During the summer of 1924, Lawrence completed the writing of *St. Mawr*, described as a short novel. There is no new thematic development in this short novel except a new interest in Mexican life and characters. The novel, however, has a certain distinction and beauty. First of all, there is effective presentation, which is the result of perfect crystallisation of the author's material on hand. Secondly, there is a new crisp and assured style, which goes well with the intended, and achieved, dramatic irony. Dr. F.R. Leavis is correct in claiming that *St. Mawr* is a technical triumph comparable to that of *The Waste Land*. Because of this technical triumph, there is a certain newness about the quality of the work, although the themes have been explored in the previous novels. The perfect crystallisation of matter, a thorough integration of the material, a sense of irony that reveals the achieved poise of the artist, are not external, mechanical trimming and chiselling. They are born of a new "relatedness" in the author's own self. Consolidation of territory after exploration and conquest is but natural; and that, in its turn, should be only a spring-board to further quest and action.

Graham Hough finds fault with *St. Mawr* on many counts.¹ He does not find it consistently realistic in the presentation

of the details. He does not find it an authentic piece of work; he thinks that there is a falsity in the motive and the conception which fatally affects the whole. I think the critic errs here, as he fails to notice the transition in the artist from the phase of exploration to that of consolidation. The change involves a change in the artist's attitude to his material. The seeker is internally becoming, in tone, a prophet; and an overlong stay at the prophet's phase is pernicious to the artist. It would be inimical to the very integrity of the artist.

This point, however, may be taken up again while considering *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.  

*St. Mawr* does not warrant this consideration at length.

*St. Mawr* is most readable — an attribute which many of Lawrence's novels scarcely deserve. It is remarkable for its swift narration, and adroit economy in the description of characters. The novelette is knit around two terrestrially separated but symbolically related nodes. In the first hundred pages, *St. Mawr* looms large, whereas in the last twenty-five pages it is the majestic, lovely, snowbound Mexican mountain that impresses the readers. Between these two colossuses are dotted the devitalised society of Paris, the diabolical and at the same time ludicrous middle-aged Mrs. Witt, and her whimsical proposal to her Welsh groom.
Lou Witt, an American girl, meets Rico, an Austrian young man in Paris; after a short period of love and fun and good time, they get married. Lou's mother, Mrs. Witt, does not like her son-in-law. There is a constant battle of wills between them. Rico is an artist, with a modest inherited income. He likes Lou's "quaint aplomb and her genuine knowingness, and her aloofness." Rico and Lou play for some time like two butterflies on the same flower. Gradually, however, they find that the charm is only momentary, and they take their love as if love is an after-dinner tablet. The relation between them is a strange vibration of nerves rather than of blood, a curious tension of wills rather than spontaneous passion. This relation is purely destructive.

Rico (like Hermione of The Rainbow) has the fear of some deficiency of himself, despite his handsome appearance. He is clearly a symbol of futility; the animal in him has gone queer and wrong.

Lou does not clearly know at the beginning what she needs. She is like any other sweet girl of high society, moving from one fashionable capital to another. But when her mother appears on the scene with a seven-year-young stallion, St. Mawr, Lou finds herself strangely fascinated by him. St. Mawr's "alive and alert intensity, and his unyieldingness" make "her want to cry". She finds

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something noble and majestic in him. He is a demon who must in some way be worshipped. St. Mawr symbolises wild strength and spirit as against the mechanical will and strength of men.

While the battle of wills between Mrs. Witt and Eico is waging, the arrival of St. Mawr is important and decisive. St. Mawr provides a convenient background against which the different characters are exhibited in their true colours. The unexciting constant war of wills gets a new tempo as Rico tries unsuccessfully to subdue St. Mawr. Once St. Mawr behaves nastily in the park, and on another occasion St. Mawr, seeing a snake in the grass, throws Rico off the saddle and kicks him. Rico wants to get the stallion shot, to which Lou is not agreeable. Mrs. Witt, of course, finds St. Mawr a convenient instrument to torture Rico. So far, the mother-and-daughter relationship has been only a "newspaper fact;" Mrs. Witt, in spite of her "love," has no liking really for Lou. Now, they join hands to fight Rico and his friend Miss Manby, and to save St. Mawr. Rico has arranged to sell the stallion, and finally to get it gelded. In the meanwhile, however, Mrs. Witt despatches St. Mawr to America. Mother and daughter after a few days of wandering reach Mexico. Lou is attracted by the lonely pine trees, the wilderness of the place, whereas Mrs. Witt is repelled by "the spirit of the ranch."

Lou is not a nun running away from men. She does not want to degrade sex. She is like a priestess who would wait for her Osiris, rather than go after cheap sex. She says that most men, specially "clover men are mostly such unpleasant animals." "A pure animal man would be as lovely as a deer or a leopard, burning like a flame fed straight from underneath." She tells her mother: "We have no minds once we are tame, mother. Men are all women, knitting and crocheting words together." She is spell-bound by St. Max, as well as Mexico, because both of them have an "impersonal wild spirit." She tells her mother at the close of the novel:

"There is something else even that loves me and wants me. I can't tell you what it is. It's a spirit. And it is here on this ranch. It's here, in this landscape. It is something more real to me than men are, and it soothes me, and it holds me up. I don't know what it is definitely. It's something wild, that will hurt me sometimes and will wear me down sometimes. I know it. It's something big, bigger than religion. It is something to do with wild America.... And it does not want to save me either. It needs me. It craves for me. And to it, my sex is deep and sacred, deeper than I am, with a deep nature aware deep down of my sex. It saves me from cheapness, mother."7

She loathes Phoenix, the Mexican groom, for he has only one way of interpreting sex. She detects in him a certain meanness which is proverbially associated with rats. As a matter of fact, she has the vision of the evil at two different points: when she sees the "pale gold belly of the

stallion upturned, the hoofs working wildly, the wickey curved hams of the horse and then the evil straining of that arched, fishlike neck, with the dilated eyes of the head. Lou becomes "aware of the evil, evil, evil rolling in great waves over earth." She thinks that evil is not mere negation of the good. Good "reversed" is purely evil.

In the same mood, she reviews Rico and his world. "They believe in nothing, care about nothing but keep the surface easy, and have a good time.... No scenes, no spoiling the game. Stick to the rules of the game. Never, by any chance, injure your fellowmen openly. But always injure him secretly. Make a fool of him, and undermine his nature. Break him by undermining him, if you can. It is good sport." She sees the mysterious potency of the evil in individuals, in society, in the press.

Again, when she sees the majestic, absolute beauty of the ranch and mountains, she has in one corner of her mind "an awareness of the evil," of some mysterious malevolence fighting against the will of man. The pack rats with their bushy tails and big ears, come down out of the hills, and jump and bounce about, symbols of curious debasing malevolence that is in the spirit of the place. Similarly, the goats, the ants, the disease attacking the chickens, the lightning striking the horses, contain the evil principle.

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The vision of the evil is effectively evoked. Similarly, her love for the wild spirit of the ranch and the mountain, — "bigger than men, bigger than religion, and to which her sex is deep and sacred, deeper than she is"— has an air emotional authenticity. This fascination and pull is all the more powerful as there is in Lou a reflex action against the cheap sex and the degeneration of Rico's world.

Along with this momentous movement runs the tale of Mrs. Witt and her love for her Welsh groom, Lewis, providing the comic relief as well as thematic amplitude. Mrs. Witt takes it into her head to trim Lewis's hair; she does it much to the dislike of Lewis. Lewis does not want that his hair, or any part of the body, should be touched by a person who does not sufficiently respect his body. Mrs. Witt in a comical-yet-serious fashion proposes to Lewis. Of course, Lewis rejects the proposal and later even offers his resignation as groom. Mrs. Witt is undaunted, in the true Don Quixote way, by any of these events, and she retains her domineering, malevolent spirit till the end. She dislikes the ranch, its spirit, but enquires about the price of the ranch. On being told by Lou that it was only twelve hundred dollars for her Chivas, Mrs. Witt speaks the last sentence of the novelette: "Then I call it cheap considering all there is to it; even the name."
There are a few delightful Dickensian situations and bits of dialogue here. In the portrayal of Mrs. Witt, and situations like Mrs. Witt trimming her groom's hair with American efficiency, and her proposal to him, there is an element of exaggeration and caricature. Some time after Mrs. Witt's proposal to Lewis, Mrs. Witt and Lou are inquiring of him why he is not really a "marrying type of man," when the Honourable Laure Ridley arrives. Mr. Lewis is asked to stay on. In the midst of the conversation Laura asks Lewis:

"Are you an artist?"
"No, I am a groom." "O, I see!" she looked him up and down. "Lewis is St. Mawr's master," said Lou.

The realism of the entire novelette is never dissociated from this fact of exaggeration and ruthless satire and even amusing caricature at times. The amusing caricature is very rare in Lawrence's novels, though not so in his short stories.

Apart from its economy and form, St. Mawr is significant in that it is a precursor of two stories, namely, The Princess and The Man Who Died. On their way to the ranch, Lou is afraid at one point that Phoenix may

misinterpret her behaviour; this misinterpretation is a basic fact for the plot of *The Princess*. Similarly, Lou being an Isis type, waiting for her orisis, anticipates the priestess of *The Man Who Died*. *St. Meur* anticipates the general my style and parable-like structure as well as dream-like reality of *The Man Who Died*, which was composed three years after *St. Meur*.