

## Thesis Abstract

The present thesis sets out to follow three different problems in the metaphysics of Virginia Woolf's late novel *The Waves* and contrast them with the theories of three thinkers – Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Jacques Derrida. First chapter discusses Woolf's approach to subjectivity. It is shown that Deleuze's and Guattari's method establishing subjectivity as a by-product of a machinic assemblage is particularly fruitful in reading the characters in the first four chapters where their bodies and their "subjectivities" form in diverse ways. D&G comment on the waves of the lyrical passages as an abstract machine of which the character-assemblages are actualizations. They do not, however, comment on the territorialising function of sunlight which seems to be equally important and therefore needs to be analysed. This function corresponds with the ever growing oedipalisation of the characters, which finds its summit in the fifth chapter of the novel and transforms a deterritorialized rhizome into a reterritorialized (or oedipalised) signifying system.

The second chapter discusses how the functioning of the territorial machine of the sun reduces the rhizome into a centralised system whose centre can be understood through the prism of Derrida's theory of structure as a play of supplementation. It posits Percival as this (non)centre of the signifying structure. The centre needs to be recognized as a supplementary sign that limits the infinite play of the structure. Percival's status is confirmed in three different ways – he is a myth that cannot be the *arché*, he is a supplementary sign, and the transcendental illusion of his presence must be affirmed. Percival's death induces different reactions in the three characters that narrate it. The reactions of Rhoda, Bernard and Neville are discussed along with Louis non-reaction.

In Chapter III, the signs and the style of *The Waves* are analysed. A classification of signs devised by Deleuze is applied to the novel showing that all three basic types – worldly signs, signs of love, and sensuous signs can be found. In order to be able to explicate the fourth type, the signs of art, an apprenticeship has to be taken. Bernard undergoes this apprenticeship throughout the novel with more and less success but finishes it only in the last chapter. The signs of art are thought by Woolf perhaps in a slightly more radical way than Deleuze. Bernard's final step, when the sun sets and the territorial machine stops working, is to take the line of flight towards deterritorialisation. He loses his self which enables him to see the world in its essence as absolute difference. This, however, only works because Bernard's functioning as a character assemblage represents the production of the literary machine at the same time. He is therefore a part of the essence, the superior Viewpoint that provides different perspectives on objects. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the style of the novel and its relation to rhythm.