation of the humiliation and remorse that may result from a homosexual affair. Lionel March is a soldier whose bravery in military operations in Africa wins him a quick promotion. On the ship, a young Indian half-caste manages to get a berth in his cabin. March remembers that he had once played with him as a child long ago on board, a ship which took his family to England from India. The half-caste who was then for the sake of fun called by the name 'Cocoanut' now makes March drink so much champagne that he leaves aside all his inhibitions and enters into a homosexual act with him. But soon after, when he comes into his senses, a painful feeling of guilt and remorse overpowers him. He becomes furious and in a fit of frenzy and rage murders 'Cocoanut'. The feeling of guilt becomes even more accentuated in him after this act, and he jumps himself to death.

The story may seem melodramatic but the motive and psychology of Lionel March have been sufficiently justified. It is not just the sudden recoil that causes the fit of frenzy in him. Some impressions in his unconscious mind of his earlier journey with 'Cocoanut' also play an important role in precipitating the crisis. Long back, on that early journey, his mother had warned him against playing with him and she had as much as put the blame of causing the death of one of her children on 'Cocoanut'. This impression together with the prejudice in his mind created by the 'pukka sahibs' on
the dock infuriates him as he thinks that this native has tried to establish his superiority over him by tempting him into homosexual act through pre-planned manoeuvrings. Unconsciously, he also avenges himself on the part of his race as he considers the natives their enemy. The story has much of the maturity and complexity that we find in *A Passage to India*. John Colmer rightly describes it as a very fine story pointing towards the fiction Forster would have written "had the private censor, his reticence and the public censor permitted."

Underlining the common denominator between "The Other Boat" and "The Life to Come" Jeffery Meyers in his perceptive study *Homosexuality and Literature: 1890-1930* writes:

The two most ambitious stories, "The Life to Come" and "The Other Boat" are separated by forty years, have the same plot and repeat the climatic defenestration - suicide... Both posthumous stories concern the relations between an Englishman and his aromatic and sensual Indian lover, and both end in disaster. In the former the naked Indian stabs the Englishman to death and jumps off the roof, and in the latter the Englishman, 'with the seeds of love in him' stabs the naked Indian and jumps off the ship. In both stories stabbing is a symbolic destruction of the sexual instinct.

At times Forster seems to admit that sex, even when it is homo, carries with it the seeds of its own destruction and contrary to his assertion that homosexuality can
substitute marriage and even lead to greater fulfilment of this basic human urge, many of these stories end with the tragic death of the guilt ridden characters. Even the love affair between Hall and Scudder in Maurice would have ended in this tragic disillusion but for the author's forced 'happy-ever-after' ending to the novel.

Forster's frank admission that these stories 'were written not to express myself but to excite myself' should convince us to treat the homosexual stories as the result of his erotic fantasies. While Meyers is right in dismissing the exaggerated praise of them by Oliver Stallybrass (that "The Life to Come" and "The Other Boat", show Forster at the height of his powers with a tragic grandeur unequalled in his stories, and unsurpassed even in A Passage to India his own contention that "these puerile, pathetic, sentimental and thoroughly unimaginative fantasies, which lack Forster's characteristic subtlety and wit, actually excited the elderly novelist and occupied his creative mind for forty years," seems to be equally misplaced. The truth lies midway between these extreme judgements of Stallybrass and Meyers.

To be fair to the author, it must be said that while the posthumous stories have not added much to the stature of Forster as a writer, they do help us in locating and defining the source of all what he wrote as fiction. The fountain-head of this creation lies in the unconscious self and Forster's
own description of the stories as 'fantasies' aptly defines the nature of all his short stories, including the homosexual ones. They also betray his major preoccupations i.e. the passions, urges and desires which gave his novels the peculiar Forsterian touch of pagan Hellenism and an elusive dualism in the form of a struggle between the forces representing the mundane world and the incomprehensible universe. The novels, beginning with the experiences of his journey to Italy and Greece and culminating in the massive crescendo of A Passage To India are a class apart, drawing upon the fantasies of the short stories but never betraying their puerile and unpublishable elements in the process.

In a revealing entry in his diary, Forster frankly confesses that homosexual leanings in him 'clogged' him as an artist. After having burnt the scripts of a few of the homosexual stories he writes:

Not a moral repentance, but the belief that they clogged me artistically. They were written not to express myself but to excite myself, and when first...I began them I had a feeling that I was doing something positively dangerous to my career as a novelist. I am not ashamed of them...It is just that they were a wrong channel for my pen.25

Evidently he was inhibited and consequently severely limited as an artist by his homosexual inclinations. But he was straightforward in dealing with this deep rooted complex in his self. He did feel guilt-ridden and ashamed of the
'abnormality' which people in general tend to term as 'stigma'. But keeping his conscience above such a narrow view, he diligently negotiated and reconciled with this 'truth' of his self. The homosexual short stories no doubt seemed to him 'a wrong channel' for a while, but nevertheless they were necessary for channelising the repressed and pent up basic physiological drives haunting his self. Forster seems to be in full agreement with Bertrand Russell's contention that inconvenient truth, if not accepted, becomes even more inconvenient when one tries to conceal it.

That these stories were born of a fierce struggle between the private and the public aspects of the author's self is shown by a few more revealing observations in his diary. An entry of 16th July 1964, reads:

Suddenly remembered a short story I tore up a couple of years ago like a fool, called 'Adventure Week' where 8 bored boys have to go into camp and are tricked by the only clever one into a delicious disaster. It was so gay and warm....It was a craftsman's dissatisfaction that destroyed it.

The internal strife in him puts his private self in direct confrontation with the public self. Obviously he was not convinced about the moral justification of these stories. When we remember that the stories 'clogged' him as an artist and that the stories were 'positively dangerous' to his career, we cannot overlook the truth that his homosexual
leanings did have a crippling effect on his artistic potentials. When he remorsefully confesses that these stories were the 'wrong channels' for his pen, and that the stories were written 'not to express myself but to excite myself' the obvious inference is that his homosexuality more or less pulled him down towards the lower nature.

Had he directed the same energy towards sublimating his artistic creativity, he would certainly have been a greater novelist. Mahatma Gandhi, who was also bedevilled by this kind of excessive sensuality, directed this energy for a positive and constructive goal to fortify his will power.

Sudhir Kakar, a well known psycho-analyst explains this process in Gandhi:

Beset by conflict, he inwardly yearned for a union with the mother world as he struggled with the passions... We know that the sensuality derived from the deeply felt oneness with the maternal world, a sensuality that challenges death, energised Gandhi's person, impelled his transcendent endeavours and advanced him on the road to a freedom of spirit from which India as well as the world have profited.

Obviously Gandhi tried to transform his sexual potentials into psychic and spiritual power. Appreciating the significance of this sublime transformation and channelization of his sensuality, Kakar underlines the ferocity of struggle that accompanied it. A sympathetic reader, he writes, "cannot fail to be moved by the dimensions
of Gandhi's personal struggle - heroic in its proportion, startling in its intensity, interminable in its duration.28

Though Forster like Gandhi suffers from mother-fixation and undergoes a similarly intense and interminable struggle within his self, he does not seem to be inclined to transform or channelise his sexual potentials into a sublimating art form. His homosexual short stories serve only as an outlet to drain out the excessive measures of this energy. Even his non-homosexual stories and novels seem to betray a kind of debilitating impact of this internal struggle, though the transference of the homo themes into heterosexual ones has been more skilfully and subtly carried out in them.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


5. Ibid., pp. 205-06.

6. Ibid., p. 207.


9. Ibid., p. 42.

10. Ibid., p. 43.


12. Ibid., pp. 256-57.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


18 Oliver Stallybrass, "Introduction", Life to Come and Other Stories, (Penguin, 1985), p. 15

19 See Twentieth Century Criticism, p. 426.


23 Ibid., p. 14.

24 Meyers, op. cit. 108.

25 Stallybrass, op. cit., p. 15.

26 Ibid.


28 Ibid., p. 8.