

Kateřina Klosová, **A Wood Path to the Vital Self: The Power of Nature in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*** (B.A. thesis)

Report

Kateřina Klosová wrote a thesis focusing on a single book – D. H. Lawrence's last novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Though her scope includes a few other texts by the same author, six shorter pieces of fiction and some relevant essays, it is more than obvious that her aim was to analyse the work which makes a final point in the development of Lawrence's ideas of the vital self. This perspective is indicated several times in the text and stated more or less explicitly on the first page of the Introduction, where the novel is characterised as the work in which these ideas "come to their climax and take the clearest shape."

As far as the method is concerned, Kateřina's resolution was to apply H. M. Daleski's idea of structural oppositions to her discussion of several aspects she had identified as central to her topic. It is indeed arguable to what extent she is dependent on this critical authority, but more relevant in this respect seems to be the question whether it provided her with the ability to see the novel in its interpretive complexity. In my opinion Kateřina proves throughout the thesis that she is able to read the text attentively; her comments on some parts of the novel are indeed very relevant and sensitive, especially in the chapter dealing with the pastoral character of the novel. This chapter especially shows how she is open to the ambiguities of the text when she rejects a simple pastoral model and emphasises how problematic a solution Connie's and Mellors' retreat into the wood can be. (In this Kateřina also seems to overcome a rather descriptive tendency of the earlier chapters.)

Most of the identified topics provide a wide range for theoretical discussion (the topos of the wood, initiation rite, natural imagery etc.). In this, however, Kateřina is as brief as possible, focusing rather on the way in which Lawrence himself treats these aspects (comparing other texts by Lawrence with the novel). To support her arguments, she uses not only English critical studies, but also some recent works by Czech scholars (Grmelová, Hilský, Peprník). Yet her acceptance of some ideas sometimes seems to go too far, lacking sufficient reflection. What I have in mind is for instance Kenneth Innes' view of Mellors as the unfallen Adam: is it the Adam and Eve myth that we should see through the initiation rite in the novel? How does this correspond with Mellors' role of the priest who initiates Connie to the mystery of love? This part of Mellors is not mentioned in the passage – does Kateřina accept the idea?

There are indeed other questions I would like to ask and suggest as topics for discussion:

- 1 What is Lawrence's definition of vitalism (i.e. how should we understand his concept of the vital self)?
- 2 Does Kateřina see any difference between the earlier short stories and the later ones in the treatment of the motifs and structural elements she discusses? Is it relevant that "The Sun", a late story, presents the regenerating sexual energy as a cosmic principle, as something that reaches beyond the human sphere?
- 3 Could Kateřina explain how exactly she means to apply the Heraclitan philosophy to the situation of the novel, especially with regard to her note on p. 35?

At the end of this report I would like to stress that Kateřina's thesis far exceeds the minimum limit of BA theses; it is in fact twice as long. Though it is possible to raise some other objections (some of her comments on the short stories especially seem to be too brief and more or less descriptive), I believe that it met the requirements for BA theses, still rather vaguely defined as they are. Therefore I recommend the thesis for defense and suggest the grade **velmi dobře**.



PhDr Zdeněk Beran