

## **Report on the BA Thesis by Vít Opravil “All this little affair with ‘being’ is over:” Metaphysical Crisis in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves***

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The thesis is an ambitious attempt to interpret Woolf’s work by means of two post-structuralist theories of dynamic, open structures - Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) notions of “rhizome” and “machine” and Derrida’s notions of “play” and “supplement”. Both approaches are justified by contextual relationships: Deleuze and Guattari discuss *The Waves* briefly in *A Thousand Plateaus* and Derrida’s approach responds to one of the most important thematic and formal (narrative) aspects of the book, the demise of the centre which should organize the relations between characters and the value structure of Woolf’s book.

The major problem of the thesis consists in the difficulties implied in the combination of both methodologies. Nonetheless, the very attempt to combine them is, despite its partial failure, a courageous and innovative gesture pointing out their limitations. Although Opravil admits the incongruity of both approaches, he has not taken sufficient time to reflect deeper and more critically on the shortcomings and incompatibilities of Derrida’s and Deleuze’s concepts of sign, meaning and representation. To my mind, a thorough analysis of the differences between these aspects could significantly influence the understanding of dynamic structures in the work of both thinkers. The use of Deleuze’s book on *Proust and Signs* is fully justified in this context, irrespective of the question of existence or non-existence of individual resemblances between *The Waves* and *In Search of Lost Time*, since the use of signs and their assemblages (called “literary machine” by Deleuze) appears to be their common feature. My problem with Opravil’s approach consists in the insufficient differentiation of Deleuze’s approach in *Proust and Signs* and Deleuze’s and Guattari’s general discussion of machines in *Anti-Oedipus*. The “machine” in *Proust and Signs* signifies the plurality of times and worlds, which can be expressed only in the modern artwork, while in *Anti-Oedipus*, machines are devices organizing flows of energy among individual bodies. It can be argued that both concepts of “machines” are relevant for the interpretation of *The Waves*, yet the affinities between Woolf’s and Proust’s notions of signification may be more productive for interpretation than, say, the notions of “body without organs” or “deterritorialization.”

In spite of these shortcomings, Opravil’s thesis is a remarkable attempt at an interpretation of philosophical aspects of Woolf’s book, which significantly transcends theoretical and methodological standards of not only BA but also MA theses defended at our department, and, by the complexity of its approach, surpasses a number of PhD dissertations. I recommend it to the defence and propose to grade it “excellent” (výborně).

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supervisor