

Louis Armand, PhD  
OPPONENT'S REPORT:

re "A WOOD PATH TO THE VITAL SELF. THE POWER OF NATURE IN  
D.H. LAWRENCE'S *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*" by Kateřina Klosová  
(BA dissertation, 2006, supervised by PhDr Zdeněk Beran)

This dissertation focuses upon the figure of the "wood" as metonym—or what Ms Klosová terms "topos"—of vitality or sensual nature in D.H. Lawrence's most notorious novel. In this respect her title is rather suggestive, while the treatment accorded it is comparably chaste, considering the "wood path's" widely attested symbolic character in Lawrence and elsewhere. The dissertation's critical apparatus is based, according to the author, upon Daleski's *The Forked Frame*—however the introduction itself lacks both a clear thesis statement and rationale, and it is never certain *how* Daleski's text is supposed to provide the basis for the overall analytical structure of the dissertation. Having said this, two points should immediately be made: 1. as an apparent consequence of a lack of a clear thesis statement, the dissertation's overall structures suffers from lack of clarity and logical organisation, with no clear line of development; 2. it is insufficient, in any case, for a dissertation to be dependent upon a single work of secondary criticism. Daleski's views, when cited, are also done so uncritically, with little indication that they could not merely be substituted wholesale for the views of the author. The insufficiency with regard to research is only compounded by poor referencing. Incredibly, Rousseau is cited solely from an incompletely identified website.

Considering the canonicity of *Lady Chatterley* and the centrality of Ms Klosová's chosen topic within Lawrence criticism, it would have benefited her to have taken account at least partly of some of the views of writers like F.R. Leavis, Aldous Huxley, Henry Miller, Richard Aldington, John Middleton Murray, Frank Kermode, S.L. Goldberg or Mark Spilka. A clear, focused introductory chapter engaging a broader critical heritage, mapping the dissertation's theoretical concerns, would have improved Ms Klosová's text considerably. I would recommend serious reconsideration of her approach if she intends to attempt literary studies at a graduate level.

Otherwise, the use that Ms Klosová makes of the sources that she does cite is more or less satisfactory for a BA-level dissertation (to her credit she engages with a number of Lawrence texts in addition to *Lady Chatterley*, including the letters); although too often *critical* use of sources and *critical* engagement with Lawrence's text gives way to mere description and thematisation. On page 31 there is a mention of "binary structures", but we are given no critical context: further elaboration would have been useful in establishing an analytic rationale, even at this late point in the dissertation. Again, the brief discussion of types and stereotypes at page 34, and the "relation of two" at page 44ff, need to be tied together into a coherent theoretical apparatus. In this respect almost any structuralist analysis might have been useful. Unfortunately, the dissertation doesn't get beyond repeating the usual Lawrencian epithets about

nature, sensuality and fertility. It might have been interesting if Ms Klosová had taken a critical stance with regard to the binary schematics of mind-body, industry-nature, but especially, e.g., gender. A perfect opportunity would have been with regard to the treatment of the "wood" as a piece of property, linking in to the treatment of woman/nature as property, within a social and juridical system that privileged the claims of maleness to ownership and inheritance. (Moreover, it would have been interesting to see how Ms Klosová saw Lawrence's own projection of maleness working with regard to this general schema.) It might prove useful, in case the author wishes to further develop her interest in this area, to consider the work of Julia Kristeva, Elaine Showalter, Gilbert & Gubar, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, or Michel Foucault.

Some other points for consideration include the notion of "awakening," which Ms Klosová identifies, at one point, with the Joycean epiphanic moment (19). It is arguable that what is ironic in Joyce, however, is largely poignancy in Lawrence. It would certainly "toughen" Ms Klosová's intellectual position somewhat if she, too, were to assume a somewhat more ironic stance with regard to her subject, in particular the often evangelical tone of Lawrence in preaching the wonderment of female sexual liberation at the hands of the man-of-the-earth. One tends to overlook, among all the indictments of intellectualism, effeminacy and industrialism in books such as *Lady Chatterley* that Lawrence was himself a man-of-the-pen and of the printing press.

Overall, the recommended grade for this BA dissertation is a 2 (B-).



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