CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In attempting to make a thematic study of D.H. Lawrence's short stories, I have touched in my various chapters nearly the entire range of stories, written under the most diverse circumstances. These stories were conceived by Lawrence over a period of twenty-three years in England, the Bavarian Alps, Germany, Italy, Ceylon, Australia, Mexico and New Mexico.

D.H. Lawrence's progress in this genre follows a movement away from the conventional nineteenth century tales, towards realism. From realism, his work moved towards visionary stories and then eventually towards fabulation. Many critics have often employed metaphors related to dance while looking at Lawrence's fiction in general. In medieval and Renaissance painting, specially in Italy, a common motif is the dance of life and death. Figures dressed in satin or homespun dresses dance their way in a procession towards life, death, heaven, hell, spring and winter. Though these figures move forward in linear progression, characters often turn in towards each other and so form a series of circles. These motifs tend to capture a sense of life as both a series of intense moments as well as general movements through time. These paintings seem to be certainly useful for grasping the character of Lawrence's short fiction, especially if we let the metaphor suggest a
dance of life and death.

In his own brief and brilliant season, Lawrence speedily recapitulated the development of the nineteenth century short story and then altered several of its premises to serve his own talent. The early realistic stories which he wrote between 1909 and 1912 are important because they taught Lawrence the craft of writing a short story. But these stories are significant for other reasons besides their relation to Lawrence’s development. To the English readers, the streets, the markets and the cottages of the workers of their own lands were not as familiar as the tombs of the Pharoahs or the Greek Gods and Goddesses. In these early stories, Lawrence holds up a mirror to the love, hatred, injustices and miracles of the miners of the English Midlands. In England, these stories were not only fundamental to Lawrence’s own development but they also represented a break with the past.

After re-reading the short stories of D.H. Lawrence, we can realize that he should be considered not only as a great novelist but also as a great short story writer. His short stories have an enormous influence on not only the English short stories of his time but also on the minds of his present-day readers.

In Chapter 1, I have shown the various influences on D.H. Lawrence which formulated not only his life and ideas but also had a great influence on nearly all his writings. The
The strongest influence was probably that of his mother and this is reflected in many of his novels and particularly in Sons and Lovers. This influence seems to find its way into many of his short stories too. The influence of Jessie Chambers and her family is also strongly reflected in his fiction. The other influences on D. H. Lawrence were that of his father and Frieda von Richthofen Weekley.

In this chapter reference has also been made to Lawrence's different beliefs and his religion of the blood. Lawrence was criticized by nearly all critics especially by T. S. Eliot for his supposedly perverse thinking. However, F. R. Leavis and a host of other critics have also strongly defended him. Most of this criticism is however directed at his novels. Beachcroft, Bates, Stewart and Salgado like Leavis, regard Lawrence as one of the greatest short story writers of the twentieth century. In between writing novels there was a steady output of short stories. They are linked to the novels as well as to each other. In his output, Lawrence moved from realistic short stories, to visionary, to fables and satires. He even changed many conventions of the short story to suit his own purpose.

In Chapter II, the evolution of the short story as an art form is sought to be traced. Lawrence is essentially indebted to the great practitioners of this distinctive art form. But his astonishing originality confers to his stories, uniqueness of form and content. The content of a short story by Lawrence assumes superb harmony with the
technique of narration. We cannot conceive of a more effective type of form for a story like "Tickets Please." Some selected examples are presented in the second chapter in order to capture the intrinsic flavour of Lawrence stories.

In Chapter III, some important aspects of Lawrence's art of story telling have been discussed. Effort has been made to find out whether the stories can form groups or divisions. The development of the genre in Lawrence's hands from traditional stories to realistic ones has been shown. From realistic stories, Lawrence moved towards visionary stories. Towards the end of his life he moved to the fabulistic mode.

The stories in each group are not only related to one another but they also have many links with whatever novel Lawrence was writing at that time. These stories are full of illuminating parallels and cross-references to the novels. Graham Hough's contention that there is no link among the tales does not seem to be tenable.

Lawrence often wrote a tale and then revised it at a later date. The various important influences are clearly seen in the groups of stories as well as in the individual stories. The influence of Frieda von Richthofen Weekley is clearly seen in "Love Among the Haystacks" in that the governess seems to be modelled after her. There are also autobiographical references in the stories. "Odour of
Chrysanthemums" has a special autobiographical significance. The importance of "The Prussian Officer" lies in the fact that it introduced the visionary mode. In most of the American tales like "The Woman Who Rode Away", Lawrence wanted to show the movement of a white woman towards an ancient culture. In these tales, the different men presented see the world in different ways. The women are asked to readily submit to their mates. While some do so, there are others who do not do so.

In Chapter IV, the themes in D.H. Lawrence's short stories with reference to some most important stories have been discussed. In this chapter, I have attempted an analysis of some of Lawrence's immortal stories. "Odour of Chrysanthemums" is regarded as a pioneer among Lawrence's realistic stories. "The Daughters of the Vicar" has been praised for its commentary upon the effect of class upon individual and their relationships. The effect of the war is clearly seen in the story "Tickets Please." Another favourite theme of Lawrence, the theme of female aggression and its inter-related and diverse aspects finds its rendering in the story "Tickets Please." The young social world is interestingly reflected in "The Horse Dealer's Daughter." The stories which D. H. Lawrence wrote during September, 1922 in America introduces a white woman who gives up her own society and is fascinated by the American landscape. The three long short stories of 1921 - "The Fox", "The Captain's Doll" and "The Ladybird" are immortal and
these stories have been discussed at length here. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" was for many years one of Lawrence's best known works and the well-known comments have been brought to focus. The most specific traits of the story "The Man Who Loved Islands" are recorded in this chapter.

The four early tales "A Prelude", "Legend", "The White Stocking" and "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" are traditional in style and conception. In reading these tales, one can sense that Lawrence was learning from Stevenson and Kipling who were the masters of the traditional tale. Eventually he returned to three of these tales and revised them. Two of these tales emerge as powerful creations. Lawrence got rid of the superfluous material in rewriting "The White Stocking" and "The Vicar's Garden" or "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" and also dramatized the subject with great economy and verve.

D. H. Lawrence wrote the next group of stories after bidding farewell to Eastwood and setting himself up at Croydon. At Croydon, he wrote many stories of which "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and "Two Marriages" or "Daughters of the Vicar" are the most notable. "Odour of Chrysanthemums" was the first result of Lawrence's conversion to the young realistic school. These Croydon stories written between 1909 and 1911 are realistic in subject. Most of them are set in the English Midlands and suburbs of London and they are important for their autobiographical significance. They clearly reveal for the first time Lawrence's talents as a
writer of short fiction. Unlike the long fiction written alongside the Croydon stories, we notice that there is rarely a Paul or a Cyril. Instead Lawrence uses a wide spectrum of human perspectives. There are farmers, miners and the poor and in fact they are the very voices Ford had wanted to hear in the English Review. There are also self-conscious young men and their mothers, fathers and girlfriends, the guilt ridden, the sexually frank and the class embittered. In the Croydon stories, characters who serve as foils to the early Paul or Cyril come forth. These characters state their views of life and show us insights to Lawrence. We can see the young Lawrence responding to the call of the English Review if we keep the 1909-1911 material in mind and ignore the 1914 revisions. At this time a major part of Lawrence's appeal was his ability to create stories about a group of English people with great sensitivity and a lack of sentimentality. If we look at "Odour of Chrysanthemums" we realize that Lawrence grasped the techniques of realism all at once. But he did not exploit them consistently. It was "The Old Adam" with its ease and confidence that carried Lawrence forward to the strike tales written in early 1912. These tales show Lawrence to be a master in the art of realistic short fiction. However even in the Croydon works, Lawrence's interest in modes of story-telling that challenge the assumptions of realism is evident.

In writing the Croydon stories, the distance Lawrence
put between himself and Eastwood helped him to write candidly about that country and its people for the first time. A similar situation occurs in 1912. While sitting in Eastwood poised for flight, Lawrence wrote the short pieces commonly called the strike tales, about his own country. Once he leaves London and begins to travel a new situation develops that results in a temporary continuation of his work in realistic short fiction. Lawrence held on to familiar themes, characters and settings in three of the four stories he wrote during his first summer with Frieda as in "Love Among the Haystacks", "Delilah and Bircumshaw" and "The Christening." Although at times he does make forays into new lands, it is brief and tentative. Only in "Once" does he switch his cast to a continental setting and couple. It remains realistic in mode, while exploring issues crucial to the fiction of 1913, issues that would move Lawrence from the art of realistic short fiction to something new. In 1912, Lawrence thus wrote a masterly series of sketches and short stories valuable in themselves and in their capacity to keep indicating the way to and beyond Sons and Lovers which was revised for the last time in the fall of 1912.

Lawrence's initial enthusiasm for the realistic school had carried him through four important years. If we look back to the Eastwood stories of 1907-1908 or to The White Peacock, it becomes clear that these realistic short stories offered Lawrence a means to learn his craft and to
curb his romantic tendencies. These stories also enabled Lawrence to participate in a movement that English readers and critics considered innovative and fresh. The fact that Lawrence’s work in realism coincided with his interest and his need to write autobiographical fiction meant that the writing he did during these four years, also gave him the opportunity to sharpen his perceptions about himself, his family and his community. Not only were these stories important to Lawrence’s development as a writer, but they also influenced English short fiction in general. James and Conrad had forced English readers and critics to take short fiction seriously, to see the genre as capable of high and difficult art. Lawrence entered the field at a time when he could take advantage of this claim and extend it and it is this extension that is important. Lawrence’s short stories showed other English writers, the way they could participate in the movement Chekov had led in Russia and on the continent. It was Lawrence who together with Katherine Mansfield and James Joyce set the high standard for this exciting movement in England. But Lawrence stands out from his peers in his movement beyond realism. After writing a series of successes in this new realistic mode, Lawrence pushed himself beyond it.

The marriage of Lawrence and Frieda constitute a remarkable combination of contrasting backgrounds, personalities, classes and nationalities. When we read the entire range of Lawrence’s works, we find that there is no
way to measure the influence each had on the other. Frieda took Lawrence out of England in many ways. She seems to have brought a lively continental perspective to Lawrence. She also rescued his capacity for joy, courage and wonder which one feels he could have lost apart from her.

The tales Lawrence wrote between 1913 and 1925 capture the terror and eventual death of an individual who goes away from his community for an intense relationship. The three new tales of June, 1913 - "New Eve and Old Adam", "The Prussian Officer" and "Vin Ordinaire" focus on dilemma. In none of these stories can Lawrence imagine the unknown as a place where self will find nurturance and joy. This is however in contrast to the letters and poems he wrote during this period. At the same time, he cannot imagine turning away from the unknown at an immense cost in any of these tales. The most important point is that during the summer of 1913, Lawrence moved beyond the long fiction he was writing - The Insurrection of Miss Houghton and the initial draft of The Sisters and found a series of ways to approach the issues that lay at the centre of his heart and mind. In particular, the visionary mode he discovered in "The Prussian Officer" would serve him for years to come. It helped him express his sense of the war and the ways individuals could combat it. Later it also allowed him to reverse the understanding of "Vin Ordinaire" arguing that intimate sexual relationships bind the soul of men. What the men must seek is masculine community in order to release
their true identity.

In the visionary tales of individual resurrection community exists, but no longer in the form of neighbours and co-workers. It is in the distant abstract form of western culture that community primarily exists. Friends and lovers such as those we come across in "The Thimble", "The Horse Dealer’s Daughter" or "The Blind Man" are by implication redeeming western culture as they redeem themselves. There is a current and an undercurrent in the stories of the war years. The main current argues that courageous, warm hearted sexual relationships are the answer to public insanity, cowardice and mechanized destruction. This is the view taken by both novels of the period - The Rainbow and Women in Love as well as the great visionary stories of these years, "The Horse Dealer’s Daughter" and "The Blind Man." The descent of an individual into darkness, dissolution and death followed by a painful resembling of self or culture is a recurring double pattern in many of Lawrence’s short stories.

However, under this main current, there is a different stream too. In "England, My England" and "The Mortal Coil" Lawrence hints at what is to come later - that woman must relax dissolve and remain so, while man must move forward and take up the challenge of civilization. The complexities of human experience are avoided by this undercurrent.

In the leadership tales Lawrence imagines a cluster of
men - soldiers and Indians, a count, an astronomer, a ghost and a collier all labouring to bring forth a new mode of living. All assert that men must lead the way. The women in turn vary from poor, dry, English spinster to highly placed ladies, from a German artist to a fat mother from California. All these ladies are asked to surrender to the larger visions and capacities of their mates.

In Lawrence's late fiction written after he returned to Europe in 1925, he generally avoids the issue of worship. We do not think of "The Man Who Died", "The Man Who Loved Islands", "The Rocking-Horse Winner" or "The Lovely Lady" as stories that focus on the need to worship. In these stories, the dominant and most interesting point is his movement towards fable and satire. The balance between realism and exemplum which Lawrence maintained in his visionary stories now shifts towards the latter. This shift not only inspired Lawrence to write some of his best known and provocative stories but also helped him in his journey out of the leadership fiction.

Lawrence's last stories are an exciting new field of expression for his talents especially in brief satires and complex fables. This range of fables encompass tales which demand the willingness of the readers to accept ghosts. In theme, these tales range from proclamations on the need for absolute patriarchy to satires on the patriarch.

There is a variety of response from Lawrence to the
question of what can it mean to come back from the dead. After his collapse in Mexico in 1925, Lawrence himself had returned to life and so he seems keenly aware of the temptation to isolate and purify the soul, to stand above physical passion and decay of human life. In the stories we have seen the temptation to isolate self is usually presented in exaggerated terms and then ridiculed. The images of both temptation and ridicule are a wilful woman, a hobbyhorse, a series of islands, a writer, a pair of moccasins, a couple of blue birds and an ancient crone etc.

In "The Rocking-Horse Winner" Lawrence shows an interest which is linked with death. Another temptation faced by the resurrected individual is the desire to hoard life. The lovely lady is a figure of avarice, who carefully sips the energy of the sun and stores it for her immortality. The women of "Mother and Daughter" and "The Blue Moccasins" want to keep death at bay, but in less direct ways.

One of the dominant themes in Lawrence’s late work was his interest in the nature of human resurrection and his works also show the dynamic process with which Lawrence explored that interest. Like so many of his earlier stories, these late stories also deal with the issue of how one comes back from the dead. In Lawrence, death and destruction are necessary corollaries to life and creation. In his stories, as in his life, there is a recurring rhythm of death and rebirth. From first to last, one reads it in his letters,
stories, poems, essays and novels.

Lawrence continued to practise old modes in his work, although his short fictions show a movement out of traditional nineteenth century convention into realism, visionary fiction and fabulation. Again there seems to be a dialogue between the stories in his general movement from realism to fable. We can see Lawrence return imaginatively again and again to a work he has completed, review its possibilities and then write a new tale that explores an alternative stance or develop a new technique. These stories more than the novels exist as vital clusters, related to each other and to their contemporary novels.

Lawrence’s relation to modern short fiction in general, can be explained only if we consider the field as he found it in England at the turn of the century. Lawrence responded to Ford’s call in the English Review, by giving voice to the particularities of daily living that realism demanded. In Lawrence, Joyce and Mansfield there are more levels of meaning rich with allusions to history and myth beneath the focus on the worldly and mundane. But unlike them, Lawrence quickly began to expose those buried levels of meanings in his short stories, turning away from realism and taking the English short story to something new in glory.

Thus D.H. Lawrence picked up the recognized continental form of the realistic short story. At the same time he imbued these short stories with English content. This entire
process of creation, attractively shows Lawrence's mental
depth and sharpness. He also carved out a new kind of story
in the visionary tale by blending realism and exemplum. He
also pointed the way out of realism towards fabulation. If
we look specifically at his fiction, the value of his short
stories can be assessed in different terms. Unlike the early
drafts of the novels, his short stories exist in the world
as a finished product. These stories stand as discreet
finished works of art, that inspire his continued
exploration of different themes and techniques. Each of the
stories from 1907 to 1928 serve as a goad for going forward,
if we judge them from the point of inter-relationship
between the stories. Each of these tales also has the
potential to inspire Lawrence towards new projects.