Relational Autobiographical Choreography – on new choreographic practice.

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Preface and acknowledgment

Amor, the god of love, falls in love with Psyche, a beautiful, flesh and blood woman, and decides to marry her. He promises her his love, his money and a life full of pleasure, but there is one thing she cannot have – the possibility of seeing him. Psyche can enjoy Amor's love but she cannot know who he is. Psyche agrees but after a while she develops an urge to see Amor. This urge becomes so strong that one night she decides to light a candle in order to see the man sleeping beside her. Upon seeing him, Psyche falls deeply in love with Amor and leans forward to kiss him. However, Psyche's kiss awakens Amor and within a second he disappears. From that moment on the story revolves around Psyche's search for Amor, the love of her life. The search develops into a journey which forces Psyche to face a number of great challenges set by Amor's mother, Aphrodite, hoping that Psyche will fail them and give up her search for Amor. These challenges appear as different tasks Psyche needs to perform. She finally finds Amor, but only after completing all the tasks, and lives her life with him for ever after.

I find the German-Jewish psychologist Erich Neumann's analysis of the myth relevant to my artistic and academic process in a poetic, almost romantic way. Neumann understands the myth as a story of growth, as Psyche's journey into consciousness; a journey in which she discovers the feminine aspect of her personality. The feminine aspect in Psyche's personality (as a prototype for women in general) involves selectivity, patience, vitality, support, productivity, generosity, forgiveness, beauty and the possibility of saying no. Above all, her acceptance of failure is a key factor. It is the most basic element of being a human being. Without the feminine, Psyche cannot reach her potential as a conscious woman. In other words, it is the development of her femininity that enables Psyche to become aware of herself and of others, that allows her to know herself as an emotional and thinking women. And it is this awareness that then enables Psyche to love.

I see a certain similarity between some aspects of my PhD research venture and Psyche's journey. The PhD research was my way of combining my *intellectual*

thinking with my *emotional experience*. I am a great believer in emotions, in feelings; in experiencing life and art through emotions. However, living in the world today where a discourse is inevitable, I needed to be able to 'talk' emotions rather than just to feel them and create them. My PhD research was a way, my way, to engage with academic thinking, with the symbolic (in Kristeva's view), with logic and order (in Lacan's words), with a discourse (in Foucault's terminology). At the same time it needed to incorporate my 'femininity' as well. It needed time (seven years), patience. It needed the support of those around me, it needed forgiveness (mine…) and it needed uncertainty, the possibility of failure, experimentation, having to put things aside. In it I needed to step away from emotions, or at least to be able to look for other elements in my work, only to end up with emotions again, through the notion of Affect. I aspired through this research to create and to engage with my choreographic practice not only from an intuitive place, but also from a more rational, logical and academic perspective. Like Psyche, in my research-journey-process I discovered relationships. I discovered my self in relation to others: other people, other practitioners, other theoreticians, other collaborators, other women. In it I could find words, I could become aware.

The research took me seven years, during which I had to take many breaks to reflect and re-negotiate my purpose/s. During those breaks I needed to *experience* the things I was writing about. I needed to *experience* the relationships I formed with different 'others' and the impact they had on my identity and the essence of who I am. I needed to understand within my practice and through my feelings, emotions and sensations how relationships enable an identity, my identity, to be formed. More specifically, how my identity could be revealed to me through my relationship to others.

During the research period I was accompanied by many different others, who enabled me to develop my research, to articulate it, to fall in love with it. I would like to mention them here and to thank them all.

These were, firstly, my supervisors Dr. Martin Hargreaves, Dr. Dror Harrari and Dr. Sophie Fuller (who joined the research later on in the process), all of whom have followed me through the long journey of this research with endless support, patience and wisdom. They enabled me to understand deeper academic thinking and writing. Thank you for your wisdom, insights and thoughtfulness.

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And my students (some of whom participated in the various community projects over the years) from all around the world; some of whom I met in London and others whom I met elsewhere, who enabled me to experiment, evaluate and reevaluate my practice. They have followed me with open hearts and curious minds.

There are also the many women I met along the way – the different female theoreticians and choreographers I encountered while doing the research, and who introduced me gently into the academic world on the one hand and on the other hand into the dance world.

Most of all I want to thank my family – Elhanan, Daniella, Osnat, Dudi, Ella, my cousin David - for accepting, pushing, forgiving, supporting and believing. Without them I could not have managed.

And thank you Knut for helping me to remain authentic, true to the woman and choreographer that I am. My Amor.

Abstract

The new millennium witnessed the appearance of a novel choreographic practice in the West which challenged old concepts of autobiography. Until then autobiography had been based predominantly on a coherent self who speaks itself, by itself, but now became a practice in which a self, while dependent upon the other(s), could create her autobiography only through her relationship to others. The new choreographic practice presented autobiography as a relational act. Based on feminist ideas of subjectivity, this new form of autobiographical choreography has three distinguishing features: first, it posits identity partly as a narrative; second, it views the other as the autobiographer (instead of the self); and third, it regards relationships (with various others) as the essence of one's self. In other words, without the other the self cannot know who she is. It is the other who tells a self her life-story and through it reveals her uniqueness to her. This is the choreographic practice that I have created and analyzed in my thesis. I have named this practice: relational autobiographical choreography.

The reason for pursuing this academic and practical research was in order to locate my work in the current dance landscape. I wanted to understand and articulate what it is that I do, what it says about the notion of identity, of autobiography and of self-other relationships. In addition I wanted to explore choreographers who are creating similar work. Once I realized that my work aligned *mostly* with other *female* choreographers I felt that the thesis could contribute to female choreographers' approach to dance, choreography, and autobiography, as well as to a positive idea of the self – other relationships. By interlacing (my) life-storytelling, theory and the art of choreography (looking at the work of the Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and the Hungarian choreographer Eszter Salamon), the thesis presents my analysis of this new form of choreography. It introduces a 'feminine', political practice which elaborates an identity as understood through relationships; a vibrant and insightful choreographic practice that stretches the self into a communal act.

Introduction

Auto – a short anecdote

In 2004 I created my first choreographic work titled *A Practice*. The work was an autobiographical solo, an expression of the process of my becoming a dancer and creator. In it I moved about the studio a lot, changing dynamics, heights, and postures while communicating different memories and thoughts. I danced and talked through the memories I had embodied during my years as a dance student and a dance practitioner. I performed various dance sequences that involved some movement that I perceived as being from other dancers, as well as movement that was more familiar to me and felt more 'mine'. These would have been sequences I had to do as a dance student and a dancer, and movements I like doing and want to do as 'Hagit'. While dancing and moving around the studio I verbalized the different comments I had heard over the years about my dancing, repeating what people had told me while watching me dance. In addition I shared my own private thoughts on how I should dance and on how I should react to the different comments I heard. In a way, my body, physicality and words represented a melting pot of the many memories, encounters and affinities I had accumulated in the dance studio over a number of years. It was I, performing myself, but not only through the eyes of 'I', but also through the eyes of 'them'. They were speaking through me to the audience saying who and what was being danced in front of them. This solo expressed my wish to find my 'self' through and within the solo and the creative process after years of dancing other people's dances.

A Practice is an autobiographical solo. However, the autobiographical act it presents takes place through and alongside the memories, ideas and words of others. I wanted to find my 'self' through my encounters with different others. I hoped to discover a sense of an identity (identity as a choreographer, dancer, thinker, immigrant and a woman), to claim my name and to find meaning in the things that I do, but not alone. The idea of involving others in my autobiography came to me during the creative process, when I realized that I could not search for my 'self' alone. On the contrary, the more alone I was in the studio the more my identity, my story, my 'self', my

'purpose' evaded me. In this sense, the solo *A Practice* was a starting point for a practical exploration of autobiographical choreography which revolved around various others. From that moment on I found myself researching and performing different life-stories on stage alongside different performers and collaborators; life-stories of myself, and those who collaborated with me. I was exploring our relationships while questioning who and what we are. These relationships formed an autobiography as a collaborative act. Therefore my identity (in these works and in that context) existed only through the relationships I formed with others.

A Practice challenged my preconception of autobiography and it raised a number of crucial questions, for example: Can an act of collaboration be considered autobiography? Can an autobiography present the story of oneself as secondary and relationships as primary? And if it does, what does it say about identity? Who else does this kind of work? Who writes about this kind of autobiographical practice? These questions broadened my practical research into other spheres. Thus alongside my collaborators I was searching for different 'others'. I began to look for other choreographers who are interested in creating similar work, or who present similar ideas on identity and collaboration. Then I looked for guidance in other people's writings, which, I hoped, would provide answers to some of the questions I had, as well as enable me to find out what kind of autobiographical choreographies I was creating.

Bio – the life story of autobiographical choreographies

Autobiographical choreographies (focusing only on those made in the UK, Europe and Israel) can be divided into two main practices. The first practice uses autobiography in a straightforward way, where the choreographer tells (or dances) a story about her self. The second kind, which is more relevant to my work and this research, presents a reflective reconsideration of the notion of autobiography. In these performances choreographers use their practice in order to ask existential questions about themselves, their life, relationships, memories, identity and art as well as about the possibility of presenting themselves in dance. It is evident when watching the

latter kinds of autobiographical choreographies that this genre is broad. It tackles many themes: it engages with different kinds of theories; it deals with relationships and most importantly it negotiates and debates the essence of autobiography itself. This choreographic-autobiographical practice reflects on something that is beyond the self and the autobiographical subject. This practice explores existential matters in the contemporary world, as well as questioning contemporary dance in the world today. It presents a constant search, which is not only personal but also political, social and cultural.

The latter kind of autobiographical choreography, where choreographers rethink autobiography, can be found, for example, in some of the works of: Alexandrina Hemsley (UK), Amy Bell (UK), Bill T.Jones (USA), Dan Daw (Australia-UK), Franko B (Italy-UK), Hetain Patel (UK), Igor Urzelai and Moreno Solinas (Spain, Italy-UK), Iris Erez (Israel), Jerome Bel (France), La Ribot (Spain-Switzerland), Liat Dror and Nir Ben Gal (Israel), Liz Aggis (UK), Meg Stuart (USA-Germany), Meredith Monk (USA), Nigel Charnock (UK), Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor (Israel), Pinchet Klunchun (Thailand), Rahel Vanmoos (Switzerland-UK), Tim Etchells (UK) and Yael Flexer (Israel-UK).

However, it was after watching Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's solo *Once* (premiered in 2002 in Brussels and performed in London in 2004) that I realized something new was happening in dance. The solo was autobiographical, but it left me with a strong impression of innovation. In her solo *Once,* De Keersmaeker is alone on stage. However, what she actually performs is her relationship to Joan Baez, the American singer and songwriter. Throughout the solo De Keersmaeker dances alongside Baez's singing, which we hear as the soundtrack of the choreography. Baez is therefore an absent- presence and yet, through her singing, a very tangible partner in the piece. De Keersmaeker dances a reaction to what she hears and to what these songs represent to her. What these reactions reveal is a relational act, as if it was only through her relationships to Baez that De Keersmaeker could discover her own story and then share it with us, her audience. It appears that by telling a story of relationships she could tell us who she is. In other words, in *Once* De Keersmaeker looks at

autobiography as a relational act. It is a storytelling of self-other relationships, and it creates a sense of a connectedness, where one cannot exist and tell one's life-story without the other.

De Keersmaeker, whose piece I will discuss at length in the third chapter, is not alone in this approach. There are other choreographers in Europe, the UK and Israel who deal with autobiographical practice based on relational acts. These choreographers not only reconsider the notion of autobiography, they also perceive it as relational, consequently forming a very specific idea (both aesthetically and philosophically) of what an autobiographical act is. I have seen some of these choreographers and heard of others. To name only a few (those which affected me most): Eszter Salamon's *And Then* (2007), which I will discuss in length in the fourth chapter; Xavier Le Roy's solo *Product of Circumstances* (1999), where he presents his concept of himself as constructed by political, social, emotional, biological and cultural forces which he presented through the image, existence and embodiment of other people in him; Yasmeen Godder's *I am mean, I am* (2006) where Godder presents a process in which her dancers slowly embody her dancing, facial expressions and feelings, and hence slowly become her; Jerome Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* (2005) where both Klunchun, the classical Thai dancer and Bel meet on stage to converse about their different life histories and dancing - a conversation that revolves around 'making' and becoming an identity in conjunction with the other; Raimund Hoghe's *Sans-titre* (2009), where Hoghe dances alongside the Congolese dancer and choreographer Faustin Linyekula - in this duet both Hoghe and Linyekula form and reform borders around the stage and their bodies with different objects, as if reshaping their selves while meeting one another; Wendy Houstoun's film *A Life of a Dancer* (1997), based on the creation of her autobiographical solo *Haunted, Flaunted and Daunted* (1996); a documentary film directed by David Hinton, presenting Houstoun negotiating her dancing and the act of choreographing as a constant dialogue with different others in her life (some real and some imagined). And there were more: the choreographic work of dance students and young choreographers, which I found in, for example, various BA and MA shows, community performances, and the work of youth groups. And, of course, there is my own work. All these examples are similar to De Keersmaeker's *Once*, and present a new interpretation of autobiographical

choreography, in which a self becomes an identity and an entity through its relationships with others.

My research reveals that the literature on autobiography which surveys works that rethink the concept of autobiography in art focuses predominantly on theatre, performance art, visual arts, literature and poetry, with comparatively little on dance and choreography. This applies, for example, to the written works of the feminists Deirdre Heddon - professor of contemporary studies, Scotland (2008), Amelia Jones - art historian and critic, USA (1998), Julia Swindells - professor of literature, UK (1995), Peggy Phelan - feminist scholar, USA (1993), Sidonie Smith - professor of humanities, USA (2005) and Julia Watson - professor of comparative studies, USA (2005). All these writers discuss new concepts relating to the notion of autobiography in the arts though not in dance. Even the discussion of the dancer's subjectivity, which can be found in many of the written works of Portuguese writer and professor of performance studies Andre' Lepecki has no direct link to autobiographical thinking.

There are, of course, written works about the personal voice in dance, and some do link it to autobiography. For example, those I find most relevant include the American dance historian Ann Cooper Albright, who discusses a number of choreographers who created autobiographical works in the USA during the 1980s and early 1990s. This discussion can be found in the last chapter of her book *Choreographing Difference* (1997). Another example is the American scholar Leslie Satin's essay about Meredith Monk's work 'Being Danced Again: Meredith Monk, Reclaiming the Girlchild' (1996). In this essay Satin discusses Monk's recreation of her 1973's work *Education of the Girlchild,* which she perceives as Monk's process of rethinking an autobiographical act. There is also the British choreographer and dance scholar Emilyn Claid's semi-autobiographical book *Yes? No! Maybe…* (2006). In this book Claid discusses avant-garde dance in the UK in the 1970s, which was partly based on rethinking autobiography. There are also a number of feminist choreographers who write about the different philosophical implications and complications of expressing one's self in dance and choreography. An important figure in this respect is the

American choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer. In the first chapter I will discuss her argument that dance cannot *not* be about the dancer's self. These works are, however, only few in number and do not adequately articulate this practice's depth, aesthetics and philosophy.

As a result, I became convinced that broader research into these new autobiographical choreographies would help to contextualize this kind of work. Moreover, I felt it would help me to situate my own work in the dance world and would provide me with a stronger sense of belonging because, as mentioned above, I am also in the process of rethinking autobiography. I believed there was a need to provide a deeper and more profound perception of a new, interesting and provocative form of choreography. This perception needed to employ the right terminology, tools and ways of thinking and it needed to be framed in a discourse and within a theoretical framework.

My thesis is therefore an attempt to fill in a gap of the literature on dance engaging with autobiography, as discussed above. It provides a historical and analytical context to discuss this new phenomenon in choreography, which I call: **relational autobiographical choreography**. In this respect my research is not only an addition to the already existing research about autobiography and choreography, but it also offers a new hypothesis and a fresh understanding of the work of a selected number of choreographers, including myself, who have refashioned autobiographical choreography. The thesis introduces a new analytical approach to autobiographical choreography and proposes a fresh perspective on discussing the relational aspect of autobiography. I will draw on theoretical writing and look at the subject from within my own practice in order to indicate what kinds of autobiographical practice I discern and in what way they are different from other (older) modes of autobiographical choreographies. I will also discuss the relational aspect of these autobiographical choreographies and examine how the very concept of the self and its representation is determined by its relationships to others who are performatively implicated in intricate ways in the choreographic practice.

Graphy – practice as research: the methodology and framework of this thesis

I have chosen to discuss relational autobiographical choreographies by interweaving three elements: the practice of choreography; theory; and (my) life-storytelling. I came across this form of methodology in Shoshana Felman's writings (particularly *What Does a Woman Want?* 1993). Felman, an Israeli-American professor of comparative literature, constructs her theory of women's autobiographies using these three elements – practice, theory, storytelling - which she regards as equally important. I am first and foremost a practitioner, so my practice is the starting point for this research, believing that practice is a source of knowledge and information. This belief is confirmed in the written works of a number of theoreticians. One example is Shari Benstock, who writes in the introduction to the book *The Private Self. Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*:

> Theory and practice are not separate from each other, nor are they necessarily opposed, nor is it certain that practice must bow to the claims of theory or that theory comes first in some kind of ontological reading of the histories of theory and practice. Practice always implies theory of some kind (whether acknowledge or articulated), and theory does not appear in a vacuum – it cannot exist without practice. (Benstock, 1988:3).

Another is Robin Nelson, who perceives practice *as* research and claims that: 'at the 'performance turn' it is now widely recognized that we 'do' knowledge, we don't just think it' (Nelson, 2013:66). Lastly, Gregory L. Ulmer writes: 'Theory is assimilated into the humanities in two principal ways – by critical interpretation and by artistic experiment' (Ulmer, 1994:3). My thesis is written within that conceptual framework; in it choreography is perceived as a 'key method of inquiry' (Nelson, 2013:9).

In addition, because of the nature of the choreographies I introduce here, which draws on autobiographical methods, that are a representation of (my) self through symbolic practice, I incorporate (my) life-storytelling throughout the thesis. Thus not only do I

believe, like Nelson does, that ‘first-person accounts of process read well’ (Nelson, 2013:35), I also believe the personal voice is essential to the nature of my work. In other words, the written thesis needed to be a space for personal exploration as well as for critical consideration. I am, after all, writing about autobiography, therefore exploring it in my choreographic practice as well as in my writing seemed unavoidable.

For both theoretical and practical reasons this form of writing led me to research specific sources of information, based primarily on the writing and practice of women, all of whom perceive themselves to be feminists and postmodernists in their perception. They were chosen because, firstly, women’s writing (i.e. the women I mentioned above and those I quote throughout the thesis) tends to combine theory with ‘the personal’, or life-storytelling with academic writing, which I found relevant to my outlook. Secondly, female choreographers are rethinking autobiographical work in a similar way to me. These female philosophers and practitioners are providing the background for a new practice of autobiographical choreography to emerge; a practice, which is based on a relational act, on the ‘self-other’ relationship. Reconsidering autobiography from a feminist perspective, they introduce a voice which is in constant dialogue with an ‘other’; a dialogue that is needed as a means to survive and exist. Reading these women’s writings and analyzing their choreographic work gave me fundamental tools to discuss relational autobiographical choreographies. It enabled me to deal with existential, aesthetical and philosophical issues in a practical, theoretical and personal way. Furthermore, these female theoreticians and practitioners provided me with specific views on the self, identity, narration and ‘self-other’ relationships, which are required for the choreographies I analyze here. And it is these women who enabled me to recognize my individual voice as a choreographer and researcher. By continuing this tradition, my thesis is intended as a feminist contribution to theory and dance-making, providing an opportunity to make female choreographers and their approach to dancing oneself on stage visible, heard and accessible. It also establishes a platform to make female theoreticians and their approach to feminism and autobiography the centre of attention.

This research draws on three of my choreographic works[1]. Alongside my own work I have chosen to focus on and analyze the work of two women choreographers, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Eszter Salamon. The reason for doing so is personal, and reveals a moment in my autobiography. When I moved to London in 2003 I felt I needed fresh inspiration as a dance practitioner and as a woman and I was searching for autobiographical choreographies. I needed reassurance that the path I was hoping to follow, the path of a choreographer and autobiographer, was the right one for me. Watching De Keersmaeker's solo *Once* in London in 2004 at The Place, and a few years later Salamon's work *And Then* in Berlin in 2007 as part of Tanz Im August, provided me with the necessary confidence. These two works stirred my imagination and forced me to reconsider what autobiographical choreographies could (and maybe should) become. Thus, both works are first and foremost essential examples of the relational autobiographical choreography I discuss here. At the same time, they significantly influenced my decision to pursue my work as a choreographer and a researcher[2].

The thesis consists of four theoretical, written chapters that present my conception of relational autobiographical choreographies, including from within practice. The first chapter traces a number of dance practitioners and dance historians who provided the basis for relational autobiographical choreographies to emerge. This chapter introduces a collection of figures and forerunners who influenced my work as a choreographer and researcher and who helped me to create my own autobiographical practice. The chapter also covers feminism's ideas on autobiography. Within these feminist ideas I illustrate the transformation in thinking and in the practice of choreography towards the end of twentieth century. In the second chapter I discuss the Italian philosopher and feminist thinker Adriana Cavarero (2000) and my choreographic work *Sunday Morning* (2011). This chapter introduces a relational act, which posits the other as the autobiographer rather than the self; it is the other who

1. My choreographic works can be found in DVDs in the appendixes, alongside information about each work (i.e. collaborators' names, tour dates and supporters).
2.There is no available documentation – DVD or a link - of *Once* and *And Then*.

reveals to the self who she is. The third chapter introduces theorist Shoshana Felman (1993), De Keersmaeker's work *Once* (2002) and my work *Air Hunger – community project* (2014). In this chapter I discuss a process in which a self discovers who she is through other people's stories. It is through the act of reading an other's story that a self can discover who she is. The fourth chapter presents the American philosopher Judith Butler (2003), Eszter Salamon's choreographic work *And Then* (2007), and my work *...in the middle with you* (2014). This chapter offers an insight into relational autobiographical choreographies, which are presented through relationships rather than through narratives; these relationships enable a self to form a sense of identity. Overall, the chapters follow the progression of my work during the last seven years. They show the development in my work as well as the changes in the perception of what relational autobiographical choreographies are and can become. At the same time, this content introduces all the significant others, i.e. the other collaborators, choreographers and writers I met while doing the research, and who enabled me to form an identity as a choreographer and a relational autobiographer.

In summary, this thesis analyzes a new cultural phenomenon which perceives the self as relational. It discusses this phenomenon's presentation in contemporary choreography and it introduces its key elements. These elements subsequently shaped my own choreographic practice. Therefore, this thesis should be read as a performance analysis - an analysis of a new choreographic practice and a creative model.

There are a number of elements that are beyond the scope of this thesis. Firstly, and most importantly, the thesis does not look into audience perception of the choreographic work, which would have demanded drawing on another set of theoretical perspectives and methodological tools, such as reader-response theory or qualitative research methods (questionnaires and interviews). Doubtless, the audience constitutes the 'ultimate' and necessary other of performance. Indeed, in the introduction to her important book *Theatre Audiences*, Susan Bennett quotes Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski who asked: 'Can a theatre exist without an audience?' and asserted that 'at least one spectator is needed in order to make it into a

performance' (Grotowski quoted in Bennett, 1997:1). This research, considers the audience as a given factor without investigating its role. I do, however, reflect upon my own personal and embodied response and understanding as a spectator of the particular work I discuss here which triggered my research into relational autobiographical choreographies. In that sense I examine this cultural phenomenon both from within practice as a choreographer and from 'without' practice as a spectator.

My response to relational autobiographical choreographies indicates that these works have the potential to engage affectively with the audience. Both the relational and the autobiographical aspects enhance the audience's engagement in and understanding of the work, and can therefore influence their relationships to it. Even though these relationships are beyond the study of this thesis I will consider them briefly in my conclusion, when I present the possibility of further investigation of the relationships between the audience and relational autobiographical choreographies and suggest potential future developments in this research.

The documentation of my work for this thesis is in the form of DVDs attached to the thesis. The DVDs are provided as evidence that the work exists and they enable the reader to understand the work's form and aesthetic. There is no need to see the work live in order to understand the elements I analyze and discuss here. People who have seen my work and are interested in a further analysis and a deeper understanding of it are invited to read the thesis. On the other hand, those who have read my thesis will understand my practical work while watching the DVDs. More generally, people who are interested in a new, individual, original analysis of De Keersmaeker's, Salamon's and my work, will find it in this thesis.

1. Feminism, autobiography and dancing oneself; a short historical overview

In 1973 the American dance practitioner and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer declared in a letter she wrote to the art critic Nan Piene that 'dance ipso facto is about *me*' (Burt, 2006:87). In this chapter I will locate Rainer's statement in the history of dancing oneself. I will also discuss the practice of autobiography as it has been developed by feminist theoreticians. By using these discussions I aim to contextualize the development of a new genre in dance: relational autobiographical choreographies. Rainer's statement frames my following discussion which traces the changes in the dance world in the second half of the twentieth century and the ideas around dancing oneself on stage. Rainer's statement carries aesthetic as well as political significance as it highlights the act of dance, both embodied and autobiographical.

It was mainly female choreographers who dealt with the specific nuances of dancing oneself on stage and who helped to create a space for relational autobiographical dance to emerge[3]. In addition, female theoreticians formed and reconstructed the ideas around feminism and relational autobiographies. These female choreographers and theoreticians not only changed perceptions of feminism, dance and the presentation of the dancer's self on stage, they also had a great impact on me as a dance student, a young dancer, and later on as a choreographer. On the one hand they helped me to understand my individual approach to feminism and to articulate to myself what kind of a feminist artist I am. On the other hand they influenced my choreographic practice, inspired my writing, and made me feel part of a choreographic heritage. In this way these female dance artists and theoreticians changed the history of dance and concepts on feminism. They also changed me personally. Therefore this overview also serves to locate my work in the dance landscape, where I feel I belong - part of a collective of female choreographers.

3. It is interesting to note that the development of modern dance (from the end of the 19th century till the early 1960s) and with it the performance of the self on stage, has been discussed mostly in relation to female dancers and choreographers. Sally Banes claims that, especially for women, it was the shift to becoming choreographers rather than being only the dancers, that gave these women the freedom to 'dance' themselves on stage. These women 'put their bodies, their emotions, and their imaginations center stage' (Banes, 1998:93).

The presentation of the dancer's self on stage has been one of the main concerns in dance since the end of the nineteenth century and has been discussed by a number of American dance historians and theoreticians, such as Sally Banes (1980, 1994, 1998), Susan Leigh Foster (1986, 2011), Anne Cooper Albright (1997) and Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1987). However, although the manifestation of dancing the self has been analyzed in relation to social events, to philosophical thinking, to different political ideas and in relation to different choreographic forms and aesthetics, it has seldom been examined in terms of autobiographical practice.

1.a 'Dance ipso facto is about me' *pre-* and *post-* Rainer's claim

Phelan writes in her introduction to Rainer's auto/biographical *A Woman who…* (1999) 'Dance is at once a presentation and a representation of the body: it is a form in which artist and artwork, "the dancer and the dance" seem inseparable' (Phelan, 1999:8). Rainer then clarifies that 'the unique nature of my body and movement make a personal statement…' (Rainer in Burt, 2006:87), explaining her claim that dance is first and foremost about *me*. These claims signal a significant shift for Rainer, who throughout the 1960s had been known for her formalistic and objective approach to dance and the need to detach dance from the dancer's subjectivity and emotions (Banes, 1998:221). Rainer danced and choreographed as part of the Judson Church Theatre group in New York (a group of dance artists that is considered to be the most representative of postmodern dance's agenda, and which transformed dance practices during the 1960s in North America and correspondingly in Europe). She is known as a symbol of the postmodern intellectual dancer and as a pioneer who formed her ideas in opposition to the expressive trend in modern dance.

The dance world in the West from the end of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century was to a great extent controlled by expressive modern dance. During this period the modern dancer was generally stereotyped as emotional and female. Modern dance makers – in the tradition of Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman – conceived of dance as an expression of internal feelings, which while personal are

universal in nature. Accordingly, the modern dancer is believed to be driven by existential and phenomenological perspectives, which perceive subjectivity as an entity that reproduces itself and is rooted in freedom and enlightenment (Horton Fraleigh, 1987:xxi-xxxii). As Duncan argues convincingly, a female dancer frees herself from tradition, from old concepts of dance, movement and body. She is romantic in her approach, expressive in her dancing, psychological in her interests and a rebel in her actions.

In the early 1960s the formalistic Rainer was opposed to precisely these concepts. She questioned the expressivity of the modern dancer and challenged the attachment of dance to the dancer's self, rejecting the idea that a universal experience exists. Instead she sought an intellectual, abstract and objective analysis of dance and choreography, and was interested in performing an objective self. In her famous NO manifesto from 1965, Rainer strove to locate dance in the body rather than in the expression of the dancer's self. Banes claims that Rainer's NO manifesto proposed an emotionally detached and a seductive-free dance, which is not about expressively moving, nor about being emotionally moved. However, Rainer is personal in her choreographies, although she does not perform an expression of who she is; instead she performs what she does at the moment of doing it and the way she does it. As Foster states, Rainer is not 'concerned with self-presentation […]. She doesn't tell the body how to move or how to express feelings – but rather participates fully in the activity at hand' (Foster, 1986:181). She therefore becomes 'a practitioner of moving' (Foster, 1986:180), a 'neutral doer' (Rainer, 1999:7), and makes her body and movement subjects in themselves to explore (rather than her internal feelings and emotions). Rainer challenged 'the traditional link between mind-intellect-male and body-emotion-female' (Banes, 1998:227) which was evident in dance at that time, the early 1960s. She wanted to be seen as a thinking, intellectual dancer rather than an emotional one.

However, in 1973 Rainer expressed concerns she had with regard to her dance and to dance making. She was worried about the commitment to dance as an abstract form of art, the dance as an object, or else the act of objectifying movement, bodies and the dancer's self (Banes, 1998:225). This concern arose from two growing realizations:

firstly, Rainer's engagement with the idea that the dancer's body is 'circumscribed by that body's social and ideological construction' (Burt, 2006:87), and therefore can never be objective; secondly, Rainer understood that the 'narcissistic-voyeuristic duality of doer and looker' could not be overcome in dance performances (Rainer, 1999:5). This voyeuristic gaze of the spectator (which Rainer, according to Banes, perceived as masculine) positions the dancer as an object to be looked at (drawing from Mulvey's article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' written in 1973 and published in 1975) and therefore negates the dancer's agency. In this situation, she is always inferior to the person looking at her. Rainer therefore stated that 'dance ipso facto is about me', and shifted from an objective and abstract perception of dance to one which is embodied.

While Rainer decided eventually to make a shift into filmmaking, other choreographers followed her ideas and engaged with the dancer's self on stage, openly and curiously. These choreographers either adopted the idea that dance is a singular experience that cannot embrace more than the dancer's self, or they tried through different methodologies – engaging in their choreographies various forms of storytelling, fragmentation, repetitions, and the idea of the collage - to challenge it. Thus during the 1970s the dancer's subjectivity returned to centre-stage. However, the dancer's self was different from the expressive modern dancer. It was different in terms of both its philosophy and its politics. In the 1970s a de-centered, conditional, uncertain and open-ended postmodern subject was on display; a subject which was part of an exciting and promising, though desperate and self-destructive, postmodern reality (Mansfield, 2000:174, 168). This stood in complete opposition to the 'anchor, the truthful, the united modernist reality' and the modern self (Mansfield, 2000:137) which the modern dancer displayed on stage at the beginning of the twentieth century[4].

4. It is important to note that, at this stage, I mention only briefly the different choreographers who engaged in one way or another with the dancer's subjectivity on stage. Here I am not analyzing a phenomenon, but only pointing out a few time periods and a few figures in dance history that provide a source for the relational autobiographical practice, as well as for my own choreographic practice, to emerge. I want to preclude any expectations of a deep and lengthy historical discussion, as my only purpose in presenting this historical overview is to point out landmarks and trends.

One of the key figures working on the notion of the dancer's self on stage in the 1970s was the German choreographer Pina Bausch, with her Tanztheater work. She is essential to this discussion because of her creative process. Bausch positioned her dancers' self at the heart of her research; her attention and exploration focused on her dancers as human beings. As Bausch herself said: 'I pick my dancers as people… I look for the person… the personality… I am not as interested in how they move as in what moves them' (Climenhaga, 2009:42-43). As Andre' Lepecki writes, she then 'decides to ask… questions, rather than to propose movement as the compositional point of departure for her pieces' (Lepecki 2004:173). Bausch looked at the personal experiences and emotions of her dancers and herself, and 'on what made them most human' (Climenhaga, 2009:2) but was not interested in the expression of this on stage. Her work speaks of a personal experience, without it being explicit. She found ways to de-centre the expressive self and achieved this by questioning expressivity and its forms and structures. This did not require the substitution of the objective attitude towards the body, movement and the self (something the postmodern dancer does). Bausch took a different approach to how the subject in all its complexity might appear. She then succeeded in choreographing an experience of living and being in a postmodern reality rather than choreographing a personal presentation of her dancers and herself (in contrast to the expressive modern dancer). Bausch instead committed to Rainer's 'dance ipso facto is about me' by creating work based on her dancers' and her own internality. However, she tried to find ways to challenge this idea once she crafted it into choreographies. Thus even though Bausch does not provide me with a straightforward example of dancing oneself on stage, her process-based work provided an essential basis and component of autobiographical dance, which arose not much later.

Another important figure in this context is the British choreographer Emilyn Claid, whose semi-autobiographical book *Yes? No! Maybe…* (2006) is relevant to my discussion. Claid choreographed and performed as part of the X6 dance collective. In her writing, she connects second-wave feminism's conception of voicing the Other with the dance scene in the UK during the second half of the 1970s and expresses her own Otherness (I will mention the idea of the Other in the following sub-chapter). Her

Otherness did not connect directly to the fact she was a woman, but rather to the fact that she belonged to a minority within the dance in the UK during those years, which sought to break the conventions of the existing dance milieu. Drawing on her own life experiences, history, emotions and personal agenda, Claid aimed to offer new possibilities of dance, choreography, bodies and aesthetic, and correspondingly to make space for the voice of the avant-garde dancer to emerge. Her writing incorporates many autobiographical elements and at times is completely reliant on them, in order to construct a different approach to movement, bodies, seeing and being seen.

Both Bausch and Claid (even though their work was very different in scale, methodology, philosophy and aesthetic) were not, properly speaking, creating autobiographical dance or debating autobiographical practice. They were interested in incorporating aspects of themselves on stage to debate an existence, a reality and to make a political statement. I see their work as a prototype for dance-making in the 1970s, dance which is hugely influenced by radical feminism and the politics of the Other, by postmodernism and more directly by Rainer's 'dance ipso facto is about me'. Their dance was personal though not autobiographical in itself; not there to discuss the process of subjectification but to posit a subject in a social scheme.

The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed further development in displaying the dancer's self on stage, and it became an essential component in choreography. During those years choreographers (who I will mention briefly below) incorporated their selves in their choreography in order to 'voice' - discuss the 'Other'. However, an interesting transformation occurred during those years. This was the idea that a dancer dances herself and her belonging to a group of those like her. In their work in those years, choreographers grappled with the feminist idea of the *collective,* where a subject forms her identity through her belonging to a group. I will deal with this idea at length when discussing autobiography, in the last part of this chapter, where I will refer to concepts developed by feminist theoreticians according to their view of autobiographical practice. At this stage, I would like to discuss this idea as it was perceived in choreography.

During the 1980s and the 1990s choreographers used their autobiographies to discuss the voice of the Other, which was also part of a collective self or collective identity. The voice of the Other was not only the voice of women, but also of different minorities, for example of Black and minority ethnic people or LGBTQ (Lesbian. Gay. Bisexual. Transgender and Queer) people. This discussion can be found, for example, in Ann Cooper Albright's writings (1997). Albright analyses autobiographical dance in the US during those years and suggests that some autobiographical choreographies were a means to voice the identity of minorities. The choreographers who were engaged with autobiographical work, hoped to find or form a community through their work. As Albright writes, 'when these choreographers work autobiographically, they are conscious of finding the intersections between their lives and personal issues and those of others' (Albright, 1997:148). In other words, by mentioning in their autobiographical work an Other, an identity of a minority, these choreographers wished to mention those who are like them - a minority.

These choreographers, as Albright has made clear, perceive autobiography as an 'act of community' (Albright, 1997:149). This is a crucial point, since it is only in the 1980s and the 1990s that discussion of autobiographical dance began. It appears that the notion of the collective-self enabled discussion of dance and autobiography, or else of autobiographical dance, to emerge (mainly by writers such as Anne Cooper Albright and Leslie Satin). These works display a dancer who only through her belonging to a group could form her identity. The best example in this regard is the American choreographer and musician Meredith Monk. Monk choreographed her belonging to a collective, or rather she choreographed an identity, which was formed through a collective self. Monk, another member of the Judson Church theatre group, created mysterious, poetic, dreamy and surreal choreographies which Banes called 'modernist folk tales' (Banes, 1987:165). Foster claimed that Monk's work was about family and ancestral heritage, the process of memorializing through the community and the collective (Foster, 1986:209). Nevertheless, Foster did not connect it to autobiography or to feminism. It was Leslie Satin (1996) who connected Monk's work to second-wave feminism and the idea of the collective self.

Satin expanded on Foster's view of Monk's work and claimed that by connecting to her predecessors and historical heritage, Monk formed her own identity. In this regard, Satin analysed Monk's reconstruction of *Education of the Girlchild* (first staged in 1973 and then reconstructed in 1993). *Education of the Girlchild* consists of two parts: the first part is for a group of female dancers that dance archetypes of womanhood intertwined with their own individual lives (Satin, 1996:122). The second part is Monk's solo, which goes back in time and tells Monk's autobiography in reverse - from her being an old woman to her as a child. Both parts, as Monk herself says, are about: 'growth, change, life cycles and community' (Satin, 1996:122). In *Education of the Girlchild* the idea of education or the process of growing up is seen with the group - through Monk's dance with and around a company of many other women, and alone – through her solo (Satin, 1996:122). In this work Monk performs her idea of an individual who emerges and is formed within a collective, from a 'human family' (Satin, 1996: 122, 127). This 'human family' enables Monk to form a sense of identity. In other words, by choreographing archetypes of different cultures, different periods in history, and different age-ranges, Monk 'expresses the connectedness of people across rooms and across areas and cultures' (Satin, 1996:127). This enabled Monk to be a 'member of a great assortment of communities, historic and invented' (Satin, 1996:127). Through these communities Monk formed her identity, and it is this identity which she then dances alone on stage in the second half of the choreography.

I would like to mention a few choreographers who worked similarly – reflect the same attitude towards the self and the collective (in terms of ideology though not in form and aesthetic) - to Monk in the 1990s. Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s these choreographers continued in one way or another what had started in the 1970s - the incorporation of the dancer's subjectivity on stage in order to discuss postmodern society. However, they added a feminist reconsideration of different minorities and the collective self. Choreographers such as: Bill T. Jones, an African-American dancer who raised the political aspects of being a black, gay man in the US; the gay Australian choreographer Lloyd Newson, who developed his dance practice in the UK

and who danced his sexual identity with all its political implications; the British choreographer Nigel Charnock, who danced his anger at middle-class dominance of dance and the arts, and voices the working class dancer; the British choreographer Wendy Houstoun, who danced the complexity of being a female solo dancer/performer in the UK.

However, the real shift in dance and choreography occurred only at the beginning of the new millennium when new forms of autobiographical choreographies emerged. These were different to those that appeared at the end of the twentieth century. According to Andre' Lepecki the turning point occurred in 2001 when the French choreographers Jerome Bel and Xavier Le Roy and the Spanish choreographer La Ribot proposed a manifesto for European Performance Policy. The three called for breaking down the boundaries between the different arts forms, between nations and between dance and research: 'our practices can be described by a range of terminology, depending on the different cultural context in which we operate' (Lepecki, 2004:172). This manifesto enabled many dance artists to develop their practice in different directions, one of which was the autobiographical practice I am analyzing here. Even though the manifesto does not include any thoughts on autobiography, it encouraged choreographers to enter into a deep dialogue with performance theories, with the dancer's presence and with the question of what dance is. These deep dialogues enabled dance artists to rethink relationships between bodies, subjectivities, politics and movement. Questions emerged around the notion of the performativity of the self, the development of new relationships between the body and subjectivity, and the process of the subjectification of the dancer's self (Lepecki, 2006:5). Correspondingly, autobiographical choreographies were once again rethought and reformed, and even though not much can be found in writing, in practice it is visible and alive. However, before delving headlong into the discussion of these new approaches to autobiographical choreographies, which I perceive as relational, I need to discuss autobiography as a practice in itself.

1.b Notes on autobiography: Friedman, Olney and Gusdorf

'During the last century women have been naming themselves by making art and performance from their own bodies, experiential histories, and memories… naming is the active tense of identity, the outward aspect of the self-representation process…' (Smith and Watson, 2002:5). This quote relates to the idea that the presence of the (female) dancer cannot be reduced to formalism but rather is a means to perform the self. It also encapsulates the ideas on autobiography and subjectivity which feminist theoreticians have engaged with since the 1960s. These theoreticians (for example those I cite here: Heddon, Phelan, Smith, Watson, Swindells and Albright) understood subjectivity to be fragmented and deconstructed[5]. Their discussion of the subject is dependent on language, culture and political forces, and therefore is never fixed, is always in flux and always in a process; a fragmented, provisional and multiple subject (Smith and Watson, 2002). Their idea of the subject was a means to rediscover, re-invent and reconstitute their own subjectivity through their own perceptions. Lacking language and power, or as Peggy Phelan writes: 'unmarked, lacking measured value and meaning' (Phelan, 1993:5) in a patriarchal culture, women had to look for ways to raise their voice, the voice of womanhood, to form their own language and to discover their own sense of control and power. This applied to women in general, women as a unit, as an Other. As Heddon posits while quoting the British theorist Imelda Whelehan: 'their problems [were] not individual but [were] part of a collective oppression of the whole sex' (quoted in Heddon, 2008:21). Forming a collective was a means of bringing these women together to generate greater change and greater awareness.

Moreover, these female thinkers needed to adopt different practices, platforms and methodologies through which they could make themselves heard and seen on their own terms, where they could become the authors – creators of their own perception of subjectivity. One way was to create autobiographical practices using different art

5. These female theoreticians challenged older concepts (modern concepts) of psychoanalysis, history, philosophy, culture, gender and politics. At the same time they relied on postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminist theories, queer theories and postcolonial theories, which were developed during the second half of the twentieth century.

forms. By engaging themselves in their art (be it in writing, performance, fine art or any other form of art) these women presented their beliefs and agendas. By working with and through their life stories, they started to deal with philosophical and existential questions of subjectivity and to reconstruct them through their own conceptions of femininity and womanhood. Autobiographical practices enabled them to shift from being 'objects' to being 'authors' of and in their own work and to re-create their identity. However, in order to engage with autobiography they had to deconstruct the very concept of autobiography. They achieved this by opposing and rearranging older forms of autobiographical practice. In order to understand these women's reformed practice, I need to give a short introduction to the notion of autobiography.

In her essay 'Women's autobiographical selves: theory and practice' (1988) Susan Stanford Friedman, an American feminist professor of English and women's studies, rethinks autobiography in relation to the findings of James Olney and George Gusdorf. Olney in his book *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (1980) claimed that what makes a piece of writing into an autobiography is the *graphy* (writing), which transforms both the *auto* (self), and the *bio* (life) into a text. According to Olney, critical thinking around autobiography as an art form can be seen from the middle of the twentieth century. However, he added that written autobiographies have existed throughout history (Olney mentions as the oldest example St. Augustine's confession from the fourth century, AD). Olney's point of departure is George Gusdorf's essay 'Condition and Limits of Autobiography' from 1956. In this essay Gusdorf writes: 'It is obvious that autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist' (Gusdorf in Olney, 1980:30). Gusdorf then adds that:

> Autobiography is a second reading of experience, and it is truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it[…] it is a truth of the man, images of himself and of the world, reveries of a man of genius, who for his own enchantment and that of his readers, realizes himself in the unreal[...]

> a true creation of self by the self[…] a work of art and at the same time a work of enlightenment. (Gusdorf in Olney, 1980:38, 43, 44, 45).

According to Friedman, both Olney and Gusdorf take a modernist approach to the subject – which they consider as a coherent, conscious and individual - hence they perceive the autobiographer as 'surrounded and isolated by his own consciousness, an awareness grown out of a unique heredity and unique experience' (Olney in Friedman, 1988:36). She proposed that Gusdorf founded his theory and understanding of autobiography on the belief that only when a self is a 'finite unit', 'an island unto himself' can autobiographical practice occur (Friedman, 1988:36). This means that only a coherent self that speaks itself truly could write an autobiography. This represents a modernist view on the subject of autobiography and the process of subjection.

Julia Swindells added to Friedman's proposition and claimed that this modernist idea of autobiography created an autobiographer who speaks 'authoritatively for the surrounding ideological world' (Swindells, 1995:2). She contends that Olney expressed 'the perfect relationship between consciousness and environment' (Swindells, 1995:2), and believed the autobiographer (normally a man) to stand in for man's consciousness in general. This posits autobiography as the domain of certain people, as Albright writes: 'only certain lives, those circumscribed by the gilt frames of public prestige and power, were deemed worthy of recitation. These life stories recorded the triumphs and exploits of heroes and statesmen, reinforcing enlightenment conceptualizations of the universal self' (Albright, 1997:122). This meant that only those who possess subjectivity, power, and control, i.e. men (or even more specifically western, heterosexual, middle- or upper-class white men) and those who live important, sophisticated and intelligent lives could write (and were even expected to write) their autobiographies for the benefit of those who are *not* in power and in control. In short, autobiography becomes the domain of 'great men' and engages the 'lives or achievement of distinguished individuals' (Giddens, 1991:76).

According to the women I cite here, these ideas on autobiographical practice were linked to patriarchal philosophies and streams of thoughts, representing the conservative autobiographer. Their argument was that these older ideas of autobiography failed to present any type of existence other than white, western man's. Also, these older ideas failed to 'accommodate any sense of tension, struggle, contestation, or outright conflict between consciousness and environment, between people and their surrounding ideological world' (Swindells, 1995:2), which they obviously constructed in their own image and reflected in their autobiographical writing. In addition, they did not explain the complexity in the relationships between the individual and the social world (Smith and Watson, 2002:6). And lastly, they conflicted with postmodernist ideas of subjectivity, as they suggested the existence of a coherent and conscious self in a truthful modernist reality (Mansfield, 2000:137-174).

Against the backdrop of privilege, patriarchal, positivist and modernist autobiography a new critical deconstructive autobiographical practice started to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century. People who had not been heard before - women, black people, working-class people, gays and lesbians, queers, different ethnic groups and disabled people - used autobiography to gain presence. They made themselves visible, and created a place for themselves in society and culture through autobiography, through declaring that they have a personal voice, which speaks for itself and speaks by itself. As Albright writes, autobiography became a platform for 'speaking of life stories by voices that historically have been silenced' (Albright, 1997:123). Those silenced voices 'began to insert themselves into the culture via autobiography' (Swindells, 1995:7). Additionally, and as importantly, they aimed to create a practice, which represented their view of the fragmented self – some of the choreographers in the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s incorporated these ideas and realized them in practice.

In 'Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice' Friedman proposes a new method, which enables these unprivileged subjectivities to practice an autobiographical act. She draws on Gusdorf's and Onley's propositions which I quoted above[6] and then rephrases and re-formulates it in the following way:

> Autobiography is possible when the individual does not feel herself to exist outside of others, and still against others, but very much with others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community… where lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. The important unit is thus never the isolated being. (Friedman in Benstock, 1988:38).

Friedman added three key concepts that enabled the new ideas of autobiography to develop: *identification, interdependence,* and *community*. These concepts challenged the foundation of the conservative autobiographical approach. As I understand it, these concepts challenge this conservative approach in the following ways: community replaced 'isolation'; identification replaced the 'unique experience'[7] and interdependence replaced one's 'own consciousness'. According to Friedman these elements are essential when forming women's autobiography, as it is not the individual that the personal story (autobiography) presents. It is the dependency on the other, and the belonging and attachment to a group that autobiography needs to express[8]. These concepts perceived the self as open, multiple and relational and proposed to rethink the autobiographical practice differently, as Smith and Watson write: 'Performance of the self is not self-sustaining or coherent within itself, not a pure, uni-directional show of individual agency, but always contingent on otherness' (Smith & Watson, 2002:86). The 'other' in the new millennium is no longer only a minority (an Other with a capital O), but rather it is any other, which encounters and forms relationships with oneself[9].

6. Gusdorf: 'Autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist' (Friedman, 1988:34), and Olney: 'the autobiographer is surrounded and isolated by his own consciousness, an awareness grown out of a unique heredity and unique experience… separate selfhood is the very motive of creation' (Friedman, 1988:36).
7. When identifying with something or someone there is a shared experience rather than an individual one. I will explain and expand this point further in the third chapter.
8. As Nancy Chodorow, a feminist psychoanalyst, writes: 'growing girls come to define… themselves as continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego and boundaries of differentiation. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate' (Chodorow, 1978:169).

These relationships create a communal act which, according to Friedman, is a complex one. It is complex because it does not eliminate the uniqueness of each individual, but rather adds to each individual 'a group consciousness' (Friedman, 1988:40). In this sense identity 'is nor purely individualistic. Nor is it purely collective' (Friedman, 1988:40), but rather it merges the shared and the unique. In Phelan's words identity: 'is a form of both resisting and reclaiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other' (Phelan, 1993:13).

1.c Relational autobiographical choreographies

Friedman's de-construction of the notion of autobiography is relevant to my understanding of the new form of choreography in the new millennium, which I will analyze in the next chapters. This new form transforms autobiography into a relational practice and leads me to name this kind of choreographic works: **relational autobiographical choreographies.** Even though Friedman wrote her essay thirty years ago I still find it pertinent to my reading of current choreographic practice. While in the 1980s and the 1990s choreographers dealt with one aspect of Friedman's theory, which is 'autobiography as an act of community' (Albright, 1997:149), at the beginning of the 21st century a more detailed consideration of her ideas is taking place.

In the new millennium choreographers on both sides of the Atlantic started to perceive the process of becoming a self as a complex one. It is perceived as a process which contains a self that cannot be dissociated and isolated from others. This process enables these choreographers to 'understand the body not as a self-contained and closed entity but as an open and dynamic system of exchange, constantly producing modes of subjection and control, as well as resistance and becoming' (Lepecki,

9. What started as women's ideas about their own subjectivity and which then stretched into different minorities in society, in the new millennium and according to feminist theoreticians becomes an idea which can be applied to all people. A self and an other, whoever they are, whatever gender they are, are caught in a relational act in order to form their identity.

2006:5). This idea of the act of becoming a 'self' through different processes of exchanges, which contain encounters and relationships with 'others', is new to autobiographical dance. Choreographers in the new millennium (such as Xavier Le Roy, Yasmeen Godder, Jerome Bel, Raimund Hoghe, Wendy Houstoun, Eszter Salamon and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker) perform a 'self' through its encounters and relationships with others and through a constant process of becoming. The community in the 21st century is no longer a community of people in a position of powerlessness in society, but rather any kind of community, where a self and an other meet, interact and form relationships. My thesis offers those choreographies a theoretical framework.

An analysis of the relational autobiographical choreographies will be presented in three different chapters. I have chosen to discuss this practice in relation to the three elements Friedman engages with in order to form a new autobiographical practice and in accordance with her interpretation of these elements. Thus the ideas of community, identification and interdependency will provide me with the necessary framework in which I can discuss my analysis. These elements will be presented in the discussion of various choreographers and theories. Each of the following chapters will introduce one of the three choreographic elements – community, identification, interdependency – by discussing one of my choreographies, the work of another female choreographer and one major theoretical perspective. Together they form my theoretical discussion of this new practice of relational autobiographical dance. They form the performance analysis of this new cultural phenomenon.

2. Community: in-between the unique and the shared

I ended my previous chapter with an introduction to a new phenomenon in choreography, which I name relational autobiographical choreography. This choreographic practice, I suggest, extends the self into a communal act which occurs in between recognition of the shared (the collective self, the group consciousness) and the unique (the singular element of each individual). This communal act is a result of the process of becoming a self which occurs through the relationships a self forms with others. However, this process of becoming a self incorporates one more component: narrative. By the mid 1990s theories in sociology and culture (for example Anthony Giddens, 1991 and Stuart Hall, 1991) and gender and feminist philosophies (for example Cavarero, 2000 and Smith & Watson, 2002) expanded the notion of subjectivity by locating identity in narrative. As Stuart Hall claims: 'identity is always in part a narrative... identity is not something, which is formed outside, and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one's own self' (Hall quoted in Heddon, 2008:27). The self is a 'hypothetical place or space of storytelling' (Smith in Heddon, 2008:27). Therefore the individual does not possess a 'self', but rather can become one only through a process of narration. Who does the narration? Is it an autonomous act of reflective narration by/through which the individual is born to itself or, is it, if we accept the postmodern conception of self and the idea of relational autobiography, a narration dependent on an other? I maintain that not only does the self become a self through a continuous process of relationships with others, it also becomes a self through a constant process of narrations. In other words, it is life-storytelling and sets of relationships with others that enable a self to become a self, and then reflect it in autobiography.

The process of becoming a self (through the different relationships a self forms with others as well as the different acts of narration) is essential to the theoretical framework of relational autobiographical choreographies for two reasons: first, this process reconsiders the act of narration and experiments with different possibilities of storytelling; second, it challenges and reconsiders the role of the storyteller. This process locates the other as a co-autobiographer. Accordingly, relational autobiographical choreographies, as I will demonstrate in the next three chapters,

display different processes in which another elaborates a self's autobiography. They do so by engaging with the different kinds of relationships a self forms with an other (relationships which highlight the dependency between the two entities), and the different acts of storytelling (or life-storytelling).

In the following section I will demonstrate these ideas by analyzing my choreographic work *Sunday Morning* and through a discussion of Adriana Cavarero's theory of Narratology (2000). Cavarero claims that the essence of a person, who someone is, 'lies in the classic rules of storytelling' (Cavarero, 2000:4). I have divided my analysis below into two parts. In the first part I discuss Cavarero's theory. In the second part I discuss *Sunday Morning* at length. The need to deepen the discussion of it relies on the fact that *Sunday Morning* was the first work I created out of a theory and it forms a direct dialogue with Cavarero. I engaged with Cavarero's theory not only on a philosophical level but also on a methodological one. It was after Cavarero that I engage with a more abstract-poetical way with theory. It is important to note that reading Cavarero enabled me to form a new *practical* understanding of what a relational self is: how a self formulates a sense of an identity which is in between the shared and the unique; in between the cooperative and the individual. Cavarero's theory enabled me to encounter *my* relational self, i.e. my understanding of my own choreographic practice happened in between my practice and Cavarero's theory. At the meeting point between (Cavarero's) theory and my choreographic practice, my new sense of self, as a relational one, occurred.

2.a Adriana Cavarero's auto-biography bonding

The Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero developed a theory of Narratology. Narratology, I suggest, can be viewed as the art and act of life-storytelling. It provides a positive solution to the notion of an incoherent sense of identity proposed by post-modernism, post-structuralism and feminist philosophies. Cavarero's argument is that through a life-story told by an 'other' a sense of self and identity are reconstructed. Moreover, Cavareo claims it is an 'other' who needs to tell us our life story in order for our identity to be constructed and claimed. As Paul Kottman writes, while

explaining Cavarero's idea: 'each of us is narratable by the other; that is, we are dependent upon the other for the narration of our own life-story, which begins from birth' (Kottman, 2000:ix). This is the desire a self has to hear her life-story from the mouth or pen of an 'other'. In other words, it is the role of the 'other' that Cavarero emphasizes when it comes to revealing a self's life-story. It is through the relationships between this other and that self (be it through friendships, love affairs, etc.) that a self can discover *who* it is.

Cavarero draws on Hannah Arendt to elaborate the notion of hearing one's story from another: 'who somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero' (Arendt quoted in Cavarero, 2000:24). One reveals oneself to others through different modes of communication and relationships. However, one cannot know what one is revealing as one does not know oneself. It is the others who know, observe and discover that unique quality. Therefore: 'who somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero - the biography' (Arendt cited in Cavarero, 2000:24). Cavarero then explains in her own words: 'the meaning of a life-story… is always entrusted to biography, to the tale of another' (Cavarero, 2000:24). This implies that what was once considered an autobiographical act becomes through Narratology a *biographical* act, the tale of another.

In addition, Cavarero claims that Narratology not only establishes the other as the autobiographer, it also provides human beings with the knowledge and acknowledgment of their uniqueness. The uniqueness is an essential element in Cavarero's theory and is comprised primarily of a self's memories. In other words Cavarero regards memory as the unique quality each of us possesses (p, 34). These memories are the *auto* part of our autobiography. They are the familiar essence a self has and they affirm the self has a unique essence and that she is a unique being. For Cavarero, this uniqueness is 'who' someone is; it is the unique quality each one of us is born with, but loses during our childhood (p, 39).

Cavarero argues that once we lose our sense of uniqueness we lose our sense of identity. We then develop a desire to find it during the course of our life. However, we soon realize that it is through an ongoing process of narratability, a never-ending process of life-storytelling and the narration of our own specific life story that our uniqueness can be revealed to us. In other words, it is one-self's memories that the self seeks when hearing her life-story from an 'other'. Therefore these memories not only provide a self with a sense of familiarity and uniqueness, but also affirm she is narratable. As Cavarero writes: 'every human being is aware of being a narratable self – immersed in the spontaneous auto-narration of memory' (p, 33). The idea of being *narratable* indicates a continuous process of narration a self needs to be engaged with in order to know who she is. A self cannot discover who she is in a single act of life-storytelling, but rather she needs to find different others who can tell her the story of her life and her memories. This continuity is essential to Cavarero. It shifts the essence of a self from a definitive one to a *biographical* one. Cavarero writes: 'who someone is, in fact, does not belong to the (genuinely philosophical) art of definition, but rather to the art of biography' (p, 73). Rather than being an entity that has already been 'subjected' to philosophical definitions, Cavarero positions the self as a 'flesh and blood existent whose unique identity is revealed *ex post facto* through the words of his or her life-story' (Kottman, 2000:xiii).

Cavarero introduces a complex idea of autobiographical practice which occurs in between 'auto' and 'biography' (Cavarero, 2000:34). The connection between the auto and the biography is made when memories, our sense of familiarity (p, 34) and the story we hear from an other match. It is at this point that auto and biography bond to become autobiography. And it is our desire, which 'appears to place itself between… a self that always already senses herself to be narratable and the act of narration' (p, 62) that leads us to search for their connectivity. Cavarero writes: 'one does not seem to know who he is, until he meets up with himself through the tale of his story…. told by another' (p, 17-18). The role Cavarero assigns to the other transforms 'selfhood' into a relational act. The self is no longer an autonomous entity, but is dependent on the other, as its narrator. Without the other the self does not know her own story; she does not know *who* she is. In other words, according to Cavarero

an autobiographical act happens once the other tells me my life story, and by doing so reveals to me my own uniqueness.

2.b *Sunday Morning*

Sunday Morning engages with Cavarero's de-construction of the concept of autobiography, and hence with our sense of uniqueness and with the need for an other or others. It first encounters Cavarero's ideas in the act of life-storytelling, and then when positioning the autobiographer as the other, rather than the self. *Sunday Morning* was created throughout the autumn of 2010 and winter of 2011 and premiered in 2011, in London. It is a devised autobiographical work for four performers - collaborators, two women and two men, which deals with memories of childhood, family and home. Throughout the piece the four of us negotiate the relationship between our memories and the act of remembering, as if looking at photograph albums, playing with fragments of memories and stories. *Sunday Morning* engages with three different elements: first, it is based on the act of life-storytelling; second, it challenges the role of the storyteller; third, it engages with the development of a group, our little community of four individuals. These three elements combine into choreography, where the act of remembering forms new relationships with the sense of who we are and turns it into a dance piece.

The first part of the creative process took place around the act of life-storytelling. In preparation for the rehearsal period and before we met in the studio, I asked the performers to collect stories about their childhood from other people. These could be obtained from family members, recorded and brought to the studio. When we met in the studio I explored different ways of relating these memories. Initially, I was not interested in hearing the performers telling their own life-stories, preferring to find different ways that these stories could be revealed to us. Accordingly, we created imaginary stories and told them to one another, using partial memories. We wrote down a number of different stories and then decided to whom they belonged. We then listened to the recordings the performers had brought with them and read parts of what they had written down. I started asking each performer to tell her/his own story

only after engaging in these tasks for a number of rehearsals. I asked the performers to share the stories they had heard from their family before the process started and then to retell them in their own words – to see if and what had changed. In addition, I asked them to share memories they remembered alone, those that their family members did not tell them or share with them or even remember.

Of the stories the performers told by themselves I was very interested to hear what each performer chose to share and how and why they remembered what they did. I asked them to discuss some of these memories with their family, wanting to see if some of these memories were shared by other people in their family or whether a memory had been transformed when passing from one person to another. I was also looking for a way of pinpointing those moments when stories could not be told fully, or for details as they were forgotten, lost, or felt to be too private. It seemed to me that those moments were crucial, in terms of the meaning they possessed.

Throughout the first few weeks I asked the performers to tell their stories through words, movement, role-play, simulation, painting and games. I experimented with different storytellers; each performer was another performer's storyteller. Through this process I came across two different elements. First, there was a clear difference between moments where the stories became vague, where details changed each time the story was told or danced, where words and movement were transformed, lost or forgotten and moments that felt very personal, which evoked a strong sense of emotion and authorship. Second, what felt very uncomfortable at the beginning – letting other people tell someone else's story - started to feel fundamental and essential after a while. As time passed the performers felt more comfortable hearing their stories being told by another person rather than by themselves. It appears that hearing one's memory from an 'other' (be it another performer, or a family member), allowed performers to discover something new and revealing about themselves. Hearing the memory retold by another person seemed to create a new relationship to the memory itself. As the process deepened and the more we heard our memories told by others, I realized that, on an individual level, we were forming new relationships to our past, to our memories and hence to the sense of who we are. This is a crucial

point, as it is through the different acts of life-storytelling and the different storytellers that a relational act occurred[10]. In order to be able to create an autobiographical choreography I needed the other(s). The others, the act of life-storytelling we were all engaged in, and the process in which we practiced our autobiography as a *biography*, where our stories were being told by others, enabled me to transform *Sunday Morning* into a relational act. This relational aspect functions on a level *between* the shared (the community) and the unique (the singular), or in Cavarero's terminology between the auto (uniqueness) and the biography (the other).

The way *Sunday Morning* explores the auto - biography and self-other bonding is displayed by the constant dialogue the four of us have between our own memories and the stories, our stories, which we hear from others, and see danced by others. Before analyzing this bonding in depth, I would like to introduce it by mentioning one particular moment in the final choreography. At that particular moment a memory is a site of life-storytelling, which intertwines the self's uniqueness and the other as the self's narrator. Towards the middle of *Sunday Morning* (at 17 minutes) there is a scene in which Orley and Cornelis are caught in a dialogue. Orley, standing centre stage, starts to tell a story, a personal memory about her childhood, or perhaps *a* childhood. At some point Cornelis joins in and interrupts her. He corrects her, changes some of the information she has given to the audience and presents his own version of the memory. His interruptions raise questions with regard to whom this memory belongs to. While talking and listening, Cornelis is trying to stand on his hands, mastering his performance and balance, as he remembers doing during his childhood. This is an important moment in the piece as it introduces the complexity of remembering, of 'owning' a memory and identifying with it, and the need to 'get it right' – something urgent to do with belonging. In other words, Cornelis and Orley's disagreement on the details of the memory being shared represents a sense of loss. It is a loss of Cornelis' sense of familiarity and authorship of his memory and therefore of his sense of identity. At this moment, Cornelis does *not* meet up with himself

10. My decision to engage with memories of our childhood, family and sense of home was made in order to engage with our sense of individuality, or in Cavarero's terminology: our uniqueness. However, it was only through the creative process that I realized how effective memories are to the sense of our identity and belonging to 'ourselves'.

through the tale of his story, told by Orley (drawing from Cavarero). Therefore at this moment there is a failure in Cornelis' auto (Cornelis' unique quality) and biography (Orley as Cornelis' narrator) bonding.

Cornelis' and Orley's moment is one example of the auto - biography bonding *Sunday Morning* engages with. The best way to explain this bonding in a more practical-theoretical way is by examining some elements in *Sunday Morning*'s movement exploration. There are two main aspects in it which enabled me to physically and structurally engage with the auto – biography bonding that Cavaero discuss and which lead me to incorporate Cornelis' and Orley's moment described above. On the one hand, the movement exploration involved an individual search into one's own physicality (the unique aspect). I directed the performers to explore their own movement material in relation to the memories they heard and in relation to the emotions attached to these memories. They were also asked to explore other people's memories through their own physicality. On the other hand, the movement exploration evolved through my interpretation of the relationships and the group dynamic that developed between us during the rehearsals and through the act of storytelling (the shared aspect). However, the real depth of the movement exploration was reached only once I started to look for ways to connect these two different aspects into one form of movement language. I did this by abstracting the movement material and detaching it from each performer. In other words, I was busy trying to avoid the sense of familiarity each dancer had with the movement material he or she explored. I wanted to preserve the quality and the kinetic energy of the movement and to avoid the expressiveness of it as much as possible. This, I hoped, would enable me to control and reduce the level of emotion and theatricality the movement would convey. The memories and movement we explored were charged with emotions which I believed to be private. I was not interested in creating a revealing dance piece about our childhoods. Rather, I wanted to present a considered indication of what relational autobiographical choreography is. For that reason I needed to find a way to control and reduce the emotions attached to our researched movement.

In order to achieve this I had to find different ways of distancing the performers from their stories, memories and movement vocabulary. This was done through the use of humor, role-playing, and exercises in detachment. Eventually we learned each other's movement. We integrated all the information into a new movement vocabulary, creating a new movement language that combined the different movement explorations into a new dynamic, new shapes and new kinetic possibilities.

I guided the process of detachment through the use of movement material as well as through the act of storytelling. I played with the parts of the story being shared and how we shared it with each other. The stories were integrated with one another to such an extent that their details disappeared and as a result a memory could not necessarily be identified with a specific performer, or else it was not told as a single memory but rather as a mixture of different ones.

In my view, the process of detaching the movement from the stories' private aspects was fundamental. Firstly, this process retrospectively brought us close to one another and helped us to form a group identity and a sense of community. It enabled us to develop a sense of belonging to one another and to the group which then led us to generate a stronger connection to our selves. Secondly, it was necessary in order to create a piece which highlighted the idea of a search and which was formed through group memory rather than via a personal one. Thirdly, it enabled me to create a choreography in which the performers performed themselves but also not themselves, though they were not performing the others either. They were not, in fact, performing a character, in the sense that they did not act as someone other than themselves, although it was not only themselves that they performed. In a way, we all performed ourselves as well as all the others we met in the studio, both roles at the same time. We performed shared 'selves'.

This way of performing corresponds with Richard Schechner's theory on 'Restored Behaviour' (1985). For Schechner, one of the founding figures of performance studies, our social behaviour and interactions are performed not simply in the sense of

executing in act, just doing, but rather through restoring behaviour. Restored behaviour, according to Schechner, is a process in which a person performs a behaviour as if she were someone else (Schechner, 2002:28). It is a behaviour which has been performed many times, endless times, by different people and not only by one specific person. It is not singular and it is not about a unique self. It can be sensed as if it is 'out there', separate from a self, though it is still the self who is behaving. The process in which a behaviour is restored occurs when 'a person performing recovers his own self only by going out of himself and meeting the others – by entering a social field' (Schechner, 1985:112). According to Schechner, restored behaviour inevitably engages the performing self with others in a communal act. Without the others, the self cannot behave. It is only through interacting that the self learns to behave.

Sunday Morning encapsulates this pattern of a self that learns to restore a behaviour and make it her own, as if this behaviour were hers. During the creative process the mechanism of detachment I discussed above is what directed us all to learn the other performers' behaviour, stories and movement vocabulary. We learned to dance 'the dance' of one another, though we never lost our own dance. Additionally, we learned to tell and to engage with the stories of one another as if they were ours, and once again we never forgot our own. This process gradually forced us to dance a dance that exists between our own dance and the dance of others. It also enabled our stories to become a shared element as well. The stories themselves, the stories' details, just like the personal movement material, lost their relevance and importance. This process directed us, not necessarily consciously, to become shared 'selves', somewhere between the others and ourselves; somewhere between our unique quality and the group, the collective, the shared consciousness.

The idea of the shared 'selves' is an important aspect in Cavarero's theory as well as in *Sunday Morning*. The idea of the auto - biography bonding creates *an* experience of one's sense of self. There are no clear boundaries between the two entities, between the unique and the shared. This does not mean that a self loses her sense of uniqueness, but rather that the experience of revealing one's sense of familiarity (i.e.

her uniqueness) is utterly embedded in the relationships with others. Additionally, familiarity – uniqueness - cannot be achieved fully; it does not aim to arrive at a resolution or a conclusion. Rather familiarity is an essence a self looks for and desires to engage with through the course of her life. A self experiences herself desiring to hear her life story over and over again and from different others. In other words, one's sense of familiarity needs to be told over and over again and by the different others she encounters. In that way one's sense of familiarity intertwines with the relationships that the self forms with others (Cavarero, 2000:xvi-xvii).

Figure 1 – Takeshi Matsumoto in *Sunday Morning* July 2011

Sunday Morning starts as the performers enter the stage randomly, while arranging the set (a picture frame, a piano stool, a chair) on the stage. At 1:19 minutes Takeshi enters the stage and sits on the chair, which is positioned centre stage. Takeshi gazes

at the audience, and starts to create various facial expressions and random gestures. This action gets more aggressive and more expressive and it seems as if Takeshi is struggling with an inner voice or a memory. At some point Orley enters the stage and starts playing on the piano, a very simple and repetitive melody. Takeshi ignores Orley and keeps moving on and around the chair. Cornelis then enters the stage, and a new situation, where Takeshi and Cornelis interact, is presented. It is not clear whether a new story is emerging or if it is a continuation of what has just happened to Takeshi. All of a sudden, the memory or story appears to embrace the two of them, and they both get caught up in a situation that looks as if they are developing a relationship, or are in the middle of a story or a memory itself. While they have a physical interaction, which becomes more tense, Orley leaves the piano, runs to the chair, moves it to the side, sits on it, and starts moving. As she moves, Takeshi and Cornelis freeze on the spot and I enter the stage and approach Orley. I sit on her, touch her hair and develop an interaction which turns into a struggle between the two of us. Takeshi and Cornelis disturb the interaction, a moment that ends when all four of us stand around the chair for a moment of pause, like a family portrait. The stage is silent. This first scene sets out the structure and the style of the piece: no one's memory is fully described or danced, and the memories intertwine to the extent that they become a story in itself.

Throughout the whole of *Sunday Morning* the performers shift from recalling different memories, either through words or through dancing, to listening; from being the storytellers to being the 'story-told'. The boundaries between the different stories as well as between the stories and the storytellers are blurred. This enables the stories to mingle and to belong to us all, rather than to one specific performer. We therefore become the authors and the storytellers of all these *devised* stories as we share and transform the memories together. For example, at 9:30 minutes, all of us arrive at centre stage, where we lie on the floor. Orley starts to share a memory with the audience; I then touch her back to stop her from talking. This action starts a transition where we all change positions on the stage. Orley then sits on the chair and starts telling another story. I approach her and move her away from the chair, sit on it myself and continue her story. Takeshi and Cornelis then approach the chair. Takeshi pushes me away from the chair, sits on it himself and continues the same story until

Cornelis puts his hand on Takeshi's mouth to stop him from speaking. This scene is followed by a moment of moving, where each one of us performs a different dance sequence, sometimes alone, sometimes in an interaction with other performers, until we all meet to dance a unison on the floor (at 12:04 minutes). The performance of *Sunday Morning* fluctuates between narratives, personal storytelling, memories and scenarios (none of which is told or danced fully). This is brought about by alternating between the different storytellers, by moving between the group and the individuals, by shifting between the different stories and by incorporating both movements and spoken words. The choreography is therefore fragmented.

The fragmentation creates gaps in information, leaves question marks, and communicates a process rather than a finite story. *Sunday Morning* therefore does not convey a conclusive narrative. This reflected the way we experienced our act of remembering during the creative process, which was never a linear process. It placed memories in a collage rather than in a sequential order. The process of remembering continued to surprise us with new interpretations and details remembered, and left space for an other to become our autobiographer. It was also a process whose relational nature - the relationships between one performer and another, between one memory and another and between telling, hearing, moving and watching – allowed a community to be formed. To add to this, this process of remembering revealed a need to make sense of who we are. This need was evident in the never-ending process of exchange, search, longing, loss, discovery and rediscovery we were all engaged in. Ultimately, it was a process in which a self experienced her self as *narratable* in a continuous process of searching and discovery, and could entrust her own story 'to another's storytelling' (Cavarero, 2000:34, 114). In short, this was a process where 'I will tell you my story in order to make you capable of telling it to me' (Cavarero, 2000:114). *Sunday Morning* is a manifestation of this process, and it became a journey of reconnecting to one another and each one to her/himself.

Sunday Morning ends with Bob Dylan's song 'Don't Think Twice Its Alright' (at 37:30 minutes). The song starts during Orley's solo. We then gradually join her and dance either individual movement sequences or short unisons. The song is very

significant and there are a number of reasons for playing it at the end of the choreography. First, it is a song that exists within our individual memories. We all used to listen to Dylan's songs when we were younger, forming different relationships to the song and to what it represented for us. Second, Dylan's art form, folk music, contains moments of collectivity and a sense of familiarity. Dylan is a storyteller of home, land and relationships. His lyrics and melody reveal something to us and about us, as if at that moment Dylan is our other, telling our story to us - a moment in which we, once again, entrust our own story to another's storytelling (Cavarero, 2000:114). Thus, even though the details of our memories are different and unique, we are all caught up in the act of remembering. It is this act which connects us as a group. In that moment, where we all dance to Dylan's song, we are all connected through space, rhythm, movement quality and intention. We all dance our own individual movement sequence, as determined by our own memories, although we also dance together in unison, as if possessed by a shared memory. At that point we dance in between the shared and the unique.

Figure 2 – Takeshi Matsumoto, Orley Quick, Cornelis Joubert & Hagit Yakira, *Sunday Morning* July 2011

In summary, *Sunday Morning* is a choreography that examines the process of discovering and becoming shared 'selves'. This process takes place within the act of

life-storytelling while encountering other bodies through kinesthesia, sharing narratives, and performing movement, text and relationships. I present my way of choreographing an autobiographical piece in *Sunday Morning*, which is not just about me and by me, but, more importantly, about interacting with others, interaction that forms a sense of self. In the piece, singularity is repositioned in order to form a sense of a community, in between the shared and the unique. It evolves around fragmentations in order to *reveal* relationships and the process of remembering on the one hand, and on the other hand, to *conceal* the details of those memories. On stage we shift from being the other to being the self, from telling to listening and from moving to witnessing. By combining all of these elements I was able to choreograph a relational autobiography.

However, and as a transitional point, each moment in *Sunday Morning* creates a reaction, which then allows another story or memory to be shared (either through movement or text). In a way we, the performers, discover our own memories and stories by watching and hearing those of others. Once we hear or watch a person's memory being expressed, something is revealed to us, something about our own memories, life and ourselves is revealed.

3. Identification: Narrating the self through another's story

According to Susan Stanford Friedman's notion of feminist autobiographical practice (1988), identification enables a self to get a sense of who she is, and consequently to elaborate an autobiography. Her argument illustrates an aspect of the relational autobiographical choreographies I discuss in this thesis, where the 'other' is the autobiographer, and in which the act of storytelling (and not necessarily of *life*-storytelling as described in the previous chapter), is what provides a self with the acknowledgment of who she is (or who she partially is). Thus identification is a type of relational act.

Identification according to Friedman (Friedman, 1988: 36) is a primal process in which a child connects to her parents, forming a symbiotic relationship with them, experiencing herself through the absence of boundaries between herself and the external world (usually her mother). She embodies her mother and experiences the resulting fusion as a single entity. A process of separation follows, in which the child 'moves away from fusion' (Friedman, 1988:37). This process of separation is essential: firstly, because it allows the child to develop a sense of self; secondly, according to Gusdurf and Olney, it enables a self to elaborate an autobiographical act. As I discussed at length in the first chapter, both Gusdurf and Olney claim that only an 'isolated being' can become an autobiographer (1956, 1980).

According to Friedman, this process of separation occurs for boys though not for girls. As she claims, girls do not experience themselves as isolated beings, and therefore do not possess the capacity to develop a sense of self. For this reason women are regarded as a category, as a single entity, as *woman*. In turn, this means that their identity is dependent upon other women (Friedman, 1988:36-37). This dependency leads women to relate to other women through the process of identification. Moreover, according to Friedman the process of identification is embedded in women's identity (p, 47) and it is a similar process to the one that occurs between mothers and daughters. As Nancy Chodorow, a feminist psychoanalyst writes: 'mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with

themselves. Correspondingly, girls tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother-child relationship itself. This means that a girl continues to experience herself as involved in issues of merging and separation, and in an attachment characterized by primary identification and the fusion of identification and object choice' (Chodorow, 1978:166). Chodorow's idea, which Friedman cites and draws upon, articulates a process of individuation a woman goes through. In this process a woman experiences her subjectivity as both connected to others (through processes of identification) and separated from the others, comparable to the relationship she formed with her mother in her early years. Friedman then explains (Friedman, 1988:44) that a woman does not become the other, she does not physically embody the other women she encounters, however, she embodies a sensation. In other words, for Friedman the process of identification is a mental one and does not correspond to the psychoanalytic perspective, which implies bodily incorporation of the other and physical, symbiotic relationships. By contrast, it indicates intuitive (emotional) and mental acts.

I would like to explain this idea in the light of my own experience. This will provide insight into both my understanding of the idea and into how it relates to my practice and analysis. Before deciding to write a PhD I often felt that I lacked the words to describe my work. I *felt* my work, I *sensed* it, though I could not discuss it. One of the reasons to pursue academic research was to be able to frame, verbalize and reflect upon my work and my creative process using theoretical terminology. During the process I have come to realize that it is through my encounters with other female writers and choreographers that I gain new insights into own work. Although their writings do not tell the story of my life, nor do they speak about my work or dance my dance, I can identify with the things they discuss, and with their dancing and choreographies. This identification was not a means to become them; it did not resemble me in that way. Rather it was an emotion, a point of view and an experience which enabled me to understand who I am.

In this chapter I will discuss the process of identification, as the primary enabler of a relational autobiographical act. It is a process which enables a self to get a sense of who she is and represents another form of relational autobiographical choreography. I

will discuss this firstly by introducing Shoshana Felman's theory and understanding of identification, then by analyzing Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's work *Once (2002)*, and finally by discussing my work *Air Hunger – community project (2014)*.

3.a Identification according to Shoshana Felman

Shoshana Felman's main proposition in her book *What does a woman want? Reading and sexual difference* (1993) is that: 'people tell their stories (which they do not know or cannot speak) through others' stories…' (Felman, 1993:18). She formulated this proposition by answering Sigmund Freud's question: 'what does a woman want?' Freud formulated this question in a letter to Marie Bonaparte. In his answer to this question and in the same letter, Freud admits to not knowing the answer, nor believing in the possibility of finding one either. Freud's last words in this letter are: '… if you want to know more about femininity, enquire from your own experience of life, or turn to poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information' (Felman, 1993:74). Felman answers Freud's question in the form of a theory by intertwining the three elements he discusses: poetry (which she shifts to literature), science (which she perceives as theory) and life experience (which she sees as life-storytelling). Felman looks at women's identity and women's autobiographies through the framework of the elaboration of self in literature and psychoanalysis. By doing so, she believes, we can discover a female voice, which is in the 'process of becoming' (Felman, 1993:12).

The starting point of Felman's theory of the female voice is the idea that the existence of a coherent voice depends on the ability for self-narration (Felman, 1993:15). According to Felman, at this point the female voice is still unknown and does not properly exist yet and therefore cannot narrate itself by itself. Felman adds that women had biographies written mostly by men who inevitably perceived womanhood differently. Women suffered years of deprivation, being positioned as a minority (as an Other), whose autobiographies were not written by themselves using their own language and in relation to their own perceptions. Felman explains: 'trained to see

ourselves as objects and to be positioned as the Other, estranged to ourselves, we have a story that by definition cannot be self-present to us' (p, 14).

Nonetheless Felman believes that a woman's voice (i.e. a woman's identity and hence story) must become a story, and it can become one through the 'bond of reading' (p, 12). The bond of reading is an active process in which women read the story of the Others*:* 'the story read by other women, the story of other women, the story told by others' (p, 14). By reading these stories, or else hearing them, they can get to know their own story. Felman explains that the act of reading should happen while women *re-read* these stories. She quotes the American poet Adrienne Rich in order to explain what the act of *re-reading* means. Rich writes that women should re-read stories (by other women and of other women) as if they are entering 'an old text from a new critical direction' (quoted in Felman, 1993:5). This means that the act of re-reading should take place while, simultaneously, women resist the old perceptions of who they are in the eyes of men, and by developing their own, new ideas of female-hood and of womanhood.

According to this approach, becoming a female voice occurs through both an intellectual and an emotional sense of recognition, and with a mutual understanding of other women's stories. As Felman writes: 'only women can *empower* a woman's story *to become a story*… each woman's story can become a story only through women's collective perception of themselves' (p, 126). Even though Felman does not discuss identification directly, her understanding of the act of reading and re-reading resembles the process of identification that Friedman discusses. These acts of reading and re-reading evoke a sense of a mental and intellectual identification. In this respect Felman quotes Virginia Woolf who writes that: 'a woman writing thinks back through her mothers' (quoted in Felman, 1993:147). While identifying (mentally, intuitively and emotionally) with her mother, she can get to know who she is and tell stories about herself. In other words, while identifying with other women's stories, a woman can come to understand her own.

Felman herself confesses to having gone through the same process. She also had to read and hear other women's stories in order to find the missing parts in her autobiography. It was this process that led her to formulate her theory about womanhood and storytelling (Felman, 1993:15). In this context the woman she cites is Simone de Beauvoir and her idea of *becoming*. Felman developed her theory on the process of becoming by reading de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir famously claimed that one is not *born* a woman but one *becomes* a woman. She then explained: 'I became a feminist especially after the book was read, and started to exist for other women… one is not born, one becomes, a woman' (quoted in Felman, 1993:11-12)[11]. Only when women read de Beauvoir and recognize themselves in and through her book, does de Beauvoir become a woman writer, who speaks by and for herself. In other words, women need to read de Beauvoir and to identify with her writing in order for her (de Beauvoir) to become an existing voice.

Adriana Cavarero opposes the idea that: 'I am you, you are me, the words which one says are women's words, hers and mine' (Cavarero, 2000:60). She develops this opposition into a theory which highlights the self's uniqueness (and is therefore singular, non-repeatable, and non-exchangeable from one women to another). Felman, on the other hand, embraces this idea and forms her theory accordingly. She does not suggest that women should become or embody the other. Instead she believes they should identify with one another in order to become selves and autobiographers[12]. Therefore she confirms the pattern according to which a self can create her autobiographical practice only through a relational act. This relational act revolves around the relationships between a self and an other; it involves storytelling and it locates the other as the storyteller. Within this relational act, a self identifies with the story of the other. This process leads her to know her own story and then tell stories about it.

11. De Beauvoir meant her book *The Second Sex* (1949).
12. I believe the process is more complex. There are aspects in each self that require a clear sense of being unique. However, there are other elements that can be reached through process of identification. Moreover, the process of identification is an essential element in discovering each self's uniqueness. The self does not identify with everyone and every story she hears, but only with certain elements in different stories. For this reason the process of becoming a self occurs in between these two possibilities. This confirms Friedman's idea that a woman forms her identity in between the shared and the unique.

3.b *Once* – Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Once* (2002) provides an interesting insight into the notion of identification, and can be seen as a choreographic engagement with that notion, as outlined by Felman. *Once* is an autobiographical work choreographed and performed by De Keersmaeker herself, that premiered in 2002 in Brussels. I saw the work in London at The Place, in the autumn of 2004. Even though De Keersmaeker was alone on stage, I perceived the piece as a duet between De Keersmaeker and the singer-songwriter Joan Baez (b. 1941). De Keersmaeker, then in her late 40s, moves and reacts to Baez's album *Joan Baez in Concert, Part 2* (1963), played from beginning to end. While reacting to Baez's songs and words, De Keersmaeker negotiates an identity in a dual process: on the one hand, it is De Keersmaeker who finds herself within Baez's songs; on the other hand, it is within the relationships between the two women that De Keersmaeker is revealed to us, her audience. As I will demonstrate below, De Keersmaeker's body and movements in relation to Baez's words and songs reveal to us an experience of identification and relationships which enables a relational autobiographical act to evolve.

Once starts when De Keersmaeker enters an empty stage and throws her shoes to the back stage, maybe imitating Baez's action of taking her shoes off during her concerts. She then comes and stands in the centre of the stage looking at us, the audience. De Keersmaeker looks at us, but at times it seems as if it is not us she sees but herself in a mirror. She examines herself and talks to herself, as if she is trying to practice something. It seems that there is an internal voice she is listening to, reacting to and dealing with. It is as if De Keersmaeker is conducting a private dialogue with her stream of consciousness. All of a sudden, from nowhere, she almost falls, she bends and starts making random movement and gestures. After around 15 minutes she walks across the stage to a big sound system located at the side. She places a record on the turntable and Baez's album starts to play. From that moment, what we witness is De Keersmaeker and her relationship to Baez. She repeats the movement sequences with small and subtle differences throughout the choreography. She shifts between abstract movement and gestures, or more natural, everyday ones like: walking, hopping, skipping, sitting, gazing or pausing. She adds some expressive movement and various

facial expressions. In this way De Keersmaeker develops her relationship to Baez and crafts *Once*.

De Keersmaeker discovered Baez as a young girl. The album which she dances to in *Once* was recorded live in 1963. It is the album she used to listen to, dance and sing along to during her childhood and later in adulthood (Burt, 2011:265). However, *Once* is not a representation of De Keersmaeker's own history and memory. Rather it is a reconsideration of her relationship to Baez and its development over time. We observe this development in the way De Keersmaeker reacts to Baez on stage, and is most noticeable in how she responds to the songs she hears. The songs' words are projected onto the wall throughout the choreography. She sings them, highlights some of the songs' words, sometimes screams the words, or else hums the melody. At times she imitates the words, or reacts to them with a gesture, or with an outburst of emotion. Sometimes De Keersmaeker herself looks at the projection, pointing out words, which she wants us to notice. Her response to the songs changes constantly: at times it is De Keersmaeker the child who 'was dancing alone to a record she loved' (Burt, 2011:266) while dancing raw and playful movement material; at other times it is De Keersmaeker the woman and artist who holds an opinion and who creates a more controlled and more aesthetic movement language.

In one of her interviews, De Keersmaeker discusses Baez. She says: 'Joan Baez spread a profound belief in social change. She fought for… a sense of well being… the word 'together' was supposed to mean something and its force made everything seem possible' (quoted in Burt, 2011:264). This indicates that her relationship to Baez was also related to Baez as a political activist. We, too, are made aware of Baez's political agenda through the songs she chooses to sing and the comments she makes in between songs. On stage De Keersmaeker shares Baez's political opinions. She does this through and alongside Baez, though she suggests them less directly. We witness De Keersmaeker projecting her political views in three stages: first, through her choice of letting us hear Baez's comments during the performance; second, when she chooses to silence Baez during the song 'We Shall Overcome' (at 25 minutes) and to say silently the song's words herself - this song is known for its association with

the Civil Rights movement (Burt, 2011:266); third, when she projects on her (almost completely) naked body footage from the silent 1915 film 'The Birth of a Nation', which is about the US civil war (at 1:07:00 minutes). This moment lasts for five minutes, until De Keersmaeker leaves the stage and ends the performance. De Keersmaeker's choice of film and her decision to project it over her almost completely naked body presents De Keersmaeker's ideas of vulnerability, hope and sorrow. On the one hand she presents herself, a woman artist naked, alongside Baez and the early 1960s which presented a wish for a new and better world. On the other hand she projects images of war and despair, mirroring the war in Afghanistan which took place during the creation of *Once* (in 2002) and that started after the September 11th (2001) terrorist attack in the US.

Baez's reactions to politics, to empathy and to the collective (which she reveals in her songs and her comments to the audience in between songs) help De Keersmaeker to formulate her own ideas on these issues. This is a crucial point: De Keersmaeker develops her ideas, agenda and dance through and alongside Baez. This applies not only to her political views but also to her personal and artistic opinions. De Keersmaeker therefore shares an experience with us - a woman and a choreographer observing herself remembering, moving, listening, getting emotional, getting frustrated, thinking, singing and being on stage alongside another woman artist. We, the audience, observe De Keersmaeker in an intimate choreography, with bare feet, at times almost completely naked and exposed, forming her relationship to Baez. De Keersmaeker depends on Baez's storytelling in order to get to know her own story. It is Baez and her songs that convey a form of storytelling, and empower De Keersmaeker 'to become a story' (a dance) herself (Felman, 1993:126).

There is a reason why De Keersmaeker forms her relationship with Baez, and why she reacts so strongly to the songs Baez sings. De Keersmaeker talks about it herself when she says during an interview:

> There are a number of things set in those songs, which I really do believe in, maybe values that were proper to a certain time, which maybe would be considered utopian or naïve. I don't think it's ridiculous to express a certain feeling that love, compassion and justice are values which are worth more than ever to defend (Burt, 2011:264).

Besides their political aspect, the great majority of Joan Baez's songs are traditional songs, folksongs and tales of a sort. They are a form of storytelling where the stories have been told and retold from generation to generation. Folklore is relevant to my discussion because of its unique features: firstly, it is a 'unifying thread that links jokes and myths, gestures and legends, costume and music into a single category of knowledge' (Ben-Amos, 1972:3); secondly, it is 'a sphere of interaction' (Ben-Amos, 1972:15) where past and present, individual and the collective, the human and the social, all intertwine, co-exist and influence one another. As Dan Ben-Amos, known for his extensive research into folklore, writes:

> Folklore is very much an organic phenomenon in the sense that it is an integral part of culture[…] tales and songs can shift media, cross language boundaries, pass from one culture to another, and still retain sufficient traces of similarities to enable us to recognize a core of sameness in all their versions[…] the materials of folklore are mobile, manipulative and trans-cultural (Ben-Amos, 1972:4).

By re-singing these folklore songs/stories and by connecting them to personal anecdotes as well as to the current political context, Baez shares with us who she is. In doing so, Baez tells her story through other people's stories. Once again, in Woolf's words: 'a woman writing thinks back through her mothers' (Felman, 1993:147), though in this context it is also through her fathers and other ancestors. Thus it is not only De Keersmaeker who is caught in an act of identification, but also Baez. They both find their stories as women, artists and political thinkers through others' storytelling. They are both caught in the act of *reading* as Felman articulated,

in which they 'enter an old text from a new, critical direction' (Felman, 1993:5). They do this so they can tell a story of their identification with other people's stories and hence of who they are. This is probably also the reason why De Keersmaeker lets us hear Bob Dylan singing 'With God on Our Side' instead of Baez (at 1:03:50 minutes) towards the end of the piece. Dylan, who was Baez's partner in 1963, is one of the folk legends of our time and he wrote that song. In the 1963 concert Baez covered Dylan's song for the first time. At that moment in the piece, while Dylan sings in the background, De Keersmaeker stops dancing. Instead she sits on a chair at the side of the stage, she gazes, she unfolds and then folds her hair, her actions seem random, personal and detached from us, her audience. It is as if De Keersmaeker disengages from us and instead is busy with an internal feeling or an internal thought. It is as if De Keersmaeker reflects on Baez's process of identification, where Baez could find her singing and songs through Dylan's storytelling.

In her famous article 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976), Hélène Cixous calls on women to look for their hidden femininity in their bodies. A woman, claims Cixous, can free herself from political and cultural agendas and chains by returning to her body; and it is this body she should use in order to express herself. She writes: 'by writing herself, woman will return to the body, which has been more than confiscated from her. Write yourself. Your body must be heard' (Cixous, 1981:250). Writing one's body is equivalent to voicing one's self. It makes a body visible, noticeable and represented. And it is the body, which according to Cixous holds an identity and a sense of self. Later on Cixous discusses (bodily) writing as an act of hearing. She writes: 'when I write… I do not write, I curl up in a ball, I become an ear' (quoted in Cavarero, 2005:143). Cixous articulates this idea further in her conversation with Adrian Heathfield (Paris, 2010) titled: 'Writing Not Yet Thought'. Writing, says Cixous: 'is coming to hearing. We have to lend ears, not only an ear but many, many ears, to what is already speaking, murmuring, singing around… speaking writes, its writing around, it comes from afar… and preliminary of writing is that: its paying that hearing attention…' (Cixous online, 2010). Thus Cixous claims that to write one's body (self) means also to listen; to listen to many other bodies (selves) that write themselves. Once she starts listening, noticing and acknowledging other bodies, a woman can write her own body-voice-self. Yet again identification is discovered in

the process of voicing one's self, but through different forms of writing and reading. This confirms the view that only through relationships between different women, between bodies that write and listen, can a woman find her own body-voice-self-story.

Cixous and *Once* meet within the art forms we see and hear – dancing and singing. De Keersmaeker 'writes' her voice in her choreography; she moves her own movement language, her drives, her technique, and her emotions. She also lets us see her body, revealing it as the choreography develops. Furthermore, De Keersmaeker also listens. She listens to another woman and alongside her writes herself through her body. The moment that captures this idea best is when Baez sings a Portuguese song: 'Nu Bello Cardillo' (at 1:09:05 minutes). At that moment De Keersmaeker is completely silent and all we can hear is Baez. However, De Keersmaeker is fully physically engaged and dances a beautiful dance. The words are not important, as De Keersmaeker admits in one of her interviews, saying she did not understand the song's lyrics as a young girl (Burt, 2011:265). The importance of the moment is the vision of a woman dancing alongside a woman singing - a body that voices a self while listening to another bodily voice.

De Keersmaeker's relationship to Baez entails a process of identification, in which De Keersmaeker can find her story through Baez. This relationship enables De Keersmaeker to choreograph her relational autobiographical act. Thus we witness an act and a process. In doing so De Keersmaeker gives us the opportunity to personally engage with the notion of identification. It is our reflection upon her personal process that De Keersmaeker invites us to experience. This invitation is most noticeable when De Keersmaeker silences Baez and stays alone on stage. This happens first at 24.30 minutes while the song 'We Shall Overcome' starts; then at 38.50 minutes when De Keersmaeker's favourite song 'Long Black Veil' begins; later at 50 minutes when De Keersmaeker dances in complete silence for four minutes; then again at 58.50 minutes while Baez sings the USA national anthem. The final moment is at the end of the piece when we see De Keersmaeker dance alone until she leaves the stage to end the choreography. Each time Baez is absent an effective reaction is created. Her

disappearance from the stage leaves De Keersmaeker alone and vulnerable. In these moments, as an audience member, I realized I was also caught up in the process of identification. I identified with De Keersmaeker. What is more, I identified with De Keersmaeker's identification with Baez.

3.c *Air Hunger – community project*

My work *Air Hunger – community project* (2014) is an examination of identification. Whereas *Sunday Morning* is an exploration of identities in a communal act, in which the shared and the unique help one's self to form an autobiography, *Air Hunger – community project* is an exercise in identification as described by Friedman and interpreted by Felman. The idea for the piece emerged while I was analyzing Eszter Salamon's work *And Then* (which I will discuss in the next chapter). At some point in her piece Salamon tells a story about an experience of drowning. As she described the moment of letting go, the feeling of surrendering to the Pacific Ocean's big waves, I experienced a profound moment of identification. Hearing Salamon's story raised my consciousness, evoking a forgotten sensation. At that moment I decided to create a piece around the notion of breath. My thinking was to achieve this by channeling the creative process into an exercise in identification. I wanted to find out what the notion of breathing means to me, through engaging with other people's stories. I decided to set up a range of situations in which people, whoever they are, could experience identification. My idea was to connect to Felman's hypothesis that '*people* tell their stories (which they do not know or cannot speak) through other's stories…' (Felman, 1993:18, the emphasis is mine).

Air Hunger – community project is a project for 20 non-professional dancers (some of whom had never danced before), a professional dancer, a composer and a singer. We premiered the piece at JW3, London on 7th April 2014. I wanted the work to be about this group of Londoners, young professionals, non-dancers, who come from different places around the world. My aim was to create a relational autobiographical choreography. I wanted the autobiographical elements to be revealed through a physical exploration that could potentially evoke (and provoke) some psychological-

existential themes. I felt that it would require a special sensation, an unusual action, or a sense of urgency to initiate personal interaction and group formation. When I realized that the notion of breathing united all these factors, the community project was born.

For three months we met once a week for five hours to explore the notion of breath, breathing and the feeling of having no air. I invited the dancers to tell personal stories, their own stories with regard to breath, and then to dance (or move) the sensation or emotion they felt. I then asked the other dancers to react to the stories with which they could identify. I asked them to react in movement, as I did not want to hear the details of what they identified with. While performing this task, a real sense of identification, as Friedman discusses, developed. Here again, the dancers shared a mental, emotional and intuitive identification with their different sensations and experiences. However, the act of identification did not always relate to what the dancers heard (the stories), but rather to what they saw (the movement). It became clear that watching someone else's dance revealed something within the other dancers. During this process the dancers dispensed with the need to talk, and all I witnessed was exchanges of movement. The dancers danced their stories; they danced their reaction to a story or else their reaction to someone else's dance. At times they danced alone, at other times they paired to dance a duet through some contact work, and sometimes they formed a group to dance. It was as if the dancers had to dance themselves, as if their bodies and dancing contained something within them that needed to be revealed, to be seen and to be expressed. Once more, Cixous and her idea of bodily writing and the bodily voice (as I demonstrated above) were evident.

It was interesting to observe non-professional dancers reacting with movement and with their bodies. They needed to learn how to access their limbs, core stability, coordination, strength, dynamics and physical possibilities during a period of experimentation. There was bound to be a sense of both rawness and of freshness, which meant that a unique and visceral body language and movement vocabulary could be developed. On the one hand there was a lack of technique, but on the other hand the movements were rich in individuality and sincerity.

This was the reason why I wanted the dancers to dance 'free' in *Air Hunger – community project.* I did not want them to match or to imitate a specific technique, or to follow a particular movement language, which would have constrained their individual ways of moving. Therefore, during the creative process we worked through improvisational tasks rather than through taught form. We explored natural movements like walking, running, swaying, and pausing. We also expanded the acts of inhaling and exhaling into different physical possibilities, such as opening and closing, stretching and contracting, and so forth. The idea was to allow the dancers to discover their own interpretations of the various physical tasks and, accordingly, to become familiar with their movement. In addition, I wanted the dancers to learn about their bodies and dancing in relation to other dancers. I therefore led the dancers into contact work, where two dancers danced together through physical contact or by reacting physically with one another. I also invited the dancers to join different group exercises, in which they could move with and alongside other moving bodies.

The creative process leads me to explain my decision to discuss *Air Hunger – community project* in relation to the act of identification rather than in relation to the community and to a communal act. *Air hunger – community project* contains a clear process of the shared and the unique as described above in the second chapter. The community aspect is indicated in the title of the piece itself. However, instead of analyzing the community aspect of the work, I found it more interesting (and more inspiring) to analyze the process which enabled the dancers to learn about their bodies and to discover their 'dance'. This process involved acts of identification. In other words, through sharing personal stories, dancing alongside other dancers, reacting to other dancers' movement and while watching the 'dance' of others, various acts of identification occurred. In doing so the dancers empowered one another to become a story (a dance) in itself (drawing from Felman). It also empowered them to become a story (a dance) of a group; a group of non-dancers, who danced their ideas on breathing, air and breath. To put it differently, these dancers did not have a 'dance' – qua – 'voice' before we met in the studio. It was through different acts of

identification that their dance, their moving stories and their voice, could take shape, be heard and seen.

The creative process was not linear. It shifted from one image to another, from one moment of recognition and realization to another. I decided to structure the choreography accordingly and therefore I created a collage of different moments. The idea was to create a collage of images, some physical, some verbal (storytelling), some of a group work and some individual, all of which relate to the notion of breath and came about as an effect of processes of identifications. A story enabled a movement to become; a physical exploration inspired a story to be told. Additionally a solo inspired a duet to be danced or a group to be formed. The dancers were breathing, inhaling and exhaling, they were physically engaged with it. They danced it or else told stories about it. I introduced one moment after the other without trying to convey a storyline or a narrative, creating instead a sequence of different encounters between stories (or parts of stories) and movement.

Air Hunger – community project is therefore made of a number of physical images and stories. I incorporated only a few stories and movement explorations in the final piece; stories and movement which I found poetic and that evoked a strong sense of interaction and exchange between the dancers. The idea was to stay true to the moments of discovery – where we found ourselves within a story of another (be it a story told or danced). This is the relational autobiographical act that Friedman offers and that Felman elaborates on; an act which happens through different processes of mental, sensational and emotional identifications with an other.

I would like to mention two examples which demonstrate the way I structured the piece. The first is Naori's story. At 14:18 minutes Naori stands and looks at the audience (the other dancers sit in the middle of the stage with their backs to the audience). Naori starts to tell a story about her grandmother who came to visit her in London. In the story Naori says that her grandma loves London. However, she prefers Japan because Japanese houses are made of wood, and wood breathes. At that point

the stage is silent and Panos, who is lying on his back, crawls slowly towards Naori. He then starts to blow onto her feet and in doing so helps her to move forward slowly and cautiously. This image develops slowly when Falli joins Panos and blows into Naori's hands so that they can move alongside her feet. The scene ends when the dancers carry Naori one by one till she is able to stand on her feet alone. Naori's story evokes something in Panos; he joins her and establishes a new dance-story. We do not need to hear the details of what it is in Naori's story that stimulates Panos, what he is identifying with, or how he re-reads Naori's story. Rather we need to witness how one person's storytelling provokes a reaction and interaction and leads to a new story (dance) being told (danced).

Figure 3 – Panayiotis Pimenides & Naori Ishikawa in *Air Hunger – community project* March 2014

The second example involves the whole group. This moment relates to Giulia's story (at 28:18 minutes). Giulia shared her memory about a big black dog that lived near her when she was a child. Whenever she got near to it she held her breath. She believed that if she did not breathe near the dog it would not be able to hear her. This story was followed by contact work, where each dancer connected with another dancer to form a duet. In these duets, the dancers held each other's mouth. At times it seemed as if they were trying to prevent their partner from breathing, and at other

times it was as if their partner needed their hand to breathe; as if the other dancer's hand was their oxygen. Giulia's story revealed something about the whole group. It was not a story but a sensation; it could be felt rather than talked about. Giulia's story initiated the process of emotional and sensational identification (like the one Friedman's discusses) and it encouraged the dancers to move together, to explore this sensation in movement. In other words, the dancers could dance this sense of identification rather than explain it or tell stories about it. In a way Giulia's story empowered the group to become a group and to dance a dance about her story; more accurately, to dance their physical identification with her story.

Figure 4 – Giulia Chini & Pablo Rimoldi in *Air Hunger – community project* March 2014

Whereas De Keersmaeker tells her own story through her relationship with Baez and the process of identification she experiences with Baez's storytelling, I choreographed a different process of identification. *Air Hunger – community project* is a choreography in which a group of 21 dancers form their relationships to the notion of breathing, air and breath through acts of identification. In this choreography the subject matter leads to acts of identification which, in turn, helped us to discover (to some extent) who we are.

Air Hunger – community project starts with the dancers walking, running, stopping, inhaling, exhaling, holding their breath and then breathing again. The choreography then shifts to Tomasz's story (at 5:05 minutes). Tomasz describes his first experience of diving. At some point Tomasz said: 'it is an art to find a balance between inhaling and exhaling'. Tomasz's sentence became my guide throughout the creative process and in the act of choreographing the piece. I used it metaphorically and aesthetically. On one hand, and as Tomasz says, breath itself is a form of balancing. Breath consists of a delicate yet essential balance between inhaling and exhaling. On the other hand, the piece itself had been choreographed while considering different forms of balancing. Firstly, finding a balance between physical images and spoken words. Secondly, equally incorporating individual work and a group formation. Thirdly, offering the dancers a balance within each movement exploration. Each physical moment on stage was formed within a considered balance between free movement and a structure. The dancers on one hand could dance freely and in their own way, while on the other hand I provided them with a framework. One example occurs at the very beginning of the choreography where the dancers enter the stage, walk, run, stop, stand and breathe. The dancers could walk or run however and wherever they wished on stage; they could also stand wherever they wanted and in the way they wanted. However, they needed to follow the instruction of one dancer, who told them *when* to run, *when* to stop and *when* to hold their breath. Another example appears at the end of Tomasz's story (at 9:00 minutes) when the dancers move on the floor freely even though they are very close. They are asked not to stop and not to touch one another. This occurs again at 18:11 minutes when the dancers start to move on stage individually. In this moment the dancers dance their ideas of inhaling and exhaling. They do so while expanding their dancing and movement into actions such as opening and closing, reaching out and retracting, expanding and contracting, widening and narrowing, all of which resemble the act of breathing. The last example happens after Guilia's story (at 29.00 minutes), where the dancers dance in pairs and where each dancer has to keep her/his hand on her/his partner's mouth while moving in time and space.

Balancing all these elements enabled me to negotiate a balance between the emotional content of the creative process and a more 'objective' understanding of breath. In other words, maintaining a balance between expressivity and objectivity. The importance of maintaining a balance between expressivity and objectivity lay in the idea of making *Air Hunger – community project* less private. Like in *Sunday Morning*, I was not interested in creating a choreography which reveals the dancers' personal stories, but rather to create an insightful choreography on how acts of identifications enable a self to form a sense of identity. My idea was to present the notion of breath and breathing while suggesting different physical and sensual aspects of it. This, I hoped, would enable me to choreograph the act of identification in all its complexity, rather than delving only into its personal side.

Air Hunger – community project comprises a collection of individuals who are moving and dancing together as a reaction to acts of identifications on the notion of breath. It is a choreographic-event of breath where the dancers could sense breath - hear it, see it, and therefore maybe even feel it - rather than just tell stories about it. In other words, I did not try to explain what it was that the dancers were doing. Instead I let the dancers be fully engaged with the act of breath and the process of identification. In summary, *Air Hunger – community project* is a relational autobiographical choreography. In it the twenty-one dancers engage in a process of identification which enables them to discover moments in their autobiographies.

In this chapter I discussed the notion of identification, as Friedman understands it, and as Felman transforms it into an act of reading and re-reading. The notion of identification arises alongside the development of interdependency between a self and an other. The self needs and depends upon the other's story and the other's ability for storytelling. In the next chapter I will discuss interdependency, which, on the one hand, challenges the self's sense of authority, and, on the other hand, makes relationships necessary. I will discuss these ideas by analyzing Eszter Salamon's choreography *And Then (2007)*, my choreographic work *...in the middle with you (2014)*, and by discussing Judith Butler's theory of the accountable self (2005).

4. Interdependency: Forming an identity through self-other relationships

In the previous chapters I discussed relational autobiographical choreographies that are elaborated through a self and its various relationships with others. I mentioned different processes within these relationships in which a self can discover who she is. In the first of these processes the other is seen as the autobiographer. In the second storytelling is regarded as an essential component in discovering an identity. In other instances identity itself becomes a narrative. The self-other relationship is essential in all processes: the self needs the other in order to know who she is. She needs both the other's ability for storytelling and the other's story, as that story will empower her to also become a story. Friedman discusses this sense of dependency, stressing its mutuality, where both the self and the other develop interdependent relationships with one another. She discusses this idea while quoting Nancy Chodorow, who writes: 'the individual does not oppose herself to all others, nor feel herself to exist outside of others, but very much *with* others in an interdependent existence' (quoted in Friedman, 1988:41).

The notion of interdependency between a self and an other can be viewed in a number of different ways. For example, both Friedman and Chodorow discuss interdependency in relation to women's identity. However, in my discussion below I extend the act of interdependency beyond Friedman's and Chodorow's feminist perspective, arguing that it is a human condition. I claim that the relationships between a self and *any* other are capable of filling in the missing parts in a person's autobiography. And it is this capability that creates a sense of interdependency between a self and an other. The development of this idea reflects my thinking during the years of doing my PhD research. I have developed a better understanding of fundamental elements in my work as I have become more conscious of my creative research and the processes of choreographing. The turning point came when I realized that I often was not really concerned with the life-stories we shared in the studio. Rather, I was interested in the relationships that the search for the stories evoked between the performers, and between the performers and me. At times these relationships seemed more important to me, or were more relevant to the notion of autobiography than the stories' details. Interestingly, I gradually became aware that

these relationships themselves formed an identity. I concluded that the only way I could practice autobiography within choreography was through my relationships with others. Now these relationships were no longer a choice but a necessity: I was dependent on them. In other words, without these relationships my autobiographical choreographies could not exist. This realization shifted my interest from the self's story to the relationships it developed with others, females and males. As a consequence, from that moment on, my story was not relevant in itself, and it was not necessary for me to be on stage anymore.

But it was more than that. I realized that the relationships I developed with my collaborators were far more important than I had thought. They were almost a substitute for elements in my life-story, in my autobiography, which I was not aware of. They were an essential part of my puzzle – the puzzle of Hagit the choreographer and Hagit the woman. This is the specific aspect of the self-other relationships I will discuss below. I aim to do so by presenting the process in which a self blurs her sense of not knowing (who she is) through the relationships she forms with others, as follows: by introducing Judith Butler's theory of the accountable self; by analyzing my work *...in the middle with you*; and by discussing Eszter Salamon's choreography *And Then.*

4a. Judith Butler and the accountable self

Judith Butler discusses the complex and unavoidable relationships between a self and 'an other', through the act of narration or, actually, the impossibility of narratability. Within this theory she discusses an 'accountable self' which, she claims, can never be fully narrated. Butler formulates her theory in relation to ethics and political philosophy, and she introduces the notion of the 'accountable self' in order to construct a theory of responsibility. Her concept of 'accountability' relates to a legal and moral discourse, and questions the ability of a person to give an account of herself (for example in court). I want to examine how Butler considers this notion through narratology and self-other relationships. In my view, her interpretation of the

importance of those relationships when forming and debating an identity is particularly interesting.

Butler's 'accountable self' can be seen to have features in common with the narrated self described in Cavarero and Felman's theories. However, while Cavarero and Felman believe a self can be narrated, Butler believes there is a certain amount of incoherence and therefore impossibility in narration. The impossibility lies in the limitation a self has when trying to give an account of itself. This is due first to the limitation of language, words and narratives. Second, it is because of the complex situation and the unavoidable relationships between a self and an other; relationships that blur the self as an autonomous entity. Butler's notion of accountability requires a self to be able to consciously and earnestly recount sequences of events of its life to an other or others. Because she debates and questions the ability of a self to know itself as a fully narrated self, the act of giving an account to oneself appears to necessarily fail. According to Butler, the moment we narrate the 'I', we 'become speculative philosophers or fiction writers' (Butler, 2005:79).

Butler discusses many processes that describe the limitations of narration and therefore prevent a self from accounting her self fully and truthfully. These procedures have social and political implications:

> When the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacity for narration; indeed, when the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist. The reason for this is that the 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation to a set of norms (Butler, 2005:8).

Butler posits that 'social temporality' consists of the different norms which are decided and coded through and by society. These norms are what enable me to give

an account of myself and be appreciated by other/s. This act, narrating myself through 'externality', through 'modes of speech that have an impersonal nature' (Butler, 2005:52), disorients myself from myself and therefore interferes with the way I give an account of myself.

In addition, Butler suggests that accountability is always a response to an other's demand (as in trials, confessions or even talk shows), and it serves different purposes under different circumstances. She says: 'I begin my story of myself only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account. Only in the face of such a query or attribution from an 'other' – 'was it you?' – do any of us start to narrate ourselves, or find that, for urgent reasons, we must become a self narrating being' (Butler, 2005:11). This fact changes the way I give an account of myself each time, as I give this account in relation to the person I am speaking to. It interrupts the narrative and it transforms the act of narration. Narration therefore becomes: 'interlocutory, ghosted, laden, persuasive and tactical' (Butler, 2005:63).

The unreliability of narrating one's self has consequences. It suggests the self is partially unknown, limited in acknowledging itself and therefore cannot give a full account of who she is (Butler, 2005:42). For this reason, Butler suggests that when asking a person, Who are you? we should ask 'without any expectation of a full or final answer…so if there is, in the question, a desire for recognition, this desire will be under an obligation to keep itself alive as desire and not to resolve itself' (Butler, 2005:43). In other words, in order to answer the question 'Who are we?' we need to be narrated entities. Being *un-narrated* selves leaves our desire to know and acknowledge whom we are unresolved. This idea may highlight firstly the possibility we can never be (fully) narrated and secondly the difficulty of knowing one's self through narration. However, as Butler suggests, it also offers an opportunity.

The (positive) opportunity within our impossibility lies here: 'I am only in the address to you, then the 'I' that I am is nothing without this 'you', and cannot even begin to refer to itself outside the relation to the other by which its capacity for self reference

emerges' (Butler, 2005:82). The 'I', says Butler, is also a 'you', therefore if not everything can be narrated, there are other forms of information, which can help me to discover 'who' I am, and they are all a part of my relationship with you. My narrative, accountability or autobiography is not something I have, suggests Butler, but is something I can discover when you and I encounter each other. Those moments in my narrative and identity, which I do not know, can be revealed to me only in the moments of *interruptions, interactions,* and *relationships* with you.

Butler cites the French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche in relation to this idea. Laplanche claimed that we all experience primal attachment to others (most likely our parents). He then added that within this process of attachment the other 'besieges and engulfs' us (quoted in Butler, 2005:74). The other becomes embodied in us, and therefore is able to install thoughts in and to transmit messages to our sense of self. This factor prevents us from detaching ourselves completely from that other. It creates an 'indistinguishability' between our sense of self and the other, and it affects the core of who we are (Butler, 2005:75). As Laplanche writes, this process leads a person to feel: 'not at home with himself in himself… which means that in himself, he is not the master and that finally… he is decentered' (quoted in Butler, 2005:75). This process of attachment and the impossibility of a complete detachment create complex self-other relationships. These relationships are based on moments of interaction with an other, interruption by an other and (interdependent) relationships with the other. Thus the sense of 'who we are' is located (also) in our understanding of all these moments, and all the others with whom we form relationships. This idea leads me to reflect back on Richard Schechner's restoration of behaviour theory (which I discussed in the second chapter), that proposes, albeit through a different theoretical framework, that a self acts, behaves and understands her story/ies (and hence herself) in between her 'self' and the other(s). As Schechner writes: 'a person performing recovers his own self only by going out of himself and meeting the others – by entering a social field' (Schechner, 1985:112).

The relevance of Butler's theory to the work I am presenting here lies in her belief that these moments, where a self's story is missing, unknown, forgotten or else does

not exist, are filled by the relationships she forms with others. This is not the notion of identification, where a woman can understand her life through reading and hearing about the life of other women, nor is it about hearing one's life from an other. Rather, it is about those gaps in one's story that can only be filled by and through the relationships a self forms with others. It is this dependency of the self on the other that Butler invites us to explore. She regards it as a dependency that blurs the sense of loss as well as the deficiencies in one's self-identity and autobiography.

4b. *...in the middle with you*

...in the middle with you - premiered in early 2014 in London and continued developing and touring until 2015 - was my attempt to choreograph a process of becoming an identity while forming interdependent relationships between a self and an other. The work does not include life-storytelling. Instead, it is itself a life-story of group formation and bonding; a collaboration between five dancers, three males and two females. I do not perform in the piece.

The artistic idea was to explore the notion of repetition and the fear (my fear) of the everyday, the routine and mundane aspects of life. Initially, I suggested the subject matter to the performers in order to see what kind of relationships they would form to the topic and to one another. To our surprise, a few days into the rehearsal period and during an improvisation task, 'the everyday' became 'the middle'. This improvisation task involved the performers in individual work, where they needed to repeat different physical assignments for a very long time, and could only rest in the middle of the studio. The middle of the studio became a place for reflecting, resting, watching the other performers as well as a starting point for new exploration. I chose the middle as a resting place because I wanted the dancers to be engaged and to be part of the exercise even while pausing and reflecting. At the end of that task, which lasted over an hour, Takeshi shared his experience and said:

> I was working very hard and was out of breath so had to sit in the middle. I was sitting there for what seems like a very long time, and I got bored. I got bored in the middle point, and it saddened me. The middle place, which seems to be the most appealing one when we started the improvisation, a place to relax, reflect and just 'be', became the most unpleasant one.

From that moment on the dancers and I were preoccupied with the notion of 'the middle' and 'being in the middle'. The everyday, the routine and repetition, which had at times felt too specific and too realistic, became the middle point, where vagueness, free interpretation and the poetic could be intertwined.

The interesting point was that none of us had any real sense of what 'the middle' meant, and we kept changing our minds about what it was and what it represented for us. However, in that vague place we could all meet. At first, the search for words, definitions and experiences that could express the notion of 'being in the middle' seemed impossible and created a feeling of helplessness, as it kept meaning different things to different people, and different things in different situations. As a result, it created a sense of urgency and dependence on the others. The search for meanings, and the possibility of this being everything or nothing, created an opportunity for us to find each other. This was a crucial insight. It meant that even if we did not find a complete story or a complete understanding of the middle point, we could find something else that was as important, as valuable and as relevant - the relationships we formed with one another. These relationships could fill the periods of incoherence, of lack of knowledge or the gaps in information and meaning. Thus 'being in the middle' was a metaphoric, lyrical and emotional state that could not be defined. However, it was our meeting point, where we could form relationships with one another. And it was these relationships that blurred the sense of not knowing.

The creative process of *...in the middle with you* engaged the performers in different physical assignments, which required them to work together. I was looking for ways to form relationships between the performers without creating a storyline, or a

narrative about relationships. Rather, I wanted the performers to be busy with a physical task that would force them to use one another in order to succeed. I thought they could use our reflections on the notion of 'being in the middle', the different sensations, emotions, scenarios and anecdotes the performers shared in relation to the 'middle point'. Accordingly, I tried to devise various assignments to recreate those sensations. The assignments were gradually developed into demanding physical tasks that forced the performers to work as a group. We improvised each task for many weeks, refining the main elements in each one, the intention behind it and the relationships between the performers within it. This refining process created two different kinds of tasks. The first kind set up a situation where the performers needed each other physically. They could not perform the task without physically engaging with one another. They needed to hold, support, follow and lift one another. The second kind engaged the performers in individual tasks, thus creating a different form of connection, not a physical one. When performing the individual tasks, the connection occurred through the rhythm, the spatial patterns and the intention of the performers. These elements created a kinetic, energetic and at times even psychological link between them. In this way, even in the most individual tasks where the performers needed to work alone, a sense of a group emerged.

Once we began working on the different tasks I realized that our stories, which we shared while researching and searching for the notion of 'being in the middle', were not needed. This implied that our personal stories in *...in the middle with you* had almost completely disappeared. In their place we were left with the five performers searching for each other. This search led us to form different kinds of relationships, and it was these relationships that then formed a life-story in themselves. In other words, a shift had taken place and the concept that became central to *...in the middle with you* was the reconsideration of the act of narration. This concept tied into Butler's suggestion that language and words become limited when forming an autobiography. She articulates this idea when claiming that once we try to narrate our identity we become 'speculative philosophers or fiction writers' (Butler, 2005:79), as I demonstrated above.

For this reason I chose to answer the questions related to the performers' identity and activities in the form of a relationship rather than through the act of narration. In other words *...in the middle with you* deals with questions related to the choreography's meanings, the identity of the performers and the nature of their relationships. In doing so it links indirectly to the essence of who the performers are. These questions are, for example: 'What is the middle point?' 'Who is in the middle point?' 'What does it mean to be in the middle point?' and so forth. However, instead of answering these questions with narratives, I answered using relationships. Answering these questions in this way resonated with Butler's idea that: 'the structure of address is not a feature of narrative… but an interruption of narrative' (Butler, 2005:63). This interruption leads Butler to locate the answer to the question: 'Who are you?' within relationships.

...in the middle with you is choreographed from the different tasks I devised during the rehearsal period. I left some of these tasks open to improvisation, others I composed carefully, creating a clear and tight score, which the performers needed to follow. Each task lasts for a number of minutes, repeats and exhausts itself in an unresolved manner, and starts and stops suddenly. In all these tasks the performers strive to find each other over and over again in order to survive and succeed in performing the task. This structure created a framework where 'being in the middle' became firstly being in the middle of *an action* with you; presented by a necessity to meet the other performers and engage with them in an interdependent relationships. It then became *...in the middle with you*, which eliminates (almost completely) the idea of a narrative and narration. It lacks a beginning, an ending and a sense of continuity (similarly to the title of the piece), suggesting the performers' stories are absent, but acknowledges them as relational individuals.

The opening scene of *...in the middle with you* involved a task and a text (this text is almost the only text we hear throughout the choreography). The task incorporates different kinds of walking. The dancers enter the stage one by one and while walking create different patterns, rhythms and physical shapes on the stage. In carrying out this task the performers slowly develop group awareness, which leads to group formation. The task revolves around a quote of the Danish philosopher Soren

Kierkegaard, which Takeshi tells to the audience. In it Kierkegaard shares his thoughts on the importance of walking, and how if one keeps walking every day, everything will be all right[13]. This task and text introduce the notions of repetition, actions, relationships and their positive qualities, all of which are the essence of *...in the middle with you*. From that moment on the performers are occupied with different physical tasks: they are not able to walk on the floor but only on clothes or on other performers' bodies. They shift between flying (being lifted) and falling. They crawl back and forth on the floor, from the back to the front of the stage, in different variations. And these are only a few examples.

Figure 5 – Takeshi Matsumoto, Ben McEwen, Mariana Camiloti, Kiraly Saint Calire & Sophie Arstall in …in the middle with you January 2014.

I would like to mention two specific tasks, which exemplify an interesting interdependency between the performers. These are the three minutes of stillness followed by three minutes of laughter at 21:51 minutes, in the middle of the choreography. The task starts when the five performers arrive at the back of the stage. They sit and have to stay completely still for three minutes. During these three minutes they are allowed to move only once. After three minutes the performers start

13. The full quote: 'Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Everyday, I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it. But by sitting still and the more one sits still, the closer one comes to feeling ill. Thus if one just keeps on walking, everything will be all-right' (Kierkegaard, 1847).

to laugh. The action starts quietly but then becomes a hysterical laugh, which lasts for a full three minutes. The dancers cannot (or else are asked not to) stop laughing. In addition, they have to keep raising their voices throughout the three minutes. For these two tasks, I decided not only to eliminate narratives but also to avoid direct relationships between the performers. The performers were busy with a physical assignment, each one with her or his own body but still completely dependent on the others' commitment, energy and engagement. These particular tasks generate in the performers a psychological dependency on one another rather than a physical one. This psychological dependency puts them in an exposed and vulnerable place.

Figure 6 -Takeshi Matsumoto, Ben McEwen, Mariana Camiloti, Kiraly Saint Calire & Sophie Arstall in …in the middle with you January 2014.

I end *...in the middle with you* with an optimistic moment, full of energy. This moment shows the performers in a task where they either fall or fly. It starts with Ben who says 'I fall' (at 43.16 minutes), and then falls at the back of the stage, while the other performers run towards him to help him stand upright again. From that moment and until the end of the choreography the performers support one another while falling or flying (being lifted in the air). Even though the dancers are exhausted, they keep running, supporting one another, screaming 'I fall, I fly' to describe their actions, and they are all together. The end mirrors Butler's positive attitude towards our sense of dependency on the other. Dependency, claims Butler, enables one self to

engage with her sense of generosity, self-acceptance and humility (Butler, 2005:80). The self knows her limitations. She knows she cannot be fully narrated and therefore cannot fully understand her sense of self. However, she can surrender to the sense of dependency and look for the support she needs, in the form of relationships with others (Butler, 2005:80). Even though the performers do not know what 'being in the middle with you' means, they are not totally in the realm of the unknown. They manage to fill this unknowingness with the relationships they form with the others, by bonding with one another and through their dependency on one another.

...in the middle with you lacks a single narrative or narration, and therefore we do not hear what the middle point means. However, it evolves from the performers, who have to be completely absorbed in the group work, or else the whole thing will fall apart. This choreography strives to communicate not only the physical and mental dependency on one another, but following Butler, the assertion that each performer needs the other in order to form a life-story and a sense of self. In choreographic terms this interdependency becomes a necessity: in order to be able to fulfil the tasks the performers need one another. For example, they need the others' energy to be able to to stand still or laugh unstoppably, or else physically needing the others in order to be supported in a fall or a lift. The dancers cannot fulfill the tasks (whether physically or energetically) without the others. However, the significance of the interdependency in the piece is more than just physical. The various modes of relational dependency are the essence of this piece. *...in the middle with you* therefore offers an insight into a relational autobiographical choreography through relationships, rather than through narratives. In other words, by fulfilling the tasks together – as dependent selves – the performers create a narrative that reflects and tells a tale about relational subjectivities.

4c. *And Then* - Eszter Salamon

And Then by Eszter Salamon is another example of a choreography in which the autobiographical act takes place within the interdependency one's self experiences towards an other. Salamon, a Hungarian choreographer based in Berlin, premiered the

piece in Berlin, August 2007, as part of the TanzIm August Festival. *And Then* is about telling life-stories, not singular or linear ones, but many fragmented ones told by various women all named Eszter Salamon.

Throughout the piece, we are introduced to different women named Eszter Salamon. One by one they appear and disappear and share moments from their lives. The stories give very little information about who these women are, where they come from, their age, nationality, profession, etc. The same story can be repeated or continued by another Eszter, or by the same Eszter, but in a different moment in the choreography. The stories start in the middle, with no beginning and no end, and there is not a clear connection between them. It is as if the stories have been chosen randomly, with only a coincidental link between them. The various stories are intertwined with one another to the point that no story belongs to one particular Eszter. The stories are sometimes replaced or followed by conversations around a topic or a thought, but here again we do not witness whole conversations. We only get to see and hear snippets from them. The 'Eszters' talk about many things: love, sex, relationships, globalization, life, food and so forth. The various topics suddenly appear and disappear; they are never resolved.

Besides confusing the stories and the conversations, Salamon chooses to play with different forms of communication. She constantly shifts from presenting the women on stage to films, which she projects on the wall. These films were made before the performance. We therefore hear and see the women either talking live on stage or else projected on the wall and, at times, doing both. Salamon also choreographs these women's actions. Throughout *And Then* we see the different Eszters move, sit, or engage in an everyday activity. They talk on the phone, water their plants, play the cello, smoke, listen to music, sing, put on their makeup, gaze, pause to think and so on. At times we watch them move together and listen to one another, at other times we watch them move or tell their stories alone. What Salamon shows us is constantly shifting and changing and although the scenes are short, there is not a sense of haste as the pace of each one is slow.

And Then does not present a straightforward connection between the women, or between the stories they share and the conversations they have. Neither does it convey any sort of uniformity in the way we see and hear these women. The whole piece is a mysterious collage of fragmented narration and broken narratives. The only evident connection between its various elements is the fact that these women posses the same name; they are all named Eszter Salamon. However, the more the choreography unfolds in front of us, the more we experience these women in a similar act. We begin to realize that the stories are there, interweaving within the scenes and characters in order to debate and share an experience of being an 'Eszter Salamon'. Throughout the piece Salamon the choreographer uses the different Eszter Salamons' sense of self and twists it, abuses it, rearranges it and confuses it to the extent that we do not know who this self is anymore. The women, their stories and their identities are so intertwined that it is not clear which story belongs to whom. And it is also not clear if these women are telling their own stories or not. However, it is clear that these women are negotiating a sense of being a self, a woman, and an Eszter Salamon.

The fragmentation of stories in this way creates ambiguous Eszters, or perhaps a collage of many different Eszters. This makes one wonder whether Salamon the choreographer is looking for these different Eszters in order to engage with her own sense of self. It is as if Salamon needs the other Salamons in order to become *a* Salamon. But it is more complex than that. Salamon not only fragments the sense of self, she also fragments the choreography itself. She then leaves the puzzle unresolved, never revealing the missing parts in these women's stories. This fragmentation and non-resolution clarifies Salamon's idea that a story (probably her story as well) lacks continuity and information. She leaves us in a state of not knowing because she does not know either. What she does reveal are different sets of relationships she forms with the other Eszters. In doing so Salamon expresses the idea that the missing parts of one's story can be found through different encounters with other selves. This idea echoes Butler, who writes: 'in the beginning I am my relation to you, ambiguously addressed and addressing, given over to a "you" without whom I cannot be and upon whom I depend to survive' (Butler, 2005: 81). Therefore, even though we never hear a complete story, memory or conversation, we do not

experience a loss. We are not left with a sense of missing knowledge, and there are no missing parts. The encounters between the different Eszters, the different stories, and our (the viewers') own imagination fill in the missing parts of those women's stories. It could be said that, with these women's appearance and disappearance throughout the piece, an experience is revealed: an experience of an autobiographical act, where a self discovers herself (only) as a relational one.

A further essential point needs to be made with regard to Salamon's ambiguous and unresolved way of storytelling. This approach to storytelling raises an interesting question with respect to Salamon's role as a choreographer and autobiographer. It seems that Salamon's storytelling invites us, as audience members, to be active participants in *And Then*. She gives us responsibility, as it is up to us to figure out the relationships between the stories, the different women and how these stories relate to one another. It seems as if she refrains from giving *And Then* a single meaning embedded in one coherent narrative. Instead, she 'opens' her choreography to a range of interpretations which shed light on the relationships of the author of a text and its receiver; in this case me, the audience.

This way of choreographing enables us to see *And Then* as a 'writerly' text, a term conceptualized by the French thinker Roland Barthes. Barthes, who replaced passive reading with active writing by the reader, claimed that the true function of writing is reading. He explained at the end of his famous essay 'The Death of the Author' from 1968 that: 'we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author' (Barthes, 1977:148). Its purpose is to enable the reader to be born as a political, active and, at times, revolutionary subject. Barthes writes:

> …a text is made of multiple writings… but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up

> writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (Barthes, 1977:148).

Once the author is dead, the singular reader steps in as the co-writer, producing meanings that evade the (original) author's intentions. It opens up a text to different meanings, and it becomes the reader's role to make up these meanings. In contrast to the 'readerly' text, which posits the writer as authoritative and presumably provides a single interpretation and meaning, Barthes introduces the 'writerly' text that liberates the reader in the act of reading. The meaning of the death of the author lies in the possibility of reading the text 'away from the search for the author's intended meaning and toward the interpretation of a text based on the codes and conventions that convey its meaning' (Foster, 1986:242).

Salamon the choreographer does exactly that. She invites us, as members of her audience, to collaborate with her and to become the author of her work alongside her. Throughout the piece she gives us time to watch how the women and their stories appear and disappear. This generosity of time and the ambiguity that Salamon allows us to experience, gives us time for observation both internally and externally. In turn, this observation gives us the opportunity to rewrite these women's stories. Without us, without our input, imagination, connections, life, memories and feelings, these stories will not necessarily make sense. Even though we do not know exactly which Eszter is which and what the story is of each one, we do not need to know. Not knowing these elements does not feel like a loss or a failure, but rather like an opportunity; an opportunity to discover the relationship between these women. But it is also an invitation to observe the relationships we form with what we hear and see and with the different Eszters. Ultimately, Salamon is dependent on us to develop these relationships. Thus the relevance of the death of the author to *And Then* lies in the possibility of transcending the work by Salamon herself. The personal is communicated only in order to explain relationships.

Writerly text enables a sense of openness, flexibility and abstraction that provides the ground and base for an act of collaboration. The importance of discussing Salamon's writerly choreography lies in the fact that it enables me, as an audience member, to become an active participant of her work. I become her collaborator. As a collaborator I am invited to form a relational act (in other words to form self-other relationships) with *And then*.

In summary, I would like to mention an anecdote related to *And Then*. After about an hour, the Eszters starts to talk about their name itself, and in doing so raise issues such as being a minority, not only as women but also as women who possess a Jewish name. They mention the Holocaust, a sense of discrimination, and wanting (or not) to fit in. After 3 minutes we start hearing an electric guitar playing an original score in the background, and the lights go off. Slowly, a new story is being shared and this time it is a long one and it is being told by different women until only Eszter Salamon the choreographer is talking to us. She tells us a story of an experience she (or maybe another Eszter) had in Australia, an experience of almost drowning. At this moment, and this happens every time I watch the piece (which I have done many times), I am moved to my core, and I cry. A combination of factors causes this reaction in me. Firstly, the different female voices and the music create a sense of intimacy for me. Secondly, my sense of familiarity with the different women and their stories develops during the choreography. Thirdly, there is the notion of recognition and acknowledgment. I am also a Jewish woman who lost many family members in the Holocaust. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, is the act of identification, which I sense towards Eszter and her drowning story (which I discussed in the third chapter). These factors are not linked to a specific memory or emotion. They create a general sensation and, at that moment, I feel I am being recognized as a dependent self.

In this chapter I discussed two choreographies, which display self-other interdependent relationships. Both choreographies engage with the idea that a self fills the missing parts in her autobiography through her relationships with others, and therefore is forced to feel dependent on them. However, they elaborate on it somewhat differently. *...in the middle with you* presents this idea while avoiding

narration and narratives. *And Then,* on the other hand, distorts the act of storytelling rather than avoiding it. *...in the middle with you* presents the formation of relationships as an alternative to narrative. It is an example of how relationships blur the sense of not knowing. *And Then,* by contrast, highlights the moments a story is interrupted and interacted with by another story of another self. These moments *are* the missing parts in one-self's narrative. Both choreographies are a living confirmation of Butler's theory, and testimony to the positive effect the other may have on us. We do not possess our narrative, accountability or autobiography. Rather, they are something we can discover through the other. In this, both works are examples of relational autobiographical choreographies.

Conclusion

Deirdre Heddon ends her book *Autobiography and Performance* with these words: 'autobiographical performances… are performances of aspiration and possibility, creative acts that have the potential to contribute to ongoing cultural transformation' (Heddon, 2007:172). She then asks creators of autobiographical work to look at the past through the present in order to 'consider the future and what we might choose to make there' (ibid, 172). I understand Heddon's words as a suggestion to leave autobiographical performances open to interpretations. Her words, to my mind, are an invitation to allow autobiographical performances to be reshaped according to different and new perspectives of the self. The implication is that if we keep this perspective we will be able to continue developing autobiographical performances, both theoretically and aesthetically. This thesis discusses complex choreographies which do exactly that: they reconsider old forms of autobiography in order to elaborate on new ones.

The research I have presented here introduces what I recognize as a new practice in contemporary choreography: relational autobiographical choreographies. This practice has its origins in the postmodern, post-structural and feminist reconsideration of the modern conception of the subject and of its representation in the conventional, patriarchal form of autobiography. Relational autobiographical choreographies display collaborative acts, where a self and an 'other' can meet and mutually 'become'; where a subject becomes through different relational acts which are a form of collaboration. These choreographies have a number of distinguishing features. Firstly, they locate the act of storytelling itself in the process of forming and acknowledging an identity. It is (life) storytelling that enables a self to become a self, and hence to elaborate an autobiography. Secondly, they reconsider the role of the storyteller and locate the other as the essential co-autobiographer. Lastly, they advocate a process, a continued act of discovering and rediscovering who we are, through our relationships with others. I discussed this choreographic practice by engaging with three different elements: the idea of a community (as in *Sunday Morning* and Cavarero); the act of identification (as in *Once* and *Air Hunger – community project* as well as in Felman) and the sense of interdependency (as in *...in*

the middle with you and *And Then* as well as in Butler). These elements were introduced by Susan Stanford Friedman (1988) and are regarded as fundamental in women's autobiographies. I demonstrated each of these elements by discussing theories and choreographic practices, all written and devised by female, feminist and post-modernist theoreticians and practitioners.

Accordingly, this thesis should be perceived as a presentation of a detailed performance analysis. It describes and explains a contemporary cultural phenomenon which understands the self through her relationships to others. It then articulates this phenomenon's appearance in choreography and declares it a relational autobiographical one. Throughout the thesis I discuss what this form of autobiographical choreographic practice does; how it affects me as a viewer, what its key elements are, how these elements are displayed in the choreographic practice and how I – as a choreographer – then implement these same elements in my own work. The thesis therefore introduces a new perspective on choreographic/dance analysis and the study of autobiography.

In the choreographies of De Keersmaeker, Salamon and my own, which are at the core of my research, life-storytelling and relational acts are portrayed both as theory and as methodology. They are practical tools and theoretical frameworks to work with structurally and aesthetically. In these works we incorporate different practical strategies and ideas that deal with the notion of becoming a 'self' and an autobiographer. These are firstly, the acts of telling, retelling and hearing (life) stories of others and ourselves. Secondly, they are ideas of locating one's life-story within the story of the other, or filling the gaps in one's identity through relationships with an other. The personal story in our choreographic works is a means to an end. It is not intended as a medium to express oneself, but to communicate an idea, a situation, a condition or a thought. We are not really concerned with a story's details and any information it might convey. What matters to us is the theoretical framework, which defines our sense of identity as relational, never (only) individual. This framework has two key features: one, it offers the (optimistic) possibility that this new form of autobiographical choreographies will enrich identity through the 'self-other'

relationships; two, it is the basis of a community, which is vital for us. The community enables us to develop a sense of empathy and responsibility towards one another, giving us the feeling that we belong.

As I have demonstrated throughout the thesis, relational autobiographical choreographies contain a number of choreographic strategies, all of which bring forth and foreground a relational aesthetic. In other words, these choreographic strategies enable relational autobiographical choreographies to, firstly, position singularity as a shared experience occurring between a self and an other (or others) and always in a process of becoming. Secondly, to perceive the relational as embodied. The self as an autobiographical agent is relationally constituted not only through narrative but also through the lived and experiencing body and its relationships with other bodies.

Drawing on my own practice, here is a concise list of these choreographic strategies. First, these works based on more than one performer; they cannot be performed alone or perceived as a solo. Even if there is only one performer on stage she encounters an other (or others) in the form of a recorded voice, a film, a song or else all of these at the same time. Thus the relational comes across through different forms of relationship and through different forms of communication and presentation. Second, relational autobiographical choreographies engage with the idea and form of a collage. Their collage is made of physical images, storytelling as well as group and individual acts. By fragmenting the unity and coherency of narrative and narration the collage communicates a process rather than a finite story. Third, these choreographies vary the role of the storyteller. Relational autobiographical choreographies alternate between the different storytellers (who sometimes tell the same story) as well as between the forms of storytelling. The stories can be told by words, movement or a physical engagement, either by the performers themselves or for example through a song being played on stage. Engaging with different storytellers and forms of storytelling challenges the roles of the performers and their sense of uniqueness. It also confuses the sense of ownership and authorship and strengthens the sense of the collective and the group. Fourth, these choreographies maintain a balance between expressivity (emotional content) and objectivity by considering the balance between

individual work and group formation, improvisation and structured movement, physical tasks and moments of dancing, moments of movement and moments of verbal storytelling. This balance preserves the personalization of the work while preventing it from becoming private and singular. It therefore enables these works to communicate a concept of relational autobiography rather than being perceived as an expressive mode of one's self. This balance between expressivity and objectivity is also a result of the use of repetition, the fifth choreographic strategy on the list. Relational autobiographical choreographies incorporate different aspects of repetition: the same story being told in different ways - words, movement, music or through different storytellers - and repeatedly. As well as movement sequences and physical explorations performed in various forms or by different performers, either alone or in a group (for example the notion of breath). The last choreographic strategy is the idea of choreographing relationships through physical tasks rather than through narratives and expressivity. Here, the relational aspect is revealed while observing the performers fulfilling various physical tasks. The performers physically and energetically depend upon the others in order to perform and achieve the tasks and by doing so reveal different relational acts.

Overall these choreographic strategies enable the relational acts to be perceived as fragmented, part of a process, as personal rather than private and as originating from positive interdependency and acts of mental identification. Additionally, they enable the performers to be presented as interdependent individuals who create different kinds of narratives (in the form of choreography) on relational selves.

As I stated in the introduction, I am first and foremost a practitioner. My starting point is my practice and it is through my practice that I form a dialogue with the theory. Poetically speaking the act of reading and re-reading (drawing from Felman's theory) is present throughout the research and it forms a theoretical dialogue with the choreographic work. The practice in this thesis, i.e. the work of De Keersmaeker, Salamon and mine, is in itself a form of a theory (a source of theoretical knowledge). It is a theory presented in the form of body, time and space, as well as in the form of craftsmanship. In other words, relational autobiographical choreographies (those I

mentioned here, my work included) are evidence that artistic practice can be (and in this thesis is) a form of a theoretical discourse. These choreographies create and debate theory within practice. They present theoretical and theoretical-practical discourses. Here it is worth referring to G.L. Ulmer again: 'Theory is assimilated into the humanities in two principal ways - by critical interpretation and by *artistic experiment*' (Ulmer, 1994:3 the emphasis is mine). More poetically, and this time in Barthes' words quoted in Ulmer: 'There exist certain writers, painters, musicians in whose eyes a certain exercise of structure (and not only its thought) represents a distinctive experience, and both analyst and creators must be placed under the common sight of what we might call *structural man,* defined not by his ideas or his language but by his imagination' (Ulmer, 1994:4).

Given the analytical framework of my thesis, which is based on performance analysis, I can only speculate as to whether the audience is aware of the relational aspects I analyze and choreograph. However, the audience's perception is beyond the parameters of this research. I write exclusively from my own understanding, my own interpretation of these works. In addition, the reader is invited to engage with my practical work through the DVDs attached to the thesis. These DVDs are a comprehensive documentation of my choreographies. They reliably present the elements discussed in the thesis and enable the reader to become familiar with the work. They reveal the relational aspects of my work, my choreographic choices and the aesthetics.

At this point, and drawing again from Heddon, I would like to offer some constructive thoughts on the future of my practice, thereby stretching the scope of this thesis. In doing so I believe I am laying the foundation for a future theoretical reading of relational autobiographical choreographies. Towards the end of this research I started developing *Free Falling*, a new choreography I started working on during the spring of 2016. In it I present a further evolution of relational autobiographical choreographies, in both practice and in theory. It is a collaboration between four performers, two females and two males. Again, I do not perform in the piece. The choreography explores the notion of falling and recovering from a physical as well as

from a psychological perspective. In some respects, this piece is a development of the last task in my work…*in the middle with you.* That task revolves around the actions of falling and flying, i.e. rising from the floor and being lifted up by the performers (which I discussed in the previous chapter). The decision to expand that task into a whole choreography developed gradually during the creative process of *…in the middle with you*. I became aware of an essential element in my work which I had not been paying enough attention to: the emotional content of the relationships between the performers. This emotional component evolved from various physical explorations, and confronted the performers with feelings such as trust, neediness, helplessness, loneliness, achievement, letting go, etc. By encouraging the performers to engage with these sensations I enabled them to achieve a deep sense of emotional connectivity, which held the potential for a rich exploration of the nature of the relationships themselves. It also revealed the psychological ramifications of meeting others and one's self. These psychological consequences were there throughout my choreographic practice and within the works I discussed in this thesis. However, in *Free Falling* they became my point of departure, the centre of my research and interest.

I explored this psychological element during the creative process of *Free Falling*. The idea was to analyze the emotions, feelings and sensations that emerged at the meeting points, when we met one another while experiencing falling and recovering. These feelings, emotions and sensations are different forms of bodily reactions which occur when a self meets and interacts with an other. By interlacing the two forms of information, the relational and the bodily, new narratives emerged that shed light on the essence of who we are. Thus *Free Falling* continues my engagement with relational autobiographical choreographies, but at the same time it attempts specifically to engage with an exploration of the power of 'affect' - the theory of emotions. According to the British social psychologist Margaret Wetherhell, affect situates 'meaning making' in the different bodily reactions by attaching them to cultural, social and personal histories, and always in relation to someone or something else (Wetherhell, 2012:96). Affect in this sense refers to how people are moved by others and what affects them at the moment of their interaction. It shifts the focus of emotions, feelings and sensations from the individual to a shared experience, between

the self and others. As Wetherhell explains, affect is a combination of 'senses and sensibilities'. This means that affect combines the body with:

> feelings and thoughts, interaction patterns and relationships, narratives and interpretative repertoires, social relations, personal histories and ways of life[…] patterns layers on patterns, forming and re-forming. Somatic, neural, phenomenological, discursive, relational, cultural, economic, developmental, and historical patterns interrupt, cancel, contradict, modulate, build and interweave with each other. (Wetherhell, 2012: 14).

Figure 7 – Sophie Arstall, Fernando Balsera & Stephen Moynihan in Free Falling October 2016

My encounter with the notion of affect helped me to understand and articulate what had happened at our meeting points while in the studio: what we discovered through our relationships; and what the emotional process was that we all went through during *Free Falling*'*s* creative process. In this way *Free Falling* enabled me to add various 'senses and sensibilities' to the relational and the autobiographical (Wetherhell, 2012: 13). These senses and sensibilities resulted from my decision to choreograph the details of the contact work between the performers, the different ways of touching and

supporting one another, and the endless modalities of falling and rising up. All of these provide perceptiveness and sensitivity to the physical aspects of falling, supporting and recovering. I therefore perceive *Free Falling* as an *affective autobiographical choreography*, assuming that by highlighting the affective aspect of it, which happens only in the meeting points between a self and others, the relational aspect becomes an essential embodied component that is experienced mutually. Affective autobiographical choreography shifts the relational aspect from the narrative (spoken or danced) to the body. It transforms autobiography to the physically embodied.

The transition from relational autobiographical choreographies to affective ones was directly connected to the development my practice has undergone during the years of my research. This development can be seen in the shift in my work away from the act of narration, in order to explore the notion of bodily relationships. With each work, from *Sunday Morning*, to *Air Hunger – Community Project* and to *...in the middle with you,* I gradually became less and less engaged with storytelling in the choreographies themselves (though not necessarily in the creative process). Instead, my interest and research shifted towards an investigation of the nature of the bodily, physical, and emotional relationships we formed in the studio and their relevance to autobiographical acts. I began to focus on physical and movement details - concentrating on subtleties, energies, the act of listening-reacting to one another, the different possibilities of contact work, the exploration of spacing, timing and movement. These details intersect in and through the body, and therefore display emotional and psychological content and convey a sense of connectivity, mutuality and interdependency between the performers. For this reason I reached Butler only at a late stage of my research. Butler questions the ability of narration to shape our identity. She then suggests that it is within the relationships we form with others that we can get to know who we are. These relationships cannot be narrated, but can be experienced. While experiencing these relationships we can discover who we are. In other words, these experiences fill the unknowingness in our autobiography (Butler, 2005). It was therefore essential for me to find a way to analyze these relationships, hence my interest in the theory of emotions. I intend to explore this aspect of my work further.

Also, the notion of affect and my choreographic work *Free Falling* enable another element to be considered in regard to relational autobiographical choreographies - the audience. The audience was not a part of my research or the written thesis. However, it is an element with which I would like to conclude my thesis in order to end on a note about the 'future' rather than thoughts about the 'past'. Relational autobiographical choreographies have the capability to extend the self-other relationships to the audience as well. This capability is realized when engaging with 'writerly' choreographies, a term I mentioned while discussing Salamon's work, in the fourth chapter. I discussed the concept of writerly choreography from an audience member's point of view while explaining my experience of seeing and perceiving Salamon's work. This experience enabled me to become Salamon's collaborator. It is here, when concluding my research that I would like to briefly expand on the idea of writerly choreography and to write about it from a creator/choreographer point of view.

The engagement of writerly choreographies gives relational autobiographical choreographies multiple meanings and can be viewed as an invitation to the audience to engage with the work as collaborators. In these cases the audience is perceived as a potential other. Together, the audience, the choreographers and the performers can hopefully discover who they are. This collaboration enables these choreographies to be 'read', seen and perceived as the audience's missing story, as a story of another, with which the audience can identify. It can also compensate for the audience's lack of their own sense of self. In this sense relational autobiographical choreographies are relational also in relation to its spectators, who become its others, and through them might discover themselves. These are, of course, only possibilities and this idea is therefore a hypothesis. As noted above I haven't researched either the audience's reaction to the work or their understanding of it. However, by drawing from my own experience as a relational autobiographical choreographies' audience member, I believe there is potential for further investigation of that element.

Regarding the audience as a potential other brings me back to the notion of affect and to my piece *Free Falling*. Once writerly choreographies invite the audience to engage with the work as collaborators, it requires further consideration of the audience's role. There is a need for a methodology that will allow extending relational autobiographical choreographies into a shared experience, where the audience, the performers and the choreographers could play the role of the 'other' for one another. Affect has the potential for emotional connectivity, and it therefore creates the opportunity to develop these choreographies accordingly. As the Canadian social theorist and philosopher Brian Massumi says:

> In affect, we are never alone. That's because affects in (the philosopher Baruch) Spinoza's definition are basically ways of connecting, to others and to other situations. They are our angle of participation in processes larger than ourselves. With intensified affect comes a stronger sense of embeddedness in a larger field of life — a heightened sense of belonging, with other people and to other places (Massumi in Zournazi, 2003:219).

In addition, as the Canadian culturist theorist and artist Erin Manning claims, the potential for interaction with the audience takes place once the body, the bodily reactions and the movement 'take place not in the subject or in the object, but in the relational itself' (Manning, 2013:3). This inspired me to choreograph *Free Falling* the way I did. By choreographing the performers in relational acts, affecting and being affected by one another on stage, I hoped to increase the chances of affecting the audience as well. In other words, by affecting the audience I wanted them to form self-other relationships with *Free Falling*.

As aforementioned, this research reveals a new choreographic practice: relational autobiographical choreography. While the thesis discusses the key elements of these choreographic practices on a philosophical – theoretical and practical – choreographic level in depth, it does not discuss its relationship to the audience. The conclusion, however, briefly presents the need for a further investigation which revolves around

the audience's perception and hopefully an understanding and engagement with the work. Thus, the conclusion summarizes my research but, at the same time, it suggests a possible future development of it.

I would like to end my conclusion with a reference to Simone de Beauvoir, whom I mentioned while discussing Felman, in the third chapter. Felman quotes de Beauvoir who wrote: 'I became a feminist especially after the book was read, and started to exist for other women… one is not born, one becomes, a woman' (Felman, 1993:11-12). I then noted that de Beauvoir claimed she became a feminist and a woman writer only after other women read her book *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir needed other women to react and identify with her writings in order for her to become an existing voice. Drawing from my own experience, it is only after my choreographic works have been viewed by the audience, when people have seen my work and have had some kind of reaction to it that I feel I am in the process of becoming a creator of relational autobiographical choreographies.

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Appendix 1:

Sunday Morning (2011-2012)

Figure 8

Programme notes distributed to audience members for *Sunday Morning*:

By Hagit Yakira

Performers-collaborators: Takeshi Matsumoto, Orley Quick, Cornelis Joubert, Hagit Yakira

Rehearsal Director: Maika Klaukien

Dramaturge: Yarit Dor

Scenographer, Lighting Designer: Rachel E. Stanners

Costume Makers: Cornelis Joubert, Berit Laageide

Music: Tom James Scott

Photography: Tony Nanadi

Commissioned by Trinity Laban

Supporters: Arts Council England, Laban Theatre, The Place, Dance Base and JCC.

Inspired by the different origins of her fellow performers, Hagit uses *Sunday Morning* to explore memories of childhood, of family, of home, and of fear of loss. Through evoking these memories (and feelings) she seeks to consider the emergence of individual identity, while at the same time examining the persistence of longing to belong.

Tour Dates:

2011:

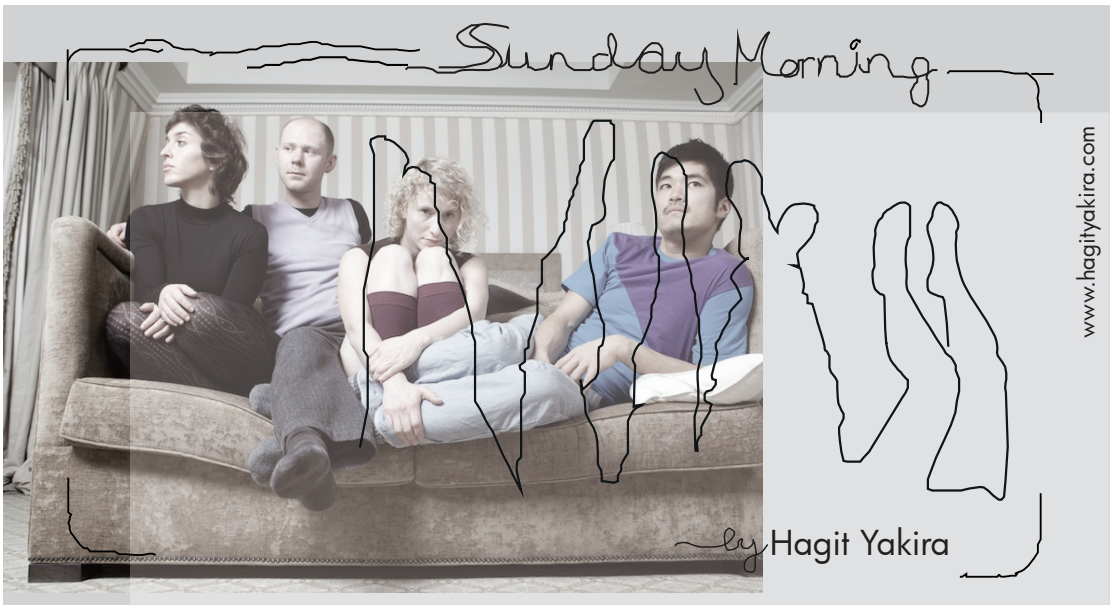
16 Feb — **Quay Arts-Isle of Wight**, 18 Feb —**The Place-London**, 3 Mar — **The Gulbenkian-Canterbury**, 19 Mar — **Rich Mix-London**, 14 May — **Deda-Derby,** 15-24 May — **Tour in Israel**, 26 May — **University of Hertfordshire**, 9 Jun — **Giessen-Germany**, 13-17 Jun — **Dance Base-Edinburgh** 26-27 Jun — **Exeter Fringe Festival**, 5-10 Jul — **Birmingham European Festival**, 11-12 July — **Laban Theatre-London**, 1 Oct — **Rich Mix-London**, 19 Oct — **Roehampton University-London**, 17 Nov — **Jacksons Lane-London**, 18-19 Nov — **Laban Theatre-London**

2012:

24 Feb —**Sadler's Wells-London**

Appendix 2

Sunday Morning - flyer



Comissioned by JAPAN THEATRE Supported by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND LOTTERY FUNDED made at the place

Choreography by Hagit Yakira

Performers_Takeshi Matsumoto_Orley Quick_Cornelis Joubert_Hagit Yakira

Producer_Maria Tsaousi
Rehearsal Manager_Maika Klaukien
Dramaturge_Yarit Dor
Scenographer, Lighting Designer_Rachel E.Stanners
Musician_Ronen Kozokaro
Costume Designer_AWAITING DETAILS
Flyer Designer_Valerie Barraclough

Sunday Morning by Hagit Yakira now showing:

Appendix 3:

Air Hunger – community project (2014)

Figure 9

Programme notes distributed to audience members for *Air Hunger – community project*:

By Hagit Yakira

Performers: Verena Schneider, Giulia Chini, Caroline Delacroix, Phillip Schone, Anne Jaluzot, Maiya Kovtunova, Tomasz Fiszer, Sophia Broido, Mohah Sharaf, Panayiotis Pimenides, Naori Ishikawa, Laura Narvae, Inbar Jeffery, Sonia Nechita, Detti Andalits, Falli Palaiologou, Marianne Ogbogbo, Pablo Rimoldi, Bernadett Andaltis, Ania Trela, Dorota Kotowicz, Sophia Broido, Daniel Izquierdo

Composer and musician: Domenico Angarano

Sound Artist: Kiraly Saint Claire

Costume design: Giulia Chini

Lighting design: Gene Giron

Photographers**:** Takako Hasegawa

Film maker: Ling Lee

Supporters: Tripspcae projects, Laban Theatre and JW3

We often forget that we breathe, but never forget to breathe...
We invite you to take a moment to inhale deeply. The instant of losing one's breath evokes many reactions, images and memories. The performers and the audience will be sharing the same breath in a collaboration that will both inspire and allow moments of exhalation. *Air Hunger* is a sensual, emotional and honest sharing of experiences that will leave you breathless.

Tour Dates:
2014:
7 April- **JW3-London**, 12 April – **Laban studio Theatre-London**, 11 May – **Tripspace-London**, 22 July – **Laban theatre-London.**

Appendix 4:

Written as a blog by one of the participants, Falli Palaiologou:

I don't really know where to begin telling its story…
'Air hunger' is a community project. Or perhaps, more accurately, it's a project which magically turns us into a community. I refer to magic here not to imply an effortless result, but rather to emphasize the *poetics* of this process; a process of generative creativity that is stimulated by exposure and sharing.
I guess to begin with I really feel the need to distinguish the *process* from the *theme* of our project. For us - the 22 Londoners - the driving force to take part in this work was the project as a process. We agreed to participate knowing almost nothing about the topic. We responded to Hagit's call to explore expression, interaction and creativity through bodily movement. In retrospect, I think that this was a very important aspect of the whole project. We agreed to experiment and we were ready to experiment with anything. In a sense, this agreement formed our prior and most important commitment as a community.
So there we were, committed to each other from day one. And here comes the magic. How do you take a group of people with no reference to each other and turn them into a *chorus* of people, into an ensemble that feels, makes decisions, takes actions, and essentially … just breathes in coherence, in togetherness?
I remember there was a lot of hesitation in the beginning. Hesitation to be exposed, to share, to explore how far you can reach, to discover and then accept or even challenge your limits, to lose yourself in the group, to become invisible, to keep yourself, to stand out, to lead… hesitation all over the place. And the topic…. Breath… this introduced even more hesitation. Breath lies at the essence of life and death. Often it felt that by revisiting breath, we revisited hope and fear. It took time and a lot of discomfort to abandon our hesitations.
I think awareness is a key word. Hagit used physical awareness to allow us to reach an emotional awareness. We worked our way into becoming aware of our physical selves and we started by using the simplest possible thing: breathing. It was like taking baby steps. We explored breathing in and out, fast, slowly, breathing while jumping up, lying down, upside down, not breathing, taking breath, giving breath, breathing quietly, loudly. Have you ever noticed how your breath sounds; the beauty

of it? Try it. You should try it. So powerful is this primitive physical act that simply the experiencing and sharing of its various dynamics created some sort of empathy. We found ourselves empathizing with the group and we explored how to act and react through movement, through touch, through our senses.

One step at a time, one breath at a time.

In my eyes, a kind of 'theatrical drama' has been taking place each Sunday, yet a more self-involved one than usual; an experiential drama, I dare to say. In our Sunday explorations, we experience moments of comedy, and we experience moments of tragedy. Interestingly enough, I find that we are more keen on, or curious about, the latter… perhaps because of our need for *catharsis* that comes after tragedy. The project has been a very engaging process. And catharsis comes on many levels. It is liberating us and at the same time bonding us. It is a personal journey, but somehow never a lonely one. You can break free from yourself, from others; as much as you can find comfort in yourself, in others. I say 'comfort' and I immediately realize how this emotion has been pivotal to our explorations. Comfort - its presence and its absence, the quest for it, the hunger for it, the fear of indulging in it, the denial of it - emotional comfort, physical comfort. Bonding with the group has been our emotional comfort; as air and breath are our physical comfort.

On our Sundays, I stretch my body. I move around, I wonder a bit… And then I just inhale air, and exhale… I inhale air, and exhale….

…..until at some point I find the group… And I inhale comfort.

Figure 10

Appendix 5:

…in the middle with you (2014-2016)

Figure 11

Programme notes distributed to audience members for *…in the middle with you*:

By Hagit Yakira

Performers-collaborators**:** Takeshi Matsumoto, Sophie Arstall, Mariana Camiloti, Ben McEwen / Marc Stevenson and Kiraly Saint Claire

Composer: David Leahy

Guest musicians: Domenico Angarano, Vincenzo Lamagna

Rehearsal Director: Maika Klaukien

Dramaturge: Inna Eizenberg

Costume Designer: Berit Laageide

Lighting designer: Fay Patterson

Film Maker: Ling Lee

Photographer: Rachel Cherry

Process Mentoring: Lou Cope

Co-commissioned by Greenwich Dance & Trinity Laban Partnership

Supporters: Arts Council England, BDE2014 and Independent Dance.

This poignant piece delves into the nature of human experience. At times light and playful, at times stark and entrancing, the choreography moves us in very personal ways. Live music and a cast of five dancers lure audiences in with personal stories of love, friendship, loss and life, energy and physicality to take us to a more muted and abstract experience that becomes very intimate. Uplifting and inspiring*,...in the middle with you* makes an emotional poem of everyday life.

Tour dates:

2014:

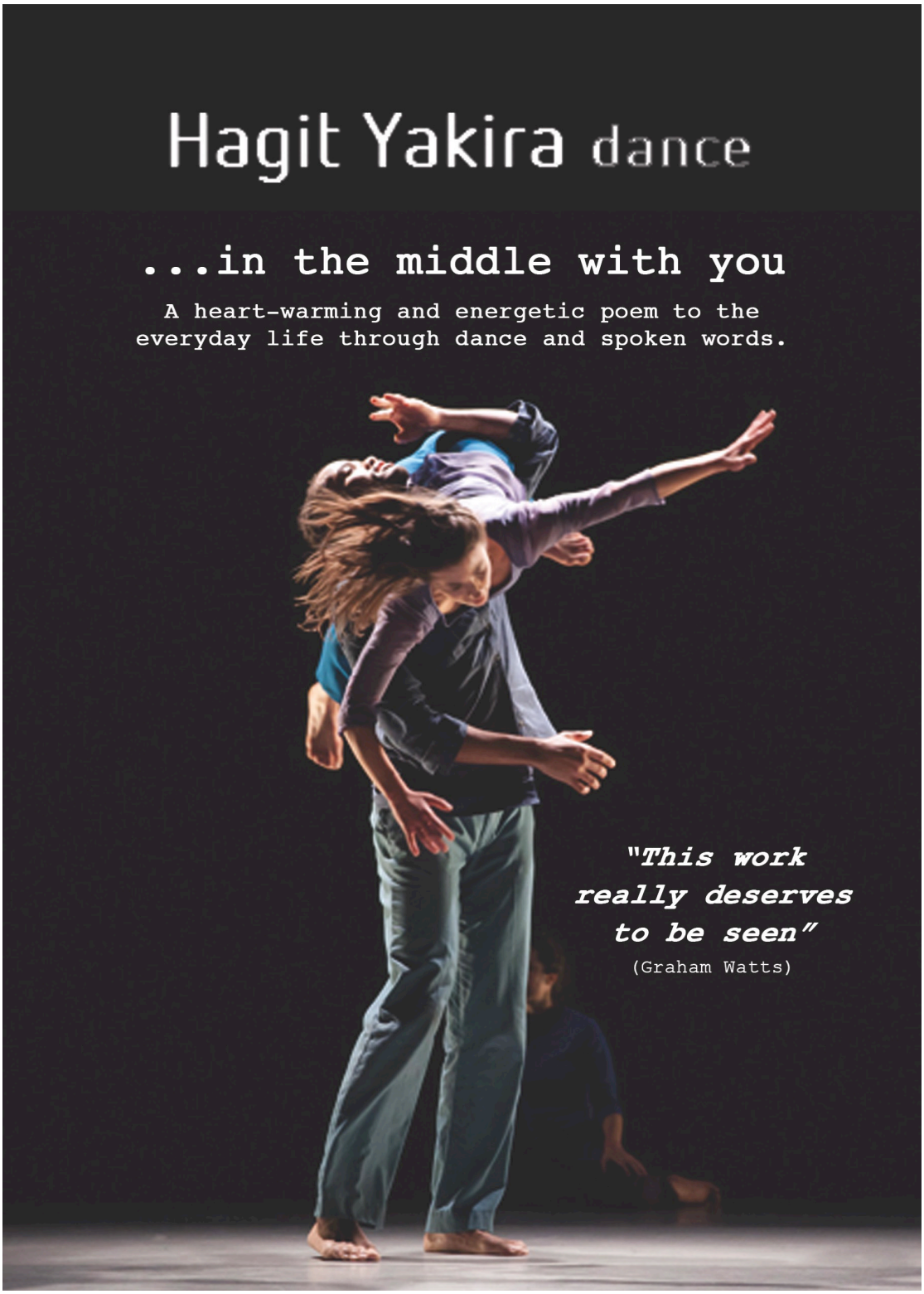
10 Feb – **Rich Mix-London**, 23 Jan – **Laban Theatre-London**, 1 Feb – **BDE 2014-Scotland**, 5 Feb – **York St John University**, 13 Feb – **Square Chapel-Halifax**, 8 Oct – **Stage@Leeds**, 13 Oct – **Wolverhampton University**, 20 Oct – **Phoenix-Exeter**, 3 Nov – **Llaneli-Wales**, 17 Nov – **JW3-London**, 20th Nov – **Bath Spa University**

2015:

29 Jan – **Edge Hill University**, 5 March – **Chichester University**, 10 March – **Lincoln Drill Hall**, 13 March – **Richmix-London**, 19 March – **Laban Theatre-London**, 24 March – **Wakefield College**, 26 March – **Circomedia-Bristol**.

Appendix 6:

...in the middle with you - flyer



Appendix 7:

Free Falling (2016-current)

Figure 12

Programme notes distributed to audience members for *Free Falling*:

By Hagit Yakira

Performers-collaborators: Sophie Arstall, Stephen Monyihan, Fernando Balsera/Joel Benjamin O'donoghue and Verena Schneider

Composer: Sabio Janiak

Dramaturge: Lou Cope

Lighting Design: Mickie Mannion

Costume Design: Bettina John & Elizabeth Barker

Photography: Camilla Greewell

Co-commissioned by: Sadler's Wells, Trinity-Laban and Dance4

Supporters: Art Council England, Sadler's Wells, Laban Theatre and Dance4

Free Falling looks at the fear of falling, failing, and the will to recover. It is a

captivating piece by four virtuoso performers taking audiences on a danced journey of trips, false starts, falls and lifts that will keep you on the edge of your seat.
Free Falling is based on the subtle line between falling and failing. By exploring the fear of falling, the notion of failing is inevitably raised and expressed. The work explores the theme from a psychological, physical and emotional point of view.

Tour Dates:

2016:

27&28 Oct- **Sadler's Wells-London**, 26 Jan – **Laban Theatre-London**, 31 January – **stage@Leeds**, 9 Feb – **Llanelli-Wales**, 22 Feb – **Plymouth University**, 28 Feb – **Guildhall Arts Centre-Grantham**, 2 March – **Circomedia-Bristol**.

2017:

24 Sep – **Zakopane-Poland**, 12 Oct – **Laban Theatre-London**, 19 Oct - **Phoenix Exeter**, 25 Nov – **Winterthur-Switzerland**, 28 Nov – **Edge Hill University**

2018:

24 September – Zakopone, Poland, 12 October – Laban Theatre-London, 19 October – Phoenix Exeter, 25 November – Winterthur-Switzerland, 28 November – Edge Hill University, 28 March – **JW3-London**, 4 May – **Swindon Dance**, 10&11 May – **Dance4-Nottingham.**

Appendix 8:

Free Falling - flyer

Sunday Morning

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwkOZ6-oGpY&list=UUqH8WWf6x46ZReGdOL1l5ow&index=1

Air Hunger – community project

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5PBGWXJ-II&list=UUqH8WWf6x46ZReGdOL1l5ow&index=57

…in the middle with you

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hJc_0BvlP4&list=UUqH8WWf6x46ZReGdOL1l5ow&index=40

Free Falling

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLs0W-WfpCg&list=UUqH8WWf6x46ZReGdOL1l5ow&index=18