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**A Corporeal Experience of *The Waves*: Dance and Literature,
an Interdisciplinary Approach to Virginia Woolf**

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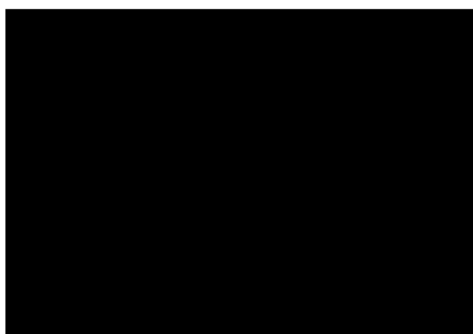


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Este trabajo ha sido un crecimiento precioso. He pasado de leer una novela que no acababa de entender a poder analizarla y relacionarla con la forma de arte que me mueve a mí cada día.

Gràcies, gràcies i mil vegades gràcies a Dolors per proposar-me un tema tan personal i enriquidor. Gràcies a tu he viscut a la Woolf d'una manera meravellosa. Gràcies per acompanyar-me i per confiar en mi.

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ABSTRACT

As a modernist, Virginia Woolf explored the limits of language in her literary work. *The Waves* (1931) is her most experimental novel. The most visible narrative device is that it is entirely formed by the thoughts of its six characters, neither action nor a narrator are present. Woolf uses the image of the swell because it represents the cyclical passage of time. She goes a step further and translates the symbolism of the waves into actual movement. This paper examines the linguistic devices that the author of the novel used to create movement in the display of thoughts. The thesis is that Virginia Woolf creates movement with her writing; and not any kind of movement: dance movement.

Keywords: Movement, *The Waves*, Dance, Virginia Woolf

RESUM

Com a escriptora modernista, Virginia Woolf va explorar els límits del llenguatge a la seva obra. *Les Ones* (1931) és la més experimental de les novel·les de l'autora. El recurs estilístic més evident d'aquest treball és el fet que està íntegrament formada per pensaments: no hi ha acció ni narrador o narradora a la novel·la. Woolf fa servir les onades del mar perquè representen el cicle de la vida. A més a més, l'autora va més enllà: l'onatge no és només un símbol, sinó que imita el seu moviment amb les paraules. Aquest TFG analitza els recursos lingüístics de l'escriptora en el moment d'exposar el pensament dels personatges. La tesi és que Virginia Woolf crea moviment amb la seva manera d'expressar-se; i no qualsevol mena de moviment: Woolf crea dansa.

Paraules clau: Moviment, *Les Ones*, Dansa, Virginia Woolf

I move, I dance; I never cease to move and dance.

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artists are extremely sensitive people. We live differently because we sense the world differently. I am a dancer and I perceive the world through my body. The paintings I like pierce my chest, and the music I enjoy enters every pore in my skin. As I read *The Waves*, I could not help but move my head, hold my breath or squeeze the book. Why does this novel cause so many physical reactions in me? Is it because I move all the time or does the author have some kind of dance notions that she is applying to her writing?

When those questions emerge, one starts to pay more attention to the text. *The Waves* is an experimental novel written by Virginia Woolf in 1931. Its peculiarity resides in the fact that the narration is entirely formed by soliloquies: during the whole novel, the reader travels the minds and thoughts of its six characters. With the narration style, she mimics the movement of the waves in various ways. Woolf, as a modernist, experimented with new forms of writing. She explored the boundaries of language and gave extreme importance to the words she weaved together. She is the kind of writer that makes you stop and stare at a sentence of a page for five minutes because she has found the perfect way to combine words so that the reader understands and feels the content. Reading Virginia Woolf is an experience that awakens many different areas of the intellect. My thesis is that Woolf used a kind of language in *The Waves* that produces movement.

Therefore, this research studies the expression of dynamics with words. It delves into how Woolf is expressing to mimic the swell. The methodology is entirely qualitative. *The Waves* is the subject of study of the investigation, and the aim is to identify and organise movement language in Woolf's novel.

In a way, Woolf has codified sea movement into word movement. She has used the image of the sea to create a text that moves with it. Structurally, each part of the novel is introduced by a short description of the sea throughout one specific time of the day. After each introduction, the soliloquies of its six characters imitate the movement of the sea with the human mind: each soliloquy introduces the reader in the present context of the character and, after that, digressions of different thoughts that come back to the present moment create a swinging movement. That is how Woolf imitates the waves of the sea.

The initial idea of the research was to use the academic sources that developed on the presence of movement in the novel, but that relation has not been studied much. It was an unexpected discovery since the movement of the sea is the backbone of the literary work. On

the contrary, other fields are richer. For example, some characters have been studied from the area of gender and sexuality; and, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, the wave has been depicted as a metaphor for the constant construction and destruction of identity.

Although movement has not been examined, the academic world has clearly noticed that there is a regular rhythmic pattern in the novel. Thereafter, there has been established a connexion between *The Waves* and music. That link is very interesting because it mainly focuses on the structure of the novel as a constant regular repetition; and the movement of the swell is indeed a constant regular repetition. The difficulty of this part of the investigation is the fact that it is an isolated field: only a scholar has related Woolf's writing and movement. Her name is Susan Jones, and she does an interdisciplinary reading of Woolf that connects her literary work and dance.

The second part of the investigation centres on the theory of movement. It intends to disclose the rules of choreographies. Specially, there is a highlight on dance adaptations from literary works with the objective of discovering what they see in words: which aspects of the text leads them to movement. Therefore, the framework for the research is the analysis that choreographers do to transfer a text into body movement. There is a significant focus on *Woolf Works*, a dance piece by Wayne McGregor that used Woolf's writings as the basis for its creation.

Finally, all that information has been used to do a literary analysis of the novel. Woolf used a language that dizzies the reader and that may be classified into different kinds of movements that mimic the waves. Structurally, there is a rhythmic pattern in the interaction of interludes and soliloquies. Another device that gives dynamics to the reading is the usage of the tunnelling technique. Motion words and allusions to the senses are used in Woolf's descriptions. There is also a repetition of words and, primarily, there is a constant allusion to the body and movement in the expression of feelings.

All this work culminates in a dance piece that is attached to the annex. The coda of the project is a personal interpretation of the novel. I have translated the literary text into my body to do a corporeal reading of *The Waves*.

2. RHYTHM AND DYNAMICS IN *THE WAVES*

The Waves is a novel written by Virginia Woolf and published in 1931 that alternates two literary texts: interludes in italics where the author depicts the sea at different times of one day and soliloquies where the six characters of the novel express their thoughts. There is a seventh character that does not have a voice, but he is present in the lives of the rest of them: Percival.

Rhoda, Bernard, Jinny, Louis, Neville, Susan and Percival are childhood friends. They went together to school, the boys attended the same university, and every once in a while, they all meet at a restaurant in Hampton Court when they are adults. The narration is entirely formed of thoughts. When they are kids there is an emphasis on their imaginative mind. Once they are young adults, the focus is on the discovery of their own identity in relation to the world. In the midpoint of the novel, Percival – the characters whose thoughts are not depicted – dies. This event is a turning point for the rest of the friends. It makes them aware of the fragility of life, and, above all, aware that the passage of time is cyclical, and it keeps repeating regular patterns that are never identical.

The thesis is that there is a dance-like movement in the narrative devices of the novel. To prove it, the first section of the research focuses on the different analysis that have been carried out about *The Waves* in the academic field. Firstly, it will give some brushstrokes of the most studied aspects of the literary work. Afterwards, it will chiefly focus on the articles that delve into rhythm and dynamics because the aim of this investigation is that area.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a growing interest in the “subjective mind of the individual” in English literature (Gamallo, 1992, p. 158). Writers changed the focus from the action to the inner thoughts of their characters, which is shown by the experimentation they carried with language: they tried new ways of expressing. These new ways of writing intend to immerse the reader in the human mind. Mimicking that level of consciousness, narration achieves a totally different tone: emotions are extremely important and chronological order loses its importance. The narrative technique that Woolf uses is called “tunnelling process”, and she discovered it while writing *Mrs. Dollaway* in 1923: “It took me a year’s groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need for it” (Woolf, 1980, p. 272). Her narrative style reproduces the dissertations of the human mind. This new technique gives a profound layer to the construction of the characters, as the reader gets to know their past and its repercussions, and their deepest

intimacies. Furthermore, it is a way of “diminishing the authorial presence” of the narrator (Monte, 2000, p. 592). The first and longest section of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is devoted to this narrative technique; and the climax of the “tunnelling process” is *The Waves*, where the whole narration is a depiction of the inner thoughts of the characters.

Precisely because of this focus on subjectivity, most research about *The Waves* deals with different aspects of psychoanalysis: the symbolism of *The Waves* as a constant reconstruction of identity, and the representation of the individual as a collective self. The presence of the swell has been analysed as a representation of the impulse of life and death. Woolf wanted the novel to be “something mystic, spiritual; the thing that exists when we aren’t there” (Woolf, 1979, p. 114). It portrays a constant destruction and reconstruction: “Each wave, each drop, embodies a stage in the individual’s life; each stage is precipitated by a loss of self-preceding the formation of another, reconfigured self” (Monson, 2004). This reconfiguration is imperative because the world is constantly changing and we need to evolve with it; as Jeanette Winterson states in her introduction to the novel: “*The Waves* is a book of constant re-orientation – to a changing world, to a changing self. Without this re-orientation, where the compass must be checked and new directions given, it is not possible to survive” (Winterson, 2004, p. ix).

Woolf had a systemic vision of the human being: somehow, she envisioned existence as a mechanism that works with the collaboration of ourselves and the people that surround our life. Gillian Beer claims that “the work muses (...) on the massing of experience, shared and isolated. Are our friends there when we are not? Are they our continuity? Do they ensure our being?” (2004, p. xi). She claims that the people we interact with are part of our being. They live in our consciousness because our social experiences determine our own personality.

Other authors envision the presence of the six characters differently. Harvena Richter states that there are multiple emotional selves in every one of us and that Virginia Woolf shows the multiplicity of the self in *The Waves* by “personifying its separate aspects as individual characters” (1970, p. 117). On her turn, Kathleen Wall (2022) states that the novel is the biography of a generation. She sees in the six characters of *The Waves* the representation of different personalities and claims that the novel is “a biography composed of the inner lives of her contemporaries” (Wall, 2022).

Woolf has been widely read from a queer perspective, and *The Waves* is not an exception to the rule. Patricia Cramer and Annette Oxindine make lesbian readings of the novel. Patricia

Cramer bases her analysis on the fact that “Virginia Woolf’s life and work reflect that continual negotiation between truth and secrecy characteristic of gay life” (1997, p. 117). She explains that this world of secrecy was extrapolated to her work and that her novels are multilayered bodies that need to be decoded as people from the collective had to build different layers in their public life. She adds that lesbian theme in Woolf’s work is deliberately well hidden because “Woolf’s aim was to write as clearly as she could about love between women while avoiding detection” (1997, p.123). Annette Oxindine explains that Rhoda is lesbian and that “her sexuality is crucial to understanding her silence and ultimately her suicide” (1997, p. 204). She analysed the drafts of the novel and got to the conclusion that Rhoda’s erotism is lesbian. She states that her suicide is a response to patriarchal abuse and lesbian frustrated desire. One argument that she uses to support her position is that “Rhoda describes her vision of another world to which she escapes to render life more bearable” (1997, p. 207). That other world may be interpreted as the world of secrecy some people had to build.

There is another path that puts the analysis of the characters aside and focuses on the structure and language of the novel. This line of investigation is relevant to the project because it delves into Woolf’s linguistic devices. First of all, Susan Jones has paid close attention to the relationship between dance and Woolf’s literature. Modernists rejected nineteenth-century realist aesthetics and searched for new means of writing literature: “literary modernists explored the breakdown of conventional aesthetic forms arising from new ways of thinking about time, space, and human identity” (Jones, 2005, p. 169). Virginia Woolf was a regular spectator in London’s dance scene. In “Virginia Woolf and the Dance”, Susan Jones makes a collection of the shows she attended, and her impressions based on letters and diary entries. Jones states that dance left a print on Woolf’s art in this modernist exploration. The more general aspect that she visualizes is the use of a more suggestive language: “Woolf envisages a new form for the novel, as for the dance, a form that is suggestive rather than explicit” (Jones, 2005, p. 187); an idea supported by Marilyn Charles: “she created a work that is lyrical and evocative” (2004, p. 81). Even if dance is based on real life situations and feelings, it is never a literal form of expression because it does not use words: its instrument is a body that moves. That is why Susan Jones declares that dance is suggestive, it is an expressive and abstract form of art. Different emotions are instilled from performer to spectator, never literal vocabulary. There is in Virginia Woolf’s form of writing, indeed, this usage of a less concrete language, a language that shows different emotions rather than giving a clear argument.

Jones goes a step further and she connects the structure of the novel with the dance world. Modernists explored the limits of language and Jones claims that Woolf was inspired by dance movement when she shaped the novel. She states that there is a choreography buried underneath *The Waves*: “She exploits dance in a variety of discrete ways (...) or, perhaps most radically, to imply the choreographic function of a text, one that outlines the processes and patterning of a narrative of life” (2005, p. 171); that is to say that dance, a codified and structured form of art, is used as an inspiration when patterning her novels, specifically talking about *The Waves*.

Woolf's representation of a cyclical notion of history through the typographical distinction of Roman and italicized passages in *The Waves* (1931) moves closer to an imagining of text as choreography, to be experienced by the reader as one "body" moving in relation to another. (Jones, 2005, p. 180)

She sees the relationship between the interludes and the soliloquies as a perfect duet between two bodies. One of the bodies is the flow of consciousness of the six characters of the novel, there is then a text that dances with it just like two different bodies interact in a choreography.

The pattern that Jones refers to is a regular repetition that mimics the bumping of the swell. While she relates that beating to dance compositions, many authors relate it with music. The entry of the 20th of December of 1920 in Woolf's diary establishes a link between a musical piece by Beethoven and *The Waves*:

It occurred to me last night while listening to a Beethoven quartet that I would merge all the interjected passages into Bernard's final speech, & end with the words O solitude: thus making him absorb all those scenes, & having no further break. This is also to show that the theme effort, effort, dominates: not the waves: & personality: & defiance: but I am not sure of the effect artistically; because the proportions may need the intervention of the waves finally so as to make a conclusion. (Woolf, 1979, p. 339)

There is an explicit reference to the musical piece, thus many authors have investigated the relationship between the novel and Beethoven's Quartet. This parallelism between music and the novel may be used in my research because there is a strong union between movement and music. Nearly always, choreographies are built upon a musical piece. A musical piece which has a marked rhythm. It is based on this rhythmic pattern that dance movement is organized; therefore, music and movement go hand in glove.

Adriana Varga and Elicia Clements have deepened on the influence of Beethoven's Quartet on *The Waves*. Varga (2014, p. 89) explains that Opus 131 is sewed together by a common thread. Both the novel and the Quartet are "structured upon a unifying motif that runs through all of its interludes and episodes." The Quartet starts with a four-note motto that is replicated and transformed throughout the whole composition, to culminate with the repetition of the original four-note motto from the beginning. Different instruments play the same melody in the Quartet; as in *The Waves* the same issues are discussed from the point of view of the different characters. Themes are replicated and articulated to culminate in Bernard's final speech. Clements agrees on the reformulation and interaction of the same issue with diverse voices:

They have individual soliloquies, but they also recall each other's phrases, comment on one another's social behaviours, and celebrate or lament the effect of each other's company. Similarly, the structural patterns of the first and last movements in the Quartet speak to each other. The Adagio non troppo previews almost all of the musical ideas that will follow in the Allegro, as the Overtura that begins the Grosse Fuge also foretells of the subsequent Fuga. (2005, p. 166)

Additionally, Elicia Clements (2005, p. 166) states that Beethoven's Quartet was used as a structural model for *The Waves*. She explains that in Opus 130 there is a six-movement string quartet where they perform unique pieces that are interconnected with the whole. The same happens with the interrelated soliloquies of the six characters: Neville, Susan, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda and Bernard. Furthermore, she adds that there is a silent but significant seventh movement which may be aligned to Percival, whose voice is never heard but is decisively relevant in the lives of the six characters. On her turn, Varga explains that the musical piece has a rising progression. She sees the same progression in the novel, as she interprets the final speech as the overall accent:

As the themes Woolf states, varies, and develops throughout this work come together defiantly in Bernard's final speech, the overall accentuation of the novel is, as with Beethoven's motto, iambic, from light to heavy, from weak to strong. (Varga, 2014, p. 89)

On the whole, the parallelism between Beethoven's Quartet and *The Waves* resides in the reformulation of the four-note motto that is represented by the interaction of the same issue in

six different voices; in the fact that there are six movements, six characters and a seventh component which is silent; and in the culmination *in crescendo* of both pieces.

Another aspect that has been studied from the musical point of view of the novel is polyphony, how all six voices are heard throughout the novel. Levin (1983, p. 166) mentions that the main difficulty in trying to mimic a musical piece when writing *The Waves* is that “voices in the novel cannot be heard simultaneously”. Woolf herself asks the question: “Can they be read consecutively? I know nothing about that” (1979, p. 312). Whereas in a musical piece you can listen to the sound of the different instruments ensembled, that is something that cannot be achieved when Woolf writes the soliloquies of her six characters: they need to stop in order to give up their turn to the next character. What she does is to present the same issues and images from the perspective of its different characters through the tunnelling process. Woolf gives prominence to the diversity of points of view rather than focusing on the action. Polyphony, then cannot be achieved in the musical sense of hearing various instruments simultaneously, but anyhow Woolf achieves a musicality in the interaction of the six voices.

Varga delves into how polyphony is present in *The Waves*: “Polyphony entails a texture of themes and motifs that are developed and intertwined as they are stated by various characters whose voices combine in a “continuous stream” to form an organically unified work” (Varga, 2014, p. 89). She expands as well on the fact that the characters do not have individually “definable ideological positions” (Varga, 2014, p. 89). The musical conversation is the cross of different voices around the same themes. An aspect noted also by Marilyn Charles, who claims that Woolf was concerned about the form of the novel because she wanted to “integrate the disparate voices into a whole in which the disparate voices could still sound their own notes.” (Charles, 2004, pp. 80-81) The existence of that unity in diversity matches the research that has been done from the field of psychoanalysis: once more, the six characters of the novel are studied as a whole.

Although there is a clear relationship between Beethoven’s Quartet and *The Waves*, there are other authors that claim that she is not adapting Beethoven’s piece to literature: she is merely using it as a source for inspiration. As Woolf herself expressed in her diary, she was very concerned about the rhythm of the novel: “the thing is to keep them running homogeneously in & out, in the rhythm of the waves” (Woolf, 1979, p. 312). She focused on the sea, its rhythm and the movement; and, in this search, music served as a tool due to its clear connection to rhythm. Gerald Levin published a widely known article in 1983 called “The

Musical Style of *The Waves*” delves into the connection between music and the novel: “the purpose of musical style in *The Waves* is to maintain this sense of ongoing experience through a structure that seems never to end” (p. 170). In the end, music served as a structural tool for the pattern of the novel, and music is structured upon a rhythm; therefore, the part Woolf extrapolated from music is rhythm.

Woolf wants to write upon a pulsation, to keep the flow of consciousness of the characters “in the rhythm of the waves” (Woolf, 1979, p. 312). Her work is very sensitive to auditory stimulus. She states that we are surrounded by a rhythmic harmony and that “in forests and solitary places an attentive ear can detect something very like a vast pulsation” (Woolf, 1905). This idea is also developed by Havelock Ellis, who claims that there is a general rhythm that marks life (1983, p. 478). Many things pulse to a *tempo*: each person’s heartbeat, the tick of a clock and the pounding of the waves on the seashore. Everything that moves around can be understood as dancing because, in the end, dancing is simply moving to a beat:

The significance of dancing, in the wide sense... lies in the appeal of a general rhythm, that general rhythm which marks life.... We have but to stand on the seashore and watch the waves that beat at our feet, to observe that... the waves are really dancing the measure of a tune. (Ellis, 1983, p. 478)

The Waves shows the cycle of life through its six characters. The novel travels with them from childhood to maturity and death (in the case of Percival and Rhoda). The intercalated passages follow the course of a day. A day that finishes, the same way that life culminates at some point. The novel imitates the rhythm of the waves to express this continuous passing of time. As a modernist, Woolf goes a step beyond and uses a form in the novel that instils perfectly that feeling of infinite rhythm.

“The rhythm is the main thing in writing” (Woolf, 2004, p. 50). Is Bernard a resonance of Woolf’s ideas? Virginia Woolf looked for the outmost with language, and in *The Waves*, she decided to write a novel where rhythm is more important than the plot. Extremely original, since every novel seems to surround a plot. She decided to knit the whole story upon a structure. Given the importance Woolf gave to dance and music, her choice is not surprising. Therefore, Virginia Woolf is aware of a constant rhythm in life, a pulsation that can only be heard by some, a cyclical course of life and a regular passing of time. Dance and music follow a clear rhythmical structure and serve as inspiration for the author, who chooses to mimic the movement of the waves.

Eric Warner and Marilyn Charles have analysed the rhythmical structure of *The Waves*. They have different approaches. Warner (1987) states that the novel follows the systole-diastole movement of the waves using dualities such as narrative and plot, personality and impersonality, process and meaning, life and art, individual and the group or speaker and interlude. He explains that the novel is filled with these dualities and that they are exposed “not so much a dialectic as a constant pattern of alternation and overlap” (1987, p. 106). Alternation and overlap clearly characteristic in the breaking of the waves.

Marilyn Charles (2004) establishes the structure from a more general point of view. She claims that the movement of the waves resides in the fact that the novel is segmented in interludes and soliloquies, and they are intercalated: “We are pounded by the waves created by the segmenting enforced by the intervals within the book, as we encounter the various personages and then the waves and then the voices once again.” (2004, p. 79) She states that there is a rhythmic power in the background of the novel that emerges in the form of interludes. Consequently, the movement of the waves for Charles is a constant pounding on the background that appears regularly in italics. That is the structure that mimics the waves.

According to Marilyn Charles, more waves surround the novel. There are structural waves in the interaction of the two literary texts of *The Waves*; and she also claims that there are waves in Woolf’s creative process. The author revised and rewrote the content “in successive waves of inspiration and refinement” (2004, p. 80). She talks about another interesting aspect: “there is also (...) the urgency to leave something of value behind and to make sense of that which is left behind by others: their residue that resides within us” (2004, p. 87). This idea relates to the cyclical aspect of the novel that is materialised by the waves and their continual movement.

In conclusion, Woolf wrote the novel with rhythm as a starting point. Throughout her working process she found interesting the beat of the waves because it has a potential meaning in the novel: the cyclical passage of time and life. My research fits in the small area that relates the beat of the waves and movement. It will accompany the solitary investigations of Susan Jones. She claims that “one area of Woolf’s work that has been largely neglected is the author’s use of dance and the dancer as an imaginative figure through which to represent certain conceptual issues in her fictions” (2005, p. 169). Although this academic field has not been developed much, artists have sensed movement in Woolf’s writing because there exist some dance adaptations that will be studied in the next section.

3. THE BASIS OF MOVEMENT

The theoretical framework which will help with the analysis of the novel and the creation of a choreography will start with a general approach to dance movement. The study will follow the evolution of dance. How has people danced throughout the last centuries? Which kind of movements have been used and with which intention? This approach will help to understand how a choreography is created nowadays. Next, this section of the research project will embark on a journey to dance adaptations from literature, focusing on *Woolf Works*. *Woolf Works* is a contemporary ballet¹ choreographed by Wayne McGregor and premiered in 2015 in the Royal Opera House that uses Virginia Woolf's life and three of her novels - *Ms Dalloway*, *Orlando* and *The Waves* - as a source of inspiration.

Classical ballet was originated in the French court in the seventeenth century. Patty Argyrides states that the classical and romantic ballets that are performed nowadays date from the nineteenth century and obey the rules of the "narrative ballet" (Argyrides, 2023, p. 26). The narrative ballet or *ballet d'action* follows a fixed structure: it is divided into acts, and it has a linear and conventional plot. Since its purpose is for the audience to understand the plot, the narrative ballet uses a lot of pantomime. It is a very literal form of dance: it may be seen as the retelling of a tale without words. Narrative ballet aims to transmit the dramaturgical text with the body, that is why it is substantially gestural.

The intentions and forms of dance pieces changed course during the wobbly twentieth century. Throughout the first decades, there was a tendency towards rejecting the classical ballet technique and merging dance and theatre. That is how modern dance emerged, a discipline that focuses on "the expression of psychological meanings, musicality, rhythmic organization, phrasing, contrast, and dramatic unity" (Briginshaw, 1987, p. 77). Although modern dance rejected classical ballet technique, this new discipline was considerably codified as well. Modern dance movement fights ballet's stiffness but it is just as strict and structured as classical ballet. In the decade of the sixties, post-moderns (Lucinda Childs, Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham) emerged with a brand-new way of moving the body. They were "more concerned with the dance medium itself: the body and how it moves rather than any potential it had for expressing meaning" (Briginshaw, 1987, p. 77). Therefore, dance creations from then on have had many diverse focuses. Instead of focusing on instilling specific stories

¹ The word "ballet" may be used to refer to a dance piece or to the discipline. In this case it refers to a dance piece. When it depicts the discipline, it will be shown as "ballet technique".

or feelings, it focuses on investigating about a specific item and leaving space for abstract and personal interpretation of the spectator.

What kind of choreographies occupy the dance scene in the present day? What is the creative process of a ballet? Classical ballet and modern dance have remained as frozen fixed repertoire. Thanks to different means of preserving, especially video material, classical ballet and modern dance pieces are replicated. What concerns present dance pieces is encompassed in a very young and malleable discipline: contemporary dance. Larry Lavender claims that contemporary choreography develops from improvisation, which is an act of “generating or testing the potential use of an image, an idea, a procedure” (Lavender, 2018, p. 108). There is no codified universal technique for contemporary dance. Instead, it uses the language and technique of modern dance, and improvisation. It is a process of creating and reconfiguring material with a given intention such as exploring how the body moves under the effect of different emotions, searching for a specific image or achieving a particular social/political outcome (Lavender, 2018, p. 108).

Dance creations are processes with very few rules. Dance pieces tend to have a plot and literary texts can be the starting point for a choreography. How may a text be translated into a choreography? Maybe it is interesting to have an insight into adaptation in general first. Linda Hutcheon explains that adaptations “actualize or concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate; they make analogies; they critique or show their respect, and so on” (Hutcheon, 1947, p. 3). Ergo an adaptation of a literary work is not a translation word by word into a different form of art, it is a reinterpretation that highlights different aspects of the text because there has been a change in the means of communicating. An adaptation uses the text as a source of inspiration and then blossoms in its own field.

Elizabeth Klett published a research on dance adaptations called *Choreographing Shakespeare* in 2019. She claims that the literary text is used as a starting point for the dance piece but that all textual reference is lost in performance because dance has different methods for being perceived that does not need words: the kinaesthetic response. The spectator perceives dance through an awareness of the bodies that are moving in space and an awareness of their own bodies as they watch the performance. It is a connection established in the present moment, a connection that “privileges the visual, and gives it prominence over the textual” (Klett, 2019, p. 6). Klett states that dance performance should be appreciated in a “bodily sense, allowing the movement to take over and supplant any concerns about larger meanings, particularly

textual meanings” (Klett, 2019, p. 4). The literary text and the dance piece may have the same intention, but they have different mechanisms; that is why a dance adaptation from literature loses the original words.

Another scholar, Katherine Profeta, maintains that language is, in fact, present in dance performances, and she explores how. Profeta released a book called *Dramaturgy in Motion* in 2015. In the first chapter of this book, she examines what happens when a dramaturg uses a text as the main support for a movement-based performance. Interestingly, she makes a distinction between two kinds of language when referring to dance: literal and figurative language. Literal language is used to refer to the different parts of the body of the dancer, but when it comes to describing movement, evocative terms are used: “other utterances, those that share ideas about what the moving bodies are or are not achieving, are or are not evoking, proceed through copious simile and metaphor” (Profeta, 2015, pp. 26-27). The language that is used in dance world is not used for naming; it is more abstract. Dance is wider than concrete and mathematic forms, therefore, it is necessary to use a language that does not label.

When trying to describe dance, abstract words need to be used. Profeta adds that, furthermore, you need to let their meaning go beyond:

This is not the same as saying that words in dance performance should be abstract, referring only to their own sound value. Rather, I’m speaking of allowing a spirit of play into how words mean what they mean, and thinking of that play as dance. (Profeta, 2015, p. 46)

What does she mean when she urges to play with words? She claims that dance and language intertwine and communicate in a different level: “artists find ways to make words dance, or motion speak, and play one mode against the other so that meaning is rarely carried discretely in word or motion but in another sort of dance, the one to be found in their interaction” (Profeta, 2015, p. 28). Movement has the power of engaging with the resonance left behind by words and give word-less explanations. On its turn, language can dance, it can be malleable in how it signifies.

Later, she talks about the “fear of the reductive, labelling power of language” (Profeta, 2015, p. 45). She questions if the job of the dramaturg reduces the range of meaning of dancing. In the end, the dramaturg has to write the *libretto* of the ballet, but there should be no impediment to express freely if they let the words be flexible and broad. She states that the act of writing itself experimented an exploration of the limits of words in the twentieth century.

Fiction writing “has embraced the limits of linguistic meaning into its field of play, with techniques including the unreliable narrator. The realization that language has the playful power to redirect and misdirect is freeing” (Profeta, 2015, p. 45). This usage of new techniques that explore what is beyond the linguistic limits is an essential feature in Virginia Woolf’s literature. Specially in *The Waves*, she employs that very kind of evocative language that Profeta links with the field of dance. In consequence, *The Waves* is a novel that exists nearby dance, which is clear in the different dance adaptations that have been made.

The rhythmic pattern of *The Waves* and the presence of figurative language link Woolf’s novel with dance, a quality seen by the choreographers Noé Soulier and Wayne McGregor. McGregor created *Woolf Works* in 2015 for The Royal Ballet and Soulier premiered *The Waves* in 2018 in Berlin. Both choreographers used *The Waves – Woolf Works* amongst other novels - as primary sources for their creations, but their approaches differ greatly. Whereas McGregor did an interdisciplinary work which aims to recreate the emotions and writing style of Virginia Woolf, Soulier made a study on gestures and memory with his choreography:

Complex experiences can be associated with bodily movements and physical attitudes. The gestures on which we are working are always incomplete, they point to something beyond themselves, and I have the feeling that this incompleteness can allow them to recall these complex experiences associated with movements. (...) A sudden change of direction, a shift in the gaze of the performer, the effort to divert the momentum from a previous moment or to maintain one’s balance can be used as supports to project complex physical and psychological memories. (*Cndc / Noé Soulier*, n.d.)

It is not shocking to have such different adaptations of the novel since *The Waves* is not an A-to-Z story, but a modernist and highly experimental work. Soulier’s piece is a small production about which there is not much academic material; but, on the other hand, there is a lot of content about *Woolf Works*, which is an award-winning piece acclaimed internationally. The Royal Ballet is one of the most important dance companies in the world and the choreography of Wayne McGregor has been performed at the Royal Opera House twice: during the season of 2015 and the season of 2017. It will be premiered in New York by the American Ballet Theatre on the 25th of June of 2024.

Uzma Hameed, dramaturg of *Woolf Works*, argues that there is a physicality in Woolf’s writing that shouts for a dance adaptation, as she declares in the hand program of the performance:

When *Woolf Works* was announced back in 2014, a question that many people in the dance world seemed to be asking was, ‘Why Virginia Woolf?’ (...) But for McGregor and myself, immersed as we were in her writings, the really astonishing question was: ‘why hasn’t it been done before?’ (Hameed, 2024)

She claims that Woolf’s fascination for dance is transmitted into her literary work by using a language that is “rooted in feeling and the body, as much as in the brain” (Hameed, 2024). Woolf does not focus on displaying the events chronologically, she unwraps the inner world of her characters giving prominence to emotion and sensation, which, Hameed argues, “might be seen as the natural territory of dance” (Hameed, 2024). This idea that emotion plays an indispensable part in writing is supported by Woolf herself in the essay “On Re-Reading Novels”: “the “book itself” is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel, (...) both in writing and in reading it is the emotion that must come first” (Woolf, 1916).

Patty Argyrides made a thorough investigation about McGregor’s ballet in 2023, she analysed how the creative team has translated Virginia Woolf’s writing into a dance performance. She argues that the ballet is not an adaptation *per se* of the three literary novels that feed the project because they take into consideration “Woolf’s non-fiction, fiction, and biography to create an embodied performance of her ideas and literary practice” (Argyrides, 2023, p. 29). The creative team assembled Woolf’s letters, different aspects of her life, and the narrative techniques used in *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando* and *The Waves*. Argyrides claims that the result is not a representation but a reinterpretation of Virginia Woolf, the ballet depicts how they have read Virginia Woolf (Argyrides, 2023, p. 26). She adds that a mere adaptation of the plots would not make sense in the case of Virginia Woolf because she is “much more than the sum of her plots; we study Woolf for her innovation to form, her meditations on writing and reading, and her feminist politics” (Argyrides, 2023, p.29). People that engage with Woolf’s work are multidisciplinary readers that are awake to all the layers of her writing, so it is reasonable to have such a rich ballet based on Virginia Woolf.

The ballet is divided into three acts: “I now, I then”, “Becomings” and “Tuesday”; which are based on *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando* and *The Waves* respectively. Each part focuses on different aspects of the novel and of the writer’s biography. The dramaturg of *Woolf Works*, maintains that they “wanted watching the ballet to feel like reading Woolf” (Hameed, 2024). In that case, which connections are established between *Mrs Dalloway* and “I now, I then”? Firstly, an aspect of the novel that is highlighted in the dance piece is the “dilemma between

past choices and present reality in *Mrs Dalloway*” (Hameed, 2024). Even though Woolf achieves a great fluidity in the exposition of different consciousness, it is not possible to give presence to various characters simultaneously. You can only listen to one character at a time. McGregor takes advantage of the fact that there is not such limitation in the dance world and double casts the role of Clarissa: a younger and an older Clarissa are present in scene. That is how the intersection of past and present is physicalized in the ballet.

The fact of having an old ballerina on stage is unusual and it has a meaning related to the novel. Professional ballet dancers usually retire by the age of forty, which may be too early for some dancers who retire forcefully because of social pressure. Alessandra Ferri, the principal dancer of the first production of *Woolf Works*, had retired in 2007 at the age of 44 and returned from retirement to do McGregor’s piece when she was 52. Argyrides remarks a connection between the character of Clarissa and the dancer Ferri: “They are both moving through the social pressures and prejudices against women as they age, and the result is moving” (Argyrides, 2023, p. 34).

Lastly, the scenography has a connotation too. McGregor worked with the architecture studio Cigüe to create three square wooden frames that move constantly during the first act. This element provokes a contrast between the fixed choreography of the dancers and the improvised movement of the frames. That unpredictability forces the dancer to be in the present moment and adapt to the scenography. Each performance is unique, each representation of the same movement becomes a different choreography. In this way, McGregor aims to represent how the re-reading the same text is a distinct experience every time due to the changes of perspective and the frames of time: “In many ways, this is a visual and physical realization of our own experience reading and re-reading Woolf (and all authors)—as new frames and scholarship emerge, a new reaction occurs when returning to the text” (Argyrides, 2023, p. 34).

“Becomings”, the second act of *Woolf Works*, changes abruptly the atmosphere. It uses the “qualities of magical realism or even science fiction – extravagance, fantasy and time travel” of *Orlando* and focuses on showing them through eccentric lightning and costumes (Hameed, 2024). Finally, “Tuesday” merges *The Waves* and Virginia Woolf’s suicide. The dramaturg remarks that this final section “sets the life cycle of six little human beings from early childhood through to death against a backdrop of the impassive, ever-returning sea” (Hameed, 2024). She sees a connection between how death is depicted in the novel as a never-ending cycle and the decision of the author of taking her own life with the conscious of a

continuance “I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will I know” (Woolf, 1941). Hameed concludes about death and loss in the third act of *Woolf Works*: “Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again” (2023).

The most distinguished aspect of “Tuesday” is the presence of the waves. Ravi Deepres, designer of the scenography, recorded the sea during a tempest. A one take shot that plays on the cyclorama² of the stage throughout the whole act. On that account, the scenography of this section is simply the constant image of the uncontainable ocean on the background, which gives the same impression as the fragments in italics of the novel that bump and appear regularly. The act starts with that image and Woolf’s suicide letter. The first scene is a duet between Leonard and Virginia Woolf. By the end of this movement, six children and one adult emerge breaking again the barrier between past and present that gives the presence of a memory. Progressively, many more dancers arise from the background. This is the way they physicalize the interpretation of the community in the novel: “The dancers were an absolute collective, a massive human wave that appeared from the darkness underneath the film image” (Deepres, 2019, p. 258). Ultimately, Jean- Rémi Lapaire has examined the ballet, and he states that the dance movements are cyclical and predictable: “Patterned dance movements were successfully used to resemiotise the characters’ interactions, inner monologues and relationships, like “solitude,” “mental confusion”, “restlessness” and “psychological entwinement,” which lend themselves well to choreographic expression” (Lapaire, 2019, p.8).

As it has been exposed, in the dance performance there are specific elements that relate to different features of the author. But there is still another feature that floods the whole choreography and Virginia Woolf: a break away from tradition. *The Waves* is described as a “unique, unclassifiable piece of fiction that defies all attempts at categorization – a protracted narrative, intensely lyrical and deeply metaphysical, which does not belong anywhere” (Lapaire, 2019, p. 2). Patty Argyrides also highlights this aspect of her work and mentions that it should show in an adaptation: “How then, do you portray the work of an author who pushed back against the tyranny of tradition within an art form that continues to desperately cling to the preservation of history and tradition?” (Argyrides, 2023, p. 27). McGregor did escape the “tyranny of tradition”, which in the case of dance is classical ballet technique.

² Curtain on the back of the stage that is used to project images or produce light effects.

Modernist writers distanced themselves from conventional forms of writing because they were living in a convulsive time that did not fit within those norms. They started to play then with elements such as time, the representation of characters or the narrator. That same search for new configurations that feel more accurate with reality engaged dancers and choreographers during the same period of time, from the beginning of the twentieth century (Briginshaw, 1987, p. 77). It is coherent, then, that the choreography of Wayne McGregor attempts to reconfigure classical ballet technique. He does that by giving extreme importance to the steps in-between. It is not that the small steps that connect the big movements are not relevant for a classical ballet performance, but they are generally overlooked under the shadow of the grand leaps or difficult turns (Argyrides, 2023, p. 28). Thus, McGregor's disruption resides in the focus to disregarded movements that give a new quality to his creation. He moves within classical ballet vocabulary to build a contemporary ballet just as Woolf discovered a new way of giving meaning to words.

Therefore, *Woolf Works* is a contemporary ballet that has been assembled from Virginia Woolf's writing method. Her novels are not linear nor plot-centered, emotions and new techniques are more important aspects of the author. McGregor tried to coat the dance piece with that messiness in his alignment with the three novels: "this refusal to be understood in terms of plot and narration positions the *Woolf Works* creative team closer to Woolf's own artistic intentions" (Argyrides, 2023, p. 27). The importance of this dance adaptation from Woolf's texts resides in the fact that a whole creative team saw movement in *The Waves*.

That McGregor, a choreographer who studies physical thinking and movement, and Hameed, a dramaturg and former dancer, pick up on the embodied aspects of Woolf's writing, suggests that her interest in dance and movement extends beyond direct mentions of dance, to engagement that is indirect yet deeper. (Argyrides, 2023, p. 25)

They have seen a form of writing that occurs very close to the dance field, and they have been able to recreate that aura in a dance composition. In *The Waves*, the cyclical pattern sets the rhythm of the choreography and the focus on emotion and evocative language dances around the pages of the book.

4. MOVEMENT IN WOOLF'S WRITING IN *THE WAVES*

My thesis is that *The Waves* is a novel full of movement, a novel that dizzies the reader because, once you enter into it, you are constant and inevitably shifted. Virginia Woolf has many resources to depict various kinds of movement in her work. The backbone of the novel is a regular rhythmic pattern. This aspect has already been highlighted by authors such as Marilyn Charles (2004, p. 79-80) and Eric Warner (1987, p. 106). After a thorough analysis of the text, one may say that Woolf uses verbs of motion to express the feelings of her characters and to relocate the reader to a scene that is alive. With this constant allusion to movement, she finds a new way of expressing that is very close to another art form: dance. That is why the research leads to the creation of a dance piece. This section of the investigation ends with an explanation of the creative process of that dance piece: which movement has been perceived and how Woolf's words have been interpreted with the body.

Waves break on the shore in a never-ending movement. They constantly create, destroy and rebuild themselves. It is an eternal cycle with a movement that is similar and repetitive but never exactly the same. Life is that: a constant bumping that never stops accompanies our actions. It is impossible to repeat an experience because it can never happen in the exact same circumstances. This parallelism is the reason why Woolf uses the swell to write a novel where she follows the existence and growth of six characters. The rhythmic pattern of the novel is, therefore, a mark of the passage of time.

The most evident structure is the interaction of interludes and soliloquies. Woolf did not divide her novel in traditional chapters, instead she uses poetic interludes in italics to separate the different sections. There are nine interludes where she describes the sea, a garden, and the room of a house at different times of a day. The duet between the descriptive interludes and the soliloquies where the thoughts of the six characters are knitted set a general structure for the novel. She starts and finishes the novel with interludes, which gives a cyclical pattern and instils the feeling of an irreparable transition of life. Virginia Woolf uses the flow of the waves in a considerable number of layers. And the first one is precisely this interaction of interludes and soliloquies. There, the waves are present twice: firstly, they are explicitly depicted in the description and, secondly, the presence of two literary texts that give voice to one another is a representation of the comings and goings of the waves.

The interval of time shown in the interludes is one day, from dawn to dusk. In these fragments, she insists on the effect of light and the height of the sun. The appearance of the

interludes makes the reader aware of the passing of time. Another way of depicting that life passes is the explicit mention of it by the characters in the soliloquies. There is a slight awareness at the beginning of the novel, when they are children: “*Month by month* things are losing their hardness” (Woolf, 2010, p. 27); but the constant and obsessive mention of time is present from the death of Percival onwards. It is a moment that makes the characters realise that life is fragile and that, even after the most transcendent event, life goes on; the engine does not stop. Woolf represents that despair through language with thoughts of the characters on how they have aged, and allusions to the cyclical course of days, months and years. In effect, after the loss of Percival, time permeates: “Life passes” (p. 112) thinks Louis; “I am now past thirty” (p. 115) “Life comes, life goes, we make life” (p. 116), “Time passes, yes. And we grow old” (p. 117) claims Jinny; “I have lost my youth” (122), “I am no longer young” (p. 130) regret Bernard and Jinny. As explained before, the characters also repeat the looping time measures: “Summer comes, and winter” (p. 112), “How fast the stream flows from January to December!” (p. 172), “After Monday, Tuesday comes” (p.179), “After Monday Tuesday comes, and Wednesday follows” (p. 181) “Another day; another Friday, another twentieth of March, January, or September” (p. 199). This sequence gives a sensation of speed, of movement. Time quickly moves forward without looking back.

Another device that mimics the movement of the waves in the novel is the transition of thoughts. There is a swaying between the present moment and space that the characters inhabit and their different perceptions. As a reader, you enter the scene, and you start traveling from one mind to another, always returning to that specific time and space they are living. That is to say that the reader swings back and forward like the waves. One could take, for example, the passage from page 76 to 78. Rhoda, Neville, Louis, Bernard, Jinny, Susan and Percival have met in a restaurant. It is Neville’s turn to speak. He is the first to arrive, he waits in a table, and he looks at the door “I have seen the door open and shut twenty times already” (p. 77). Then, he explains how he is waiting impatiently for Percival to arrive. Louis appears and he is the one to lead the conversation now. The reader is hence carried back to the main door of the restaurant as he sees Susan enter: “She stands for a moment at the swing-door, looking about her like a creature dazed by the light of a lamp” (p. 77). As a reader you plough through his impression of Susan. Those thoughts are interrupted when Rhoda presents herself. The reader then goes back to that place of the restaurant where the meeting is starting, and the main entrance is in plain view. Neville speaks again, and he brings us back to his thoughts about Percival: “The door opens, the door goes on opening, said Neville, yet he does not come.” (p.

78) It is Susan's turn now, and she places the reader in the origin as she sees Jinny arrive: "There is Jinny, said Susan. She stands in the door" (p. 78). The reader follows her descriptions of Jinny, Louis and Neville to return to that main entrance: "He has not come, said Neville. The door opens and he does not come" (p. 78). This insane dynamic is present throughout the novel thanks to Woolf's tunnelling technique.

Besides the acceleration time and the imitation of the waves in the narrative style, Woolf uses motion words abundantly. In fact, the main existence of movement in the novel is achieved through language. Movement is mainly used with three different purposes: to install the reader in a scene that is alive, to maintain the repetitive bumping of the waves and to express feelings. Concerning the first one, Woolf has a particular descriptive style: she gives prominence to action. Movement is, therefore, present in every description, and emphasised in the interludes (where there is no action, they are descriptive texts):

The grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually. (p. 1)

Now, too, the rising sun came in at the window, touching the red-edged curtain, and began to bring out circles and lines. (p. 47)

The sun, risen, no longer couched on a green mattress darting a fitful glance through watery jewels, bared its face and looked straight over the waves. (p. 70)

All for a moment wavered and bent in uncertainty and ambiguity, as if a great moth sailing through the room had shadowed the immense solidity of chairs and tables with floating wings. (p. 121)

As if there were waves of darkness in the air, darkness moved on, covering houses, hills, trees, as waves of water wash round the sides of some sunken ship. (p. 158)

There is action in her description. Thanks to this literary device, she is able to create scenes, not static images; she is able to introduce the reader in a world that is budging and alive. Hence, all around the novel, descriptions have movement. Furthermore, sometimes she even adds the senses. Not only does she introduce the reader into the scene, but she lets them feel it. "A smoke ring issues from my lips (about crops) and *circles* him, bringing him into contact" (p. 43); in this scene you see how the smoke travels, you can smell it and you can even feel it on your own face. The novel is filled with sounds as well: "I hear traffic roaring in the evening wind" (p. 65); and, sometimes, you listen to music: "It is sweet to sing together, clasping hands, afraid

of the dark, while Miss Curry plays the harmonium” (p. 152). Lastly, here is a longer description where everything depicted earlier is present, a fragment with a scene that is in movement and perceived through various senses:

At home the hay waves over the meadows. My father leans upon the stile, smoking. In the house one door bangs and then another, as the summer air puffs along the empty passages. Some old picture perhaps swings on the wall. A petal drops from the rose in the jar. The farm wagons strew the hedges with tufts of hay. (p. 24)

The second goal of using vocabulary of action is to maintain the rhythm of the waves in the narration. The movement of going and returning is represented by the use of binaries. Sometimes Woolf directly mentions the waves “My children will carry me on; their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the waves of the sea under me” (p. 86), and “Lifts rise and fall; trains stop, trams start as regularly as the waves of the sea” (p. 129); in other episodes she alludes to diverse elements that also move regularly such as: “The clouds change perpetually over our houses. I do this, do that, and again do this and then that. Meeting and parting, we assemble different forms, make different patterns” (p. 112), or “Opening and shutting, shutting and opening, with increasing hum and sturdiness, the haste and fever of youth are drawn into service until the whole being seems to expand in and out like the mainspring of a clock” (p. 172). Therefore, there is an explicit mention of items that bounce by reproducing regular patterns.

Furthermore, she uses repetitions to mimic that constant beat. She repeats the word ‘sleep’ several times during a discourse of Susan between pages 112 and 114: “Sleep, sleep, I croon” (...) “Sleep I sing” (...) “Sleep, sleep, I say” (...) “Sleep, I say” (...) “Sleep, I say, desiring sleep to fall” (...) “Sleep, I say, sleep” (...) “Sleep, I say, sleep” (...) “I push my thread through the needle and murmur ‘Sleep’”. And a few pages later, from page 121 to page 122, Bernard also repeats an action verb obsessively: “And time lets fall its drop (...) “The drop fell” (...) “This drop falling has nothing to do with losing my youth. This drop falling is time tapering to a point” (...) “As a drop falls from a glass, (...) time falls”.

Finally, there is a devastating presence of movement to express the feelings of the characters. They ramble a lot about their own perception of themselves in relation to the non-stop turning world. During the course of their lives there is a contrast between two kinds of actions: every now and then, they show agency and power when taking an action; and occasionally, they let themselves go with the general impulse. This is, once more, a strategy to

imitate the movement of the waves: when water approaches the shore there is a sensation of attack, then they break and let the residual impulse take them back to the origin. The contrast of active and passive movement in the novel is evident and copious. Here are four fragments from the book where passivity and activity are shown alternatively:

Having dropped off satisfied like a child from the breast, I am at liberty now to sink down, deep, into what passes, this omnipresent, general life. (...) I will let myself be carried on by the general impulse. (p. 73)

We are not sheep either, following a master. We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road. (p. 96)

I will walk; I will not change the rhythm of my mind by stopping, by looking; I will walk. I will go up these steps into the gallery and submit myself to the influence of minds like mine outside the sequence. (p. 102)

I will drive to my own house. I will fill the vases with lavish, with luxurious, with extravagant flowers nodding in great bunches. I will place one chair there, another here. I will put ready cigarettes, glasses and some gaily covered new unread book in case Bernard comes, or Neville or Louis. (p. 130)

There is also an interesting treatment of their own bodies as something external, something that does not belong to them and exists independently: "My body has been used daily, rightly, like a tool by a good workman, all over" (p. 143); "I took my mind, my being, the old dejected, almost inanimate object, and lashed it about among these odds and ends" (p. 180). Indeed, great importance is given to bodies in the narrative. Somehow, the characters observe their own bodies from an external point of view: "Look, when I move my head I ripple all down my narrow body; even my thin legs ripple like a stalk in the wind" (p. 25); "But when darkness comes I put off this unenviable body-my large nose, my thin lips, my colonial accent-and inhabit space" (p. 32).

In addition, action words allow Woolf to add a magnificent evocative language. The way she writes about feelings is extremely visceral. Emotions are physical in *The Waves*; Virginia Woolf relates them to the body and to movement. There is interaction between the bodies: "We suffered terribly as we became separate bodies" (p. 161); and there is also a sharp

physicality inside them: “One has pierced me. One is driven deep within me” (p. 117), “Things have dropped from me. I have outlived certain desires” (p. 123), “I went from one to the other holding my sorrow” (p. 178). There is something moving when the characters express their feelings. And not any kind of movement: body movement.

To sum up, the bodies of the characters feel through movement, they are basically dancing: “I move, I dance; I never cease to move and to dance” (p. 25). Why does she use this kind of language? Woolf left a hint on page 176: “for pain words are lacking”; words are lacking because feelings are bodily and visceral. It is otherworldly, this way of writing makes the reader feel the words in their own guts.

4.1. A Corporeal Reading of The Waves: Dance Adaptation

As a dancer, all the movement, all the physical reactions that I had felt as I read *The Waves* had to be translated to the body somehow. That is why the research ends in “Merging with *The Waves*”, a personal adaptation of the literary work into a dance piece.

The choreography I have created has the form of a video dance, a format that joins dance language and audiovisual language. In a video dance the choreography interacts with the different camera shots (Fernández, 2021, p. 181). I chose this kind of composition because it allows me to play with the scenes so that they give the same sensation of dizziness that the novel does.

The music that plays on the background is “Le Onde” (2011) by Ludovico Einaudi. This work is based on *The Waves*. I have seen a structural correlation between the music and the novel. In the novel there are two literary texts that interact: the interludes and the soliloquies; and Einaudi plays intermittently two different melodies that correspond to those two texts. He starts the song with the main melody, the one that is related to the soliloquies. The first time he plays this melody it is full of life, it is young. I have understood it as the early life of the six characters. Then, Einaudi plays the interlude, and he goes back to the principal melody. The second time he plays the melody the notes are heavier, he lengthens the phrase and provides it with solemnity. It is clear for me that Percival has died now. The melody is suddenly filled with sorrow and the weight of an adult life which has lost the dreamy aura of childhood, filled with responsibilities. Afterwards, he repeats the interlude and plays once again a fragment of the melody as it slowly fades, just like Bernard succumbs to the rhythm of the waves in his final discourse.

I have also used the sound of the waves in some fragments of the video. That sound is not present during the whole piece because it is my intention to mimic the presence of sounds in the novel, that appear only at times.

The choice of clothing is inspired by this quote from the novel: “A woman walks on deck, with a dog barking round her. Her skirts are blown; her hair is blown; they are going out to sea; they are leaving us; they are vanishing this summer evening” (p. 108). It is such a visual image: the wind moving her hair and the skirt. That is why I chose to wear loose hair, a long skirt that would move with my body and with the wind, and nude underwear to highlight those two elements.

Thereon, I have created a choreography that follows the current methodology *par excellence*: improvisation. I have selected different fragments of the novel to extract the ideas that guide my movement in each section. If I were to create a regular choreography to be performed live, I should revise my improvisation to find interesting movements, develop on them and fix them (Lavender, 2018, p. 108). But in the case of a video dance, that process is done while editing. The first thing I did was to choose the fragments of the video which I thought were interesting dramaturgically. And then I cut and pasted the different scenes. That is how the choreographic composition was done.

Once settled the backbone of the adaptation (format, music, and creative process) I will proceed to develop on the intentions of each section. Following Woolf’s and Einaudi’s structure, there are interludes and soliloquies in the video dance. Woolf describes the sea, a garden and the room of a house stressing the light at a specific time of day in her interludes. I have tried to mimic that with the transition of diverse shots of the beach with different light. The introductory beats of the music are the first interlude of the composition, where the images show the different intensities of light during dawn. The second interlude depicts the passage of time from childhood to adulthood and are shots recorded during the afternoon. The last interlude portrays the dawn again because, in the final discourse of Bernard, he makes reference to a new dawn that gives a cyclical end to the novel.

For the first soliloquy, I have selected some fragments of the novel that show the nature of childhood. During the first part of the story, there is a big ingredient of observation and exploration. These kids are filled with imagination: “My hair is made of leaves” (Woolf, 2004, p. 5); they have doubts about their identity: “I am not, at this moment, myself” (p. 74); and they are discovering the external world and how it moves and affects them: “I am turned; I am

tumbled; I am stretched, among these long lights, these long waves, these endless paths, with people pursuing, pursuing” (p. 15). Hence, the guidelines I have used for this section are curiosity, imagination and exploration of the external world.

The second soliloquy is marked by the death of Percival. While dancing I tried to explore different stages of pain: defeat, anger, absence... Since Woolf is very visceral when she expresses emotions, I thought that the movement emanated from the inside (in contrast to the first soliloquy, that has the focus on the outside). Another element of the improvisation is repetition, because the loss of his friend makes the characters obsessively aware of the ticking of existence. Movement is repetitive and similar but never identical. The composition of this section is very messy. I tried to mimic the irregularity of the novel – where some soliloquies are one paragraph long and others may last for pages -, and to highlight repetition. That is why the first scenes are extremely short while there are some others longer by the end of the segment.

The third and last soliloquy is based on the final discourse of Bernard. I dance in the sea because I think Bernard identifies himself with the waves, so it is a way of representing the merging between the body and the waters. He states “And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back” (p. 199), movement is mostly inspired by this last sentence. For me, the words he uses are very interesting in relation to the analysis done before about active and passive movement. The final result of the constant binary between acting or letting go resolves in a half-way point: “Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding” (p. 199). He succumbs to the mechanic rhythm of life, but he is not resigned, he does it voluntarily. There is an active resolution of entering the sea and dancing in coordination with the waves.

The link to the video dance may be found in the annex of this research. With my choreography “Merging with *The Waves*” and the analysis of the novel the thesis is proved: Woolf’s novel emanates movement. This movement is structured upon a rhythmic pattern and that is why the kind of movement that persists in the novel is dance. Virginia Woolf created a text that dances, and it has been assessed and performed.

5. CONCLUSION

After a thorough analysis of the academic work and the novel, the findings fulfil the initial objectives: movement is an aspect of *The Waves* that can be discerned and classified. The findings of the research are especially relevant because they belong to a field that has not been exploited yet. Although this line of investigation is not frequently circulated, the methods used have been effective. Motion was not the focus of the works cited in this research; but the novel is widely known, and the different investigations helped to make connections, discover new aspects and fully comprehend the text.

The understanding of the different characters as a collective, for example, helped in the analysis. It erased the need of distinguishing who was speaking every time. The “tunnelling process” gives different perspectives of the same situation. When the reader stops paying attention to who is speaking, and they let themselves be carried by their feelings instead; the experience of the novel is very different: that is the moment you move with *The Waves*.

In addition, a turning point in the research was the association of evocative language with dance movement. During the first reading of the novel, many fragments were marked because somehow, they conveyed a different feeling; but there was no explanation for that until the connection between figurative language and dance movement was made. Those expressions were using a new configuration of speech. Woolf was exploring the limits of writing by using abstract words that produce a reaction in the reader. She was using the same type of language that is used when describing dance movement. That is why the sections were highlighted in a first reading.

Another foundation of the research is the rhythmic pattern. That is a characteristic of the text that was highlighted by the author herself from the beginning, and thoroughly analysed afterwards. This investigation did not need to assess that field, it only had to collect the information about the structure of the novel. Finally, other analysis helped to discover new forms of movement that were not detected at the beginning, such as the accelerated passing of time and the relation between the interludes and the soliloquies. Even though the research from the academic world helped largely, there was no model for the linguistic analysis of the novel because it had not been assessed before. In the end, perceiving movement in the novel is a subjective interpretation of an abstract language.

Once the project is finished, some questions arise. Why has no one ever made a linguistic analysis of the movement in *The Waves*? Why do the lines of investigation vary that

much? Roland Barthes would argue that Virginia Woolf is dead, that the author died the moment she published the novel (1967). She wrote a text with particular intentions and the reader and researcher will never be able to know exactly which they were, because there is only one Virginia Woolf with her own private consciousness. “The true locus of writing is reading” (Barthes, 1967), and there are infinite readings of the text because each person perceives it from their own personal experience. As a dancer, I perceived movement, I analysed the movement, and I created movement. Because my existence is movement, but each person has a different perception of life.

“The Death of the Author” is a universal phenomenon and different interpretations may emerge from any literary text; but the more abstract and experimental a piece is, the more space it leaves for individual understanding. It is not the same to ask the audience what they thought about the narrative ballet of *The Sleeping Beauty*, as collecting the opinion of the public after the performance of *Firmamento*³. It is not the same analysing Velázquez’s portrait of Philip IV and Picasso’s *The Weeping Woman*. It is not the same writing an end-of-degree project about Jane Austen or one about Virginia Woolf. Abstract works of art open different paths more evidently.

Future avenues for my investigation would not involve a further study of movement in *The Waves*. The connection movement-movement has already been established. As it has been depicted with the analysis of *Woolf Works*, some other novels of Virginia Woolf may suggest movement. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine movement in other novels by Woolf. Even more interesting would be to find movement in a literary text where evocative language is not that present, such as a Medieval Romance. Additionally, *The Waves* could be studied from a different art field. Movement could have suggested colours, and it could have culminated in the creation of a painting. Or it could have induced music, as it did for Ludovico Einaudi.

The most stimulating part of art is always silence. A blank space lets the recipient feel in their own way. What is not uttered is suggested. Woolf never stated that the novel moved. She did not claim that the aim of the language was to produce a physical reaction in the reader. That is my own personal experience of the novel. And that is magic. That is why art has always accompanied human beings, that is why art is universal, and that is the relevance of art in life.

³ Dance piece by Marcos Morau for La Veronal, premiered in Festival GREC 2023

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7. ANNEX

Link to the video dance “Merging with *The Waves*”: <https://youtu.be/CrB3lSMl6k>