

**READING *BETROFFENHEIT* AS POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE: AN ANALYSIS OF
CRYSTAL PITE'S COLLABORATIVE WORK WITH THE ELECTRIC COMPANY
THEATRE IN VANCOUVER**

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine Vancouver-based, Canadian choreographer and dancer Crystal Pite's artistic approach as a dance theatre artist with a focus on her multi-award winning work *Betroffenheit* (2015). Pite founded her dance theatre company Kidd Pivot in 2002. Since then she and the performers with whom she has collaborated have created *Lost Action* (2006), *Dark Matters* (2009), *The You Show* (2010), *The Tempest Replica* (2011), and *Betroffenheit*, all while gaining international fame and attention. In this thesis, I am most interested in the latter. *Betroffenheit* was co-created with Pite and actor Jonathon Young, co-founder and artistic director of Vancouver's innovative and multi-award-winning Electric Company Theatre. Pite's choreography integrates theatricality, movement, music, Young's autobiographical narrative and text, and visual design. For this reason, I argue that *Betroffenheit* brings together the predominant properties of what Hans Thies Lehmann has termed postdramatic theatre. It blends theatrical elements, dance traditions, spoken text, and other performance genres. While Pite has often been connected to dance theatre, I argue here that *Betroffenheit* can be generatively read as postdramatic theatre. In order to discuss the relationship between dance theatre and postdramatic theatre, I will focus on Hans Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*. Most prominently, my study demonstrates how reading the performance as postdramatic theatre helps to highlight the production's numerous theatrically performative elements. Through investigating scholarly articles, book reviews, national and international performance reviews, and interviews, I aim to provide a deeper understanding of how *Betroffenheit* productively trouble boundaries between dance and theatre.

Lay Summary

Crystal Pite is a Vancouver- based Canadian dancer and choreographer who is one of the most prominent pioneers of dance theatre. Her creations and collaborations have gained recognition internationally, and are helping to shape a new genre of performance. Pite's works offer a new understanding of dance that gathers theatrical elements and dance techniques together. As yet, however, there is a dearth of scholarly work about Crystal Pite and her pioneering position in performing arts in the general sense. My study focuses on a specific collaboration of Pite with an equally innovative theatre artist, Jonathon Young, the co-founder of Vancouver's multi-award-winning and innovative Electric Theatre Company. In 2015, they created a production called *Betroffenheit* (2015) which I explore as an example of postdramatic theatre. While prior graduate dissertations have investigated Pite's works in different ways, I intend to analyze *Betroffenheit* as an example of postdramatic theatre. Ultimately, this study investigates the sense in which Pite's style pushes the boundaries of dance theatre techniques.

Preface

This thesis is an original, unpublished. Independent work by the author Olga Ozkaya.

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To grown-ups who remember to stay as children.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The persistent boom of a dance theatre carried by rhythm, music, and erotic physicality but interspersed with the semantics of spoken theatre is not by chance an important variant of postdramatic theatre.
(Lehmann, 96)

As a daughter of a Turkish theatre actress and a dancer myself, I was a lucky child able to attend a lot of theatre and dance. I developed great admiration for my mother and her colleagues' extraordinary achievements, and I continue to feel gratitude for their planting of the seeds of this work. Having a background familiarity with both traditional theatre and dance has been a starting point for my urge to search out alternative/experimental ways of performing. Dance theatre has held particular interest for me as a realm that transgresses conventional divisions between theatre and dance. However, the more I explored the practice of dance theatre, the more I discovered its string of connections with Hans Thies Lehmann's arguments about postdramatic theatre. This realization altered the trajectory of my research. Studying the connections between the terms and forms lead me to Crystal Pite's remarkable work. Further, I had the opportunity to witness her work firsthand in the award-winning production *Betroffenheit* (2015).

As a person who has had the opportunity to engage in various art forms, such as music, dance, theatre, design, and drawing, I know how the interaction between genres is beneficial in the creation process. The opportunity to research a topic that queries the boundaries between different art forms was the golden chance that I have been seeking for years. It not only provides a sphere to satisfy my hunger for experimental theatre, but also reveals the shared features between otherwise seemingly dissimilar genres. Moreover, in the age of digital technology, performances that mingle media seem ever-more prevalent and important to study. I cite

Lehmann at the outset of this chapter because his ideas helped me to explore the relationship between dance theatre and postdramatic theatre. By building from Lehmann's articulations concerning postdramatic theatre, I hope to add a different perspective to the literature.

Canadian choreographer and performer Crystal Pite founded Kidd Pivot based in Vancouver, British Columbia in 2002. Her choreography is distinctive for its strong theatrical sensibility. As a former member of Ballet British Columbia and William Forsythe's Frankfurt Ballet, Pite's choreographic experiences and training have strong roots in classical ballet. Her practice with Kidd Pivot, however, reaches beyond this tradition to incorporate theatricality, movement, music, text, and visual design from a range of other performance vocabularies and forms. My curiosity about Crystal Pite as an artist derives from my parallel passion for exploring experimental ways of staging and performing. Pite's career, her innovative and high-impact works and her insights about dance theatre offer rich opportunities to consider connections between theatre and dance. I am especially interested in how these same works might be generatively read as postdramatic theatre. The way Pite mingles theatrical elements into her freely structured improvisation dance techniques raises the question: to what extent can her work be considered as postdramatic theatre? In this thesis, I intend to demonstrate how Pite uses space, time, performing bodies, and texts in ways which resonate with Lehmann's definitions of postdramatic theatre, as well as further arguments concerning the form shared by dance, theatre, and performance by theorists such as Peter Dickinson, Marvin Carlson, Peter Szondi, James Roose-Evans, Nick Kaye, Jonathan Kalb, Patrice Pavis, Johannes Birringer, Helga Finter, Norbert Servos, and Royd Climenhaga.

It is important to acknowledge that I am not the first to connect Pite's work to postdramatic theatre precepts. Performance scholar Peter Dickinson has demonstrated strong

evidence of postdramatic theatre impulses in Crystal Pite's works. In his valuable 2014 article, "Textual Matters: Making Narrative and Kinesthetic Sense of Crystal Pite's Dance-Theater", Dickinson explains how Pite's works prompted him to "rethink some of the scholarly criticism on the intertwined histories of post-dramatic theater and postmodern dance." (Dickinson 61). Where Dickinson's examples focused on *Dark Matters* (2009), *The You Show* (2010), and *The Tempest Replica* (2011), in this thesis my focus will be the powerful and much-lauded 2015 production, *Betroffenheit*. Written and performed by co-founder/artistic director of Vancouver's Electric Company Theatre Jonathon Young and directed and choreographed by Pite, *Betroffenheit* has been recognized by many awards, perhaps most prestigiously Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production (2017), presented by the Society of London Theatre to honour excellence in professional theatre. In Canada, it won the Jessie Richardson Theatre Award: *Georgia Straight* Critic's Choice Innovation Award (2016), and a Dora Mavor Moore for Outstanding Production (2016). Further, lead performer Jonathon Young won the Critic's Circle National Dance Awards: Outstanding Performance in Modern (2016).

Betroffenheit invites questioning about genre and multi-disciplinary performance. Mingling a variety of dance traditions, puppetry, spoken text, and other performance genres, the production shares features with dance theatre and postdramatic theatre. In this thesis, I will argue Pite's dance theatre, *Betroffenheit* in particular, can be generatively read as a rich example of Lehmann's postdramatic theatre. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how reading the performance as postdramatic theatre helps to highlight the critical importance of its theatrical performative elements.

Betroffenheit is a collaborative effort between artistic leaders and companies with strong track records for innovation and the mingling of performance forms. Drawing as it does on

Jonathan Young's autobiographical narrative, written text, performance skills, and innovations, *Betroffenheit*'s processes of creation and production are obviously critically tied to Young and the Electric Theater Company's histories and aesthetics. It is therefore important to explain that the scope of my study is limited, in large part due to time and space constrictions in this thesis format, to an exploration of *Betroffenheit*'s place within Crystal Pite's and Kidd Pivot's artistic oeuvre and aesthetics. This study therefore aims to complement the future studies needed to accomplish the equally important work of locating *Betroffenheit* within Young and the Electric Theatre Company's histories and aesthetics. Further analyses might also consider the collaborative process that initiated and sustained the production as well as the material features and critical receptions of the show both at home and on tour. In short, it is important to note that this analysis does not claim to be comprehensive but pursues one central line of possible inquiry among many.

Pite has been acknowledged as one of the contemporary pioneers of dance theatre, following the legacy of the mother of dance theatre Pina Bausch, internationally recognized as a leading pioneer or "mother" of the form. With the aim of understanding how Pite locates her work in realm of new theatre forms postmodern or contemporary experimental or contemporary alternative, my thesis begins with a survey of key scholarly texts concerned with understanding and distinguishing postdramatic theatre and dance theatre. My objective is to explore how postdramatic theatre and dance theatre relate to each other, chiefly in terms of their respective histories and core characteristics. First and foremost, it will be helpful to illuminate how the term postdramatic theatre seems relevant to the study of Pite's work dance theatre in the following chapters. Therefore, in the second chapter of my thesis, I consider the academic groundwork laid by prior MA theses and PhD dissertations focused on Crystal Pite's works and dance theatre. My

literary review begins with summaries of the core arguments in the MA theses of Leslie Bitong “Generating Catharsis through Dance”, Emily Sese “Finding Multiplicity in Dance and Spoken Word: An Analysis of Works by Kidd Pivot, Cynthia Ling Lee and Bill T. Jones”, Michelle E. Kneale “The Electric Company Script Development Process: Brilliant! The Blinding Enlightenment of Nikola Tesla”, and the dissertation of Shu-Lan Miranda “The Development of a Genre: Pina Bausch and Late Twentieth-Century Dance Theatre”. I then summarize the arguments of a work of critical importance for this thesis: Peter Dickinson’s “Textual Matters: Making Narrative and Kinesthetic Sense of Crystal Pite’s Dance-Theater”.

The next section of the second chapter focuses on the history and characteristics of the term postdramatic theatre. The focus of my literature review will be Hans Thies Lehmann’s *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). Lehmann coined the term postdramatic and his work constitutes the base of my thesis. I am nonetheless interested in the scholarly responses to the term and I therefore explore several key works in this vein by numerous scholars including Marvin Carlson, Peter Szondi, James Roose-Evans, Nick Kaye, Jonathan Kalb, Patrice Pavis, Johannes Birringer, and Helga Finter. To help illuminate core features of the term, I also describe two examples of postdramatic theatre productions: Richard Foreman’s *Luogo + bersaglio* (1979) and Robert Wilson’s *the CIVIL warS: a tree is best measured when it is down* (1984). I believe that outlining core postdramatic elements in these particular productions will help me to provide more concrete links for understanding the concept’s ultimate relevance for my reading of *Betroffenheit*.

It is also important for my overall argument concerning the production to build from a clearly articulated definition and sense of the term dance theatre, particularly in relation to the pioneering and leading work of Pina Bausch in developing the genre. In chapter three, examining Bausch’s creation process and aesthetics in this way helps me to draw connections between

dance theatre and postdramatic theatre rubrics. To build these connections I also cite the work of Norbert Servos, Ramsay Burt, Patrice Pavis, Climenhaga Royd, and Christopher B. Balme.

In the fourth chapter, I will study the history of Pite's training as a dancer. I do so to develop a sense of her early impulses to dance the ways in which her choreography became, in 2016 words of Judith Mackrell, "more classically burnished and more theatrically explicit" (Mackrell). This chapter includes numerous magazine reviews and multiple interviews with Pite from different sources. These resources have been invaluable for helping me to understand her dance work and training, as well as her mentors and inspirations.

Chapter five provides a close analysis of *Betroffenheit*. However, to build a context for Pite's collaborative work in that production as well as my overall argument, I provide a brief summary account of her choices in two other critically successful productions: *Dark Matters* and *The Tempest Replica* in the previous chapter. My investigation highlights prominent postdramatic in *Betroffenheit*. After watching two performances in Vancouver, discussing the production with colleagues, and attending to reviews in the critical press, I have decided to focus on three of its primary postdramatic elements: choices about text and textscape; dream images; and physicality/ body. My study exhibits in what sense Pite's style pushes the boundaries of dance theatre and postdramatic theatre techniques.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: What is Postdramatic Theatre?

I am not the first person to research and write about Kidd Pivot and the work of Crystal Pite. Two recent U.S. based Master of Arts theses and a doctoral thesis suggest the strong interest her work holds for scholars. Most recently, in 2017 Leslie Bitong wrote her MA thesis at University of California Irvine entitled “Generating Catharsis through Dance”. Her primary research question interrogated how and why dance moves people by asking, “What are the qualities in contemporary dance that lead to a cathartic experience for the viewer?” (Bitong v). In order to understand “how catharsis might be generated in choreography,” she studies the work of Crystal Pite and Hofesh Sechter¹ in order to understand how they used “emotion to generate movement and movement to communicate emotion” (1). *Betroffenheit* (2015), the focus of my study, is among the examples from Pite’s work that Bitong addresses. Like Bitong, I am interested in how that production’s choreography sought particular effective responses from the audiences. Where Bitong’s thesis is oriented towards helping her replicate some of those effects in her own dance choreography, I am interested in how the production might be generatively read as postdramatic theatre. I am grateful to her, however, for bringing my attention to how the body is mobilized and the movement is generated to produce a cathartic experience in Pite’s oeuvre.

By contrast, in her 2017 MA thesis, Emily Sese in the Graduate School of the Texas Woman’s University places Pite’s work with Kidd Pivot in a more comparative framework.

¹ Hofesh Shechter is an Israeli dancer, composer and choreographer. He is the founder and artistic director of Hofesh Shechter Company bases in Brighton.

Entitled “Finding Multiplicity in Dance and Spoken Word: An Analysis of Works by Kidd Pivot, Cynthia Ling Lee and Bill T. Jones”, Sese focuses her research on “the use of text in dance performances” across the work of these three North American postmodernist choreographers (Sese v). Like Bitong, she analyses the 2015 production of *Betroffenheit*. While she argues that Pite’s primary style is postmodern dance, she also acknowledges, “interjections of tap, mime, and theatre styles also appear” (9). Further, she suggests that in the production Pite “uses two distinctive acts to showcase the varied relationships between text and dance” (13). While I value Sese’s attention to the structures of the performance, in my thesis, I prefer to foreground the theatrical elements as more than interjections. Indeed, I believe the framework of postdramatic theatre lets us re-examine all the choreographic choices, styles, interjections, and relationships that Sese enumerates in valuable ways. I have appreciated, however, Sese’s careful attention to *Betroffenheit* and, more particularly, her valuable argument that “movement and spoken word in Pite’s choreography serve as a launching point for further investigation into the human condition” (26).

In addition to these two recent Pite-focused MA theses, I have also benefited from a remarkable Ph.D. dissertation on dance theatre by Shu-Lan Miranda, completed in 2002 at the Texas Tech University. Entitled “The Development of a Genre: Pina Bausch and Late Twentieth-Century Dance Theatre”, Miranda’s dissertation focuses on finding “a way to define dance theatre by using interdisciplinary approaches that combine contemporary aesthetics, and theories of performing arts” (Miranda vii). Taking into consideration the significant connection between the features of postdramatic theatre and dance theatre, Miranda’s work builds a historical context for understanding the term dance theatre. The two prominent purposes of Miranda’s dissertation are detecting “the beginning of German dance theatre from the twenties until now” and

investigating “the properties of Pina Bausch's dance theatre to examine if it does include standard properties from both genres” (vii). Miranda defines Bausch’s dance theatre as a genre that consists of “singing, dancing, acting, mime, daily movement, speech etc.” that crosses the boundaries between dance and theatre and thus distinguishes itself from previous forms of dance (150). Strict categorization of dance theatre is challenging because of its mingling of performance genres; the tendency to define dance theatre as a single genre, either dance or theatre, complicates the process of classification. Moreover, Miranda emphasizes characteristics of dance theatre by using the properties of Pina Bausch's dance theatre “as a paradigm to judge works of other dance theatre by the following director/choreographers: Reinhild Hoffmann, Susanne Linke, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, and Martha Clarke²” (vii-viii). She argues for and traces the historical development of dance theatre, taking into account contradictory viewpoints concerning the establishment and primary features of the genre. For example, she notes that dance and theatre critics have disagreed about the categorization of the genre. She observes “some dance critics do not think that Bausch’s work belongs in the medium of dance, there are critics who argue that her work is dance and not theatre. On the other hand, some theatre critics state that her work should be categorized as theatre” (179). Ultimately, she not only advocates for dance theatre as its own distinctive genre among other performing arts but also asserts some

² Reinhild Hoffmann is a German dancer and choreographer who is one of the pioneers of Tanztheater. Susanne Linke is a German dancer and choreographer who is one of the pioneers of Tanztheater. Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker is Belgian choreographer, who is the founder of Rosas. Martha Clarke is an American theatre director and choreographer who is renowned for her multi-genre productions of theatre, dance and opera.

of its primary characteristics. Her close examination has helped me to understand the term dance theatre in a more historically contextualized and categorical way.

Most relevant to my present study is the pioneering work of Peter Dickinson, a professor of English and Performance Studies at Simon Fraser University. In his 2014 article, “Textual Matters: Making Narrative and Kinesthetic Sense of Crystal Pite’s Dance-Theater”, Dickinson explores the work of artists he describes as working in the “wake of Judson Church and Pina Bausch” as they pursue movement through text development, adaptation, and incorporation (Dickinson 62). Dickinson cites Meg Stuart, an American choreographer and dancer, while articulating his interest in those artists who have “not felt compelled to choose between the ‘conceptual ideas’ or the ‘theatrical concerns’” of either (Stuart qtd. in Dickinson 62). Counting Pite among such artists, Dickinson explores connections between definitions of postdramatic theatre and contemporary dance. He argues, “some of the received disciplinary accounts of postdramatic theatre’s *non-representational* debts to postmodern dance, suggesting instead that contemporary dance artists have long borrowed from *representational* conventions of the theatre” (Bogart, Landau and Overlie qtd. in Dickinson 62). Examining Pite’s work and her dance practices, he questions how text emphasizes the theatricality of dance. In line with my objective to understand *Betroffenheit* within the broader context of Pite’s work, Dickinson’s article also provides valuable detailed accounts of Pite’s previous dance creations chiefly, *Dark Matters* (2009), *The You Show* (2010), and *The Tempest Replica* (2011). He explores how Pite tackles both the “theatrical side of making work” and “the actual making of the movement” (Pite qtd. in Dickinson 62). Dickinson’s analysis is not only significant for me here because it engages with Pite as a dance theatre artist but also because it highlights dance theatre’s features as a distinct genre. His study plays an obvious and important role for my research question given his

emphasis on the connection between postdramatic theatre and Pite's works. While he upholds many of the precepts associated with Lehmann's articulation of postdramatic theatre, he also demonstrates how dance theatre is a mix of multiple art forms:

While physical theatre and postmodern dance in this respect seem to constitute a single unified field of performance via their separate body-based disavowals of the hegemony of language, parallel to these disciplinary experiments there evolved a genre of dance-theatre that distinguished itself precisely through its combining of text and movement, speaking and dancing. (62)

Dickinson criticizes dance and theatre scholars for not attending to the historical and political background of dance theatre. In order to address this, therefore, he outlines the term's history and establishes a connection between postdramatic theatre and dance theatre with an emphasis on their similarities. In this impulse, Lehmann's book and Dickinson's article are parallel in many ways. For example, both argue that dance theatre builds from theatricality and consists of numerous art forms. Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* introduces the characteristics and techniques of postdramatic theatre and outlines a new genre with reference to a broad set of examples. Dickinson is equally attentive to these characteristics but locates his arguments more specifically regarding Pite's use of theatricality and text.

Dickinson, as a local scholar who is strongly familiar with Pite's oeuvre, acknowledges both postdramatic theatre's power and currency as an explanatory term and its risks. To give a sense of the potential definition creep associated with the term postdramatic theatre, Dickinson cites Martin Welton³'s assertion that "words sometimes exceed the lexical confines of [their] enunciation as text" (Welton qtd. in Dickinson 62).

³ Martin Welton is a lecturer in Theatre and Performance at Queen Mary, University of London whose research focuses on sense in performance (the condition of feeling).

Thinking about my own plans to explore the term's relevance to Pite, I am mindful of the risk Dickinson asserts about the difficulty of separating in Pite's performance "her source of text" and "her movement patterns" (62). In that sense, he argues that there is no distinct formula to distinguish the influence of words and choreographed dance over each other. Consequently, "elements of the textscape of dance theater", "speech", and "movement" collaborate in the course of how we understand "a given performance work" as audiences (63). He underlines the significance of the exploration of dance theatre as a new genre and encourages performance scholars and critics to be more responsive to "bigger disciplinary turns" where multiple art forms mingle and exceed the explanatory powers of conventional approaches. Dickinson is not the only one who finds the term troubling. For instance, Shu-Lan Miranda claims that "the conventional way of locating an artwork in a genre faces difficulties and challenges because mixing genres and crossing boundaries has increasingly become the norm" (Miranda 1). For Miranda, dance theatre is one of the main art forms that exemplifies this trend. She points out that although Bausch herself defines her works as dance theatre, indicating Bausch's sense of "the equal importance of both dance and theatre elements," critics tend to skip past Bausch to favour definitions more rooted in theatre such as "theatre of images of Robert Wilson" (Goldberg qtd. in Miranda 1). Thus, while the term dance theatre has currency among artists and critics, its precise definition, interpretation, and connection to well-known artists whose works can lay claim to its precepts is less fixed and standardized.

With the intention of drawing attention to the theatrical elements in Pite's choreography, Dickinson investigates *Dark Matters*, *The Tempest Replica*, and *The You Show*. He reveals how text, which is an inseparable and often dominant component of classical theatre, plays a pivotal role in the creation process of dance theatre. He picks specific scenes from these pieces and

decodes the impetus behind Pite's frequent change of direction towards literature and theatricality. His primary argument is that she brings the text to the stage in ways that reach beyond conventions of both theatre and dance. As a result, the text often "precipitates the movement" (Dickinson 76). Overall, Dickinson's arguments concerning Pite's choreography not only define the characteristics of dance theatre but also identify how her works may be productively read as postdramatic theatre. In many ways, therefore, my work in this dissertation aims to extend his analysis through a careful examination of its further relevance to the more recent example of *Betroffenheit*. This means that, like Dickinson, I attend to the specific ways the production mingles art forms, uses texts, mobilizes theatrical elements, plays with the "feel of feelings," choreographs the body to generate emotions and interacts with the audience (Welton qtd, in Dickinson 79).

Another prominent scholar who has explored the principles and precepts of postdramatic theatre is Marvin Carlson, who is the Sidney E. Cohn Distinguished Professor of Theatre, Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies at the City University of New York. His research covers dramatic theory and Western European theatre history and dramatic literature. His article titled "Postdramatic Theatre and Postdramatic Performance" in *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies* in 2015 examines the term postdramatic theatre through analysis of significant production examples from such directors as Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Ivo Van Hove, Katie Mitchell, and the British Company Punchdrunk. Carlson refers to, the founder of the term postdramatic theatre, Hans Thies Lehmann throughout his article and seeks to distinguish what makes postdramatic theatre stand out among other art forms. Even in the introduction of his article, however, like Dickinson, he suggests that the definition of the term is troubling. Carlson states "as with most any critical

term, especially in recent times, a major price paid for popularity has been the wide application of the term, to the point that anything like a coherent and consistent definition of the term has become quite impossible” (Carlson 578). Having said that, he argues that the most remarkable and maybe the most accepted feature of postdramatic theatre is that it is generated “without any pre-existing text” (Craig qtd. in Carlson 579). Although abolishment of the literary text as the ultimate originary source for performance is the main concern of postdramatic theatre, Carlson identifies some further features that challenge Western text-based performance traditions. He interprets postdramatic theatre as an extension of Regietheater that has an “almost total disregard for traditional dramatic unity” or “consistency of style, either textual or performative” (581). Further, the creation process in postdramatic theatre is a “collective work of a group” that includes multiple people with expertise in various art forms such as “dancers, design people, also traditional stage designers, film and video creator and computer designers” (582). Moreover, Carlson’s work gives an insightful examination of postdramatic theatre history and its relation to other experimental theatre forms such as immersive theatre, disability theatre and environmental theatre. Carlson agrees postdramatic theatre abandons “mimesis or literary text”, however, he adds a notable aspect into the discussion that postdramatic theatre “challenges the audience/performance spatial relationship that has long been an accepted part of the dramatic theatre tradition” (586). Carlson points to the tension postdramatic theatre has with one of Western theatre’s longest standing and challenging concepts: mimesis. On the one hand, he agrees with Lehmann’s argument that “postdramatic theatre seeks to completely abandon the mimetic” (589). He nonetheless concludes his article by arguing that “the postdramatic is really neither mimetic or non-mimetic” (593). Carlson’s identifies how postdramatic theatre’s complex

relationship with mimesis is yet another example of the form's core interest in transgressing boundaries.

Finally, it is important to consider Pite's relation to the Electric Company Theatre, the co-creators of *Betroffenheit*. Like Pite, the Electric Company Theatre has also received significant scholarly attention. In my own department, Michelle E. Kneale wrote her 2005 MA thesis entitled "The Electric Company Script Development Process: *Brilliant! The Blinding Enlightenment of Nikola Tesla*", which was created by Kim Collier, David Hudgins, Kevin Kerr, and Jonathon Young. Because her arguments centered on that earlier company production and its dramaturgical process, they are not specifically oriented to the company's collaborative work with Pite. I am appreciative, however, of her careful attention to the company's founding details, aims, and aesthetics. While Kneale, of course, does not use Lehmann's later theorizing of postdramatic theatre, she analyses the company's particular collective creation process and the various resources they use in order "to generate text and imagery for the production" (Kneale ii). Her work helps to make sense of the way in which Jonathan Young and his collaborators at the Electric Company Theatre were already working in collaborative ways that challenged the audience/performance spatial relationship, mingled artistic genres and developed work without a literary text. Kneale describes, "Although the process of creating this script was largely text based, these elements ensure that the play remains extremely physical, visual – theatrical. The embedded genres are indicative of the physicality the Electrics wanted to employ since they were all trained heavily in various forms of movement" (55). Therefore, she claims that *Brilliant! The Blinding Enlightenment of Nikola Tesla* (1996), indeed, exhibits the influence of multiple genres of theatre and film. By doing so, the Electrics "use the sensibility and the vocabulary of cinema [and] then translate it into a theatrical experience" (Kerr and Young qtd. in Kneale 84).

2.1 Postdramatic Theatre and Drama in Crisis

Although Hans Thies Lehmann coined the term ‘postdramatic theatre’ in 2006, it is important to consider, as he did, its relation to the connected term “postmodern theatre”. For this reason, I begin this chapter with a brief overview of the core precepts associated with the term postmodern theatre. This equally complex term is associated with a number of origin stories but most reference the work of Peter Szondi, James Roose-Evans, Nick Kaye, Jonathan Kalb, Patrice Pavis, Johannes Birringer, and Helga Finter. Collectively, their studies include various examples of productions that present extensive frameworks of unconventional theatre. Most of these histories of the term argue postmodern theatre evolved around the idea of simplicity when Jacques Copeau⁴ established Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris in 1913. For example, Roose Evans argues that Copeau, at the beginning of the twentieth century, showed evidence of the postmodern theatre impulse to go “back to first sources [...] startlingly simple, without footlights or proscenium arch” (Evans 54). The idea of turning back to the basics revolutionized the traditional theatre by generating new possibilities for new dramatic form. Even after fifty years, Copeau’s basic impulse to begin with first sources is arguably echoed in the work of Robert Wilson and other directors widely associated with postmodern theatre.

Over time, Copeau worked “on themes without texts, ied with masks”, but also brought great attention upon “the physical and technical expertise of the actor, and wanted his students to feel free to use mime, dance, acrobatics, improvisation, as means of dramatic expression” (56-57). Copeau’s contribution, surely, had been a starting point for future explorations and

⁴ Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) was a French theatre director, actor, and dramatist, who is the founder of Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.

developments in the course of creating free theatre. The intention of generating new theatre started with the exploration of postmodern theatre leading to more experimental approaches in the following years. Therefore, early twentieth-century theatrical experimentations continuing into the 1960s built a critical foundation, which influenced the emergence of the postdramatic as well. Arguably we can perhaps best understand postdramatic theatre as a continuation of modern avant-garde and neo-avant-garde theatres.

Since my purpose is to make a close investigation on the techniques and the narrative languages established under the postdramatic theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann's groundbreaking *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) is of central importance to my study. Karen Jürs-Munby, the translator of Lehmann's book, considers Lehmann's postdramatic theatre to be a response to Peter Szondi's theory of drama first articulated in *Theory of the Modern Drama* (1987). In this text, Szondi expounded his theory of drama in crisis that focused on the clash of new theatre forms with the established forms and necessities of Aristotelian drama. Szondi summarizes the aspects of drama and conventional rules of its structure: tracing the history of western Aristotelian drama and the influences of Renaissance staging and neoclassicism. He also demonstrates drama's reliance on dialogue, unities, and absolute consciousness of nothing outside itself, arguing that the contemporary hunger for new theatre techniques emerged as a response to these limits of Aristotelian drama (Szondi 8-10). Jürs-Munby argues that Lehmann's work of *Postdramatic Theatre*, therefore, responds to these arguments by analyzing how the discrepancy between drama and theatre occurred. In other words, Lehmann is interested in the phenomenon of the "dissolution of the dramatic concept of theatre *within* drama" (Lehmann 4). He traces this dissolution to experimentation with new theatre languages by artists like Brecht, Artaud, Müller, and others who challenged the primacy of the text in theatre production.

Experimental stagings by avant-garde directors mingled dance, theatre, visual art, sculpture, and other forms in ways that led the shift away from classical dramatic tradition to postdramatic theatre.

Lehmann argues the term postdramatic helps to highlight core features of these new theatre forms. Exploring these features as evident in Pite's work is the primary focus of my thesis. For this reason, it is important to make sense of the primary features he identifies.

2.2 Postdramatic Theatre and its Components

When Hans Thies Lehmann coined the term postdramatic theatre in 1999, he highlighted several core features. Since then, several theorists, including Lehmann himself, have taken up the term critically. Piet Defraeye describes Lehmann's work as an alternative option for "dramatic theory and criticism" (646). Lehmann's aim is to provide detailed accounts of the defining features of this new kind of theatre-making. For this reason, the most instructive and descriptive chapter of the book, offering the core of Lehmann's arguments, is entitled "Panorama of postdramatic theatre" where he classifies postdramatic theatrical signs under four main subcategories: "Retreat of Synthesis", "Dream Images", "Synaesthesia", and "Performance Text". I want to begin by providing brief descriptions of each of these four theatrical sign subcategories. First of all, the retreat of synthesis heralds the departure of a fixed signification-system. According to Lehmann, theatre's sign-systems in this form focus on the "figurations of self-cancellation of meaning" (82). In other words, once again, the form is remarkable for its deconstruction of hierarchies and coherency among signs. Secondly, Lehmann likens the new order of images, movements, and words to the concept of dream images. He explains that just "as the dream demands a different concept of the sign, the new theatre demands a 'sublated' semiotics and an 'abandoned' interpretation" (84). Thirdly, Lehmann highlights the forms

interest in synaesthesia by which he means a tendency towards the “extreme”, “distortion”, “uncertainty”, and “paradox” (84). By favouring these qualities over inherited mannerisms and traditions, artists tackle “disappointment, retreat and rediscovery” (85). Lastly, Lehmann outlines four different types of theatrical staging: the linguistic text, the text of the staging, *mise en scène*, and the performance text. He focuses particularly on performance text in relation to postdramatic theatre. He describes performance text as “a type of sign usage in the theatre” which challenges the conventional properties “through the structurally changed quality of the performance text: it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information” (85). In a subsequent analysis of the last of these subcategories, the performance text, Lehmann argues for and illustrates eleven key components of postdramatic theatre: “Parataxis/Nonhierarchy”, “Simultaneity”, “Play with the density of signs”, “Plethora”, “Musicalization”, “Scenography, visual dramaturgy”, “Warmth and coldness”, “Physicality”, “Concrete theatre”, “Irruption of the real”, and “Event/ Situation”. Reviewing the book for *Postdramatic Theatre* in 2008, Elinor Fuchs argues that:

This section demonstrates the range of postdramatic theatre by showing that it can contain all moods and modes—hieratic and profane, hermetic and popular, abstract and concretely physical. In the semiotic terms favored by the German critical tradition, Lehmann levels the traditional hierarchy of theatrical signs and at the same time multiplies sign systems. (179)

As each of these eleven terms is relevant for my study of *Betroffenheit*, I now offer a summary of Lehmann’s definitions of them.

2.2.1 Parataxis/ non-hierarchy

One of the main shifts Lehmann notes in the movement away from classical theatre precepts toward postdramatic theatre was an increasing interest in non-hierarchical structure. Contrary to past conventional ordering of theatrical elements that produce “harmony and comprehensibility” in the narrative, postdramatic theatre established a structure that valued disorder (Lehmann 86). Since theatrical elements are not arranged following traditional hierarchies, audiences are pressed into a more complicated comprehension process.

2.2.2 Simultaneity

Lehmann also underlines the fact that in the classical theatre it is common to stress particular theatrical elements among others. For instance, a prop might be emphasized as it plays a pivotal role during a scene. Generally, classical theatre directors prefer to work with few theatrical elements in a performance in order to provide a comprehensible, logical narrative flow to the audience. Nevertheless, postdramatic theatre suggests a new approach that is full of sophisticated and perhaps inexplicable signs. Consequently, the audience “cannot possibly process everything” (Lehmann, 87).

2.2.3 Play with the Density of Signs

The main impulse driving postdramatic theatre is to follow unconventional techniques and discover new ways of storytelling. The urge to experiment with classical theatre manifests itself most clearly in disorienting, unconventional mobilization of signs. Lehmann asserts that postdramatic theatre artists are particularly interested in extremes, favouring either “too much or too little” sign density (89). Lehmann credits the rapidly shifting twentieth century media culture for this interest in extremes. Further, he argues that playing with extreme densities of signs helps

audiences to activate their imaginations and interpretive capacities instead of more passively receiving easily understandable theatrical material (90).

2.2.4 Plethora

By plethora, Lehmann simply argues for “deforming figuration” (90). In other words, once again, he highlights the form’s chief interest in a disorienting number of irregular and unconventional images and signs. In short, here Lehmann claims that “a mass of unconnected elements is estimated to be larger than the same number of elements arranged in a coherent order” (90). Furthermore, these unrelated theatrical elements demand interpretive action rather than passive consumption and therefore potentially/productively awaken fear, discomfort, distraction, disruption etc.

2.2.5 Musicalization

Lehmann argues that musicalization decreased the level of dominance of dramatic language in theatre. In other words, he argues that postdramatic theatre eschews conventional dramatic text in favour of incorporating a sense of music and rhythm found in such musicalizations as pop, classical pieces, operas, and electronic music. A new conception and hierarchy of sound and voice is a feature of postdramatic theatre.

2.2.6 Scenography, Visual Dramaturgy

While Lehmann describes visual dramaturgy, he is careful to note that it should not be considered as “visually organized dramaturgy” (93). Having said that, visual dramaturgy does not depend on text, meaning it has the freedom to establish its own rationale. Visual dramaturgy of postdramatic theatre builds from various forms of arts such as dance, opera, film, photography, and so on. There are no rigid boundaries that enable a blend of visual arts. Instead, Lehmann argues that postdramatic theatre prefers “self-referentiality, non-figural, abstract or

concrete art, autonomization of the signifiers, seriality, or aleatoric art” to define nature of visual dramaturgy (94).

2.2.7 Warmth and Coldness

When Lehmann talks about warmth and coldness as defining features of postdramatic theatre, he emphasizes the psychological aspects of audience’s perceptions. Mundane qualities of everyday life create a sense of belonging, acquaintance, and warmth. On the other hand, themes that artists investigate and the experimental and innovative techniques they use in staging create an environment where the audience can feel isolated and alienated. Lehmann names this affective state of mind coldness, a state he identifies as among the most common discernible components of postdramatic theatre.

2.2.8 Physicality

As in other experimental and contemporary art forms (for example dance theatre), postdramatic theatre also explores the contours, capacities, and limits of the performer’s body as a communication tool. As we shall see in the next chapter, Pite’s work is profoundly interested in these aspects of the performing body. Lehmann argues that postdramatic theatre artists aimed to explore “the pain threshold” during their studies (96). To be able to express human pain in their works, the body became critical in presenting performers’ personal experiences. Lehmann argues that “the body no longer demonstrates anything but itself, the turn away from a body of signification and towards a body of unmeaning gesture (dance, rhythm, grace, strength, kinetic wealth) turns out as the most extreme charging of the body with significance concerning the social reality” (96). I intend to examine physicality in detail in following chapters.

2.2.9 Concrete Theatre

Lehmann defines “concrete theatre” as “abstract theatre” that is distinctive because it does not have an established action/ plot (98). As in other elements of postdramatic theatre, features of concrete theatre challenge conventional approaches. Lehmann argues that, “It is not the content but the formalization itself that constitutes the challenge: the tiring repetition, emptiness, pure mathematics of what is happening on stage, which forces us to experience the very symmetry we are dimly afraid of because it brings with it nothing less than the threat of nothingness” (99). To do so, concrete theatre benefits from the new possibilities of “combining media technology, dance theatre, spatial art, and performing practice” (98).

2.2.10 Irruption of the Real

Lehmann argues that postdramatic theatre can be understood as “theatre of real” (103). In this vein, he highlights a key difference between dramatic theatre and postdramatic theatre:

Representation and presence, mimetic play and performance, the represented realities and the process of representation itself: from this structural split the contemporary theatre has extracted a central element of the post- dramatic paradigm – by radically thematizing it and by putting the real on equal footing with the fictive. It is not the occurrence of anything ‘real’ as such but its *self-reflexive* use that characterizes the aesthetic of postdramatic theatre. (103)

Further, postdramatic theatre practitioners challenge the idea of having a definite fourth wall separating the audience and the actor. Lehmann shows how this shift radically alters the sense of distance between performers and audiences, providing a more flexible, playful, and potentially interactive space. (104).

2.2.11 Event/Situation

In his conclusion to “The Panorama of Postdramatic Theatre” Lehmann argues that postdramatic theatre should not be considered as a “finished product” but an “active force”

(104). Postdramatic events are happening now and here, he insists, and they are real and require the involvement of audiences at different levels. The definition of audience members therefore also shifts away from traditional western theatre conventions to favor active participation in postdramatic theatre events.

To ground the list above in a more sustained set of illustrative examples, I offer two accounts of postdramatic theatre that resonate with Lehmann's definitions. The first is Richard Foreman's *Luogo + bersaglio* and the second is Robert Wilson's *the CIVIL warS: a tree is best measured when it is down*. I hope providing examples of past performances will be helpful to draw a parallel between Pite's dance theatre and Lehmann's postdramatic theatre.

2.3 Examples

2.3.1 Richard Foreman: *Luogo + bersaglio*

In this example, I aim to demonstrate how musicalization works in a postdramatic play. Richard Foreman, one of the most prominent postdramatic theatre practitioners, experiments with voice. Finter et al. examine Foreman's *Luogo+ bersaglio* which was performed in Rome in 1979. The most remarkable feature of the production, Finter et al. argue, is its use of rhythm and intonation:

Foreman records the text using a male voice – in American performances it is his own – then cuts up the tape, so that most of the phrases of text pronounced during the performance are anticipated or repeated by the recorded voice, which Foreman often operates himself during the performance. Sometimes the text/words are cut up by other machines, interrupted by other noises (bells, horns, alarm sirens, thunder) which obstruct the words, or by music (in this play, cotton blues, a tango, different bits of carnival music, a cakewalk) which stops the actors' movements, as though in a film which suddenly slows and stops. (509)

Consequently, the authority of the actor over other theatrical elements diminishes. The source of the sound changes and sound itself seems to drive gestures, movements, the manipulation of props etc. In other words, in *Luogo+ bersaglio* there is no one source of meaning and text is not the dominating or organizing principle for narrative meaning. In fact, Finter et al. argue that the production is most focused on “conditions of enunciation” that go “beyond the problem of the simple relation between text and voice” (511). As can be seen in this production, the actor’s role changed significantly in relation to the text. From the 1970’s onward, through productions such as *Luogo+ bersaglio*, artists experimented with various techniques to foreground sound and music and render the relations between sound and text more complex.

2.3.2 Robert Wilson: *the CIVIL warS: a tree is best measured when it is down*

One of the founders of postdramatic theatre, Robert Wilson, completely changed the trajectory of dramatic theatre. In his twelve-hour long multi-media opera, *the CIVIL warS: a tree is best measured when it is down*, it is possible to observe various postdramatic theatrical elements at once. Wilson’s *CIVIL warS* encompasses Lehmann’s notions of playing with the density of signs, plethora, and visual dramaturgy. Birringer credits Wilson for altering the conventional way of seeing theatre and cites promotional materials from the work itself that explicitly make these claims that, “In the promotional footnotes to the Cambridge ART’s reproduction of the German section of the *CIVIL warS* we read that Wilson’s theatrical technique is significantly different from “customary dramatic forms” since, like a dream or a hallucination, the action of a Wilson ‘play’ takes shape, dissolves, overlaps, fragments, and reforms” (Biringger 226).

Biringger provides detailed examples from the production to show how Wilson generated these dreamy and hallucinatory images in terms which resonate with Lehmann’s conception of

the postdramatic theatre. First, he notes the production's architecturalization of the body as "androgynous actors, hanging from the ceiling behind – or standing motionless in front of – the proscenium-sized scrim on which over dimensional images of human faces are projected, appear as surface material as if built into space" (228). Second, he highlights the production's "multiple stage pictures" with continually "changing screen projections", and additionally "text collages and soundscapes" (228). Both of these examples of production deconstructed traditional conventions for harmony and unity, visually, aurally, temporally, and spatially. Birringer argues that, the visual experimentation and incoherence in particular, made the audience feel "overwhelmed, oppressed and excited" (229). Direct address is one of the prominent changes Lehmann identified during the establishment of postdramatic theatre. He noted how performers associated with the emerging form were directly addressing the audience in ways that challenged or replaced more "conversational dialogue" and naturalist drama's conventions for the fourth wall (Lehmann 31). Instead, he argued that performers' "hidden impulses", "energy dynamics", and "mechanics of body and motorics" emerged as organizing principles and engines for production. (32). Instead creating a self-contained and separate duplicate of reality, the stage became a sphere that served as "a beginning, a point of departure" (32). This shift in understanding of stage purpose has profound implications for plot conventions.

In postdramatic theatre, Western Aristotelian dramatic conventions for plot structure are challenged directly. Broadly, these earlier conventions favoured a form which began with from initial incident/conflict which was then developed/complicated until climax and the resulting denouement/conclusion. In short, it offered a clear sense of beginning, middle, and end and often unities of time, place, and action. While there have of course been deviations over time, Western audiences have been steeped in these traditions over time and have come to expect that dramatic

integrity relies on “probability and necessity” (House, 58). Moreover, in this framework, Lehmann argues, drama means a “flow of time, controlled and surveyable” (Lehmann 40). It is a framework that reduces the feeling of unknown action on stage. Lehmann argues that even though specific plot details change, the structure and the characters remain typical. Up until the establishment of postmodern theatre, European theatre, including Brechtian theatre, was shaped by the “para-logical order” (40). Lehmann explains the essential form of drama:

The embodiment of characters or allegorical figures through actors; the representation of a conflict in ‘dramatic collision’; a high degree of abstraction of world representation in comparison to the novel and the epic; the representation of political, moral and religious issues of social life through the dramatization of their collision; a progressive action even in the case of extensive de-dramatization; the representation of a world even in the case of minimal real action. (48)

Demolition of these past conventions led playwrights and directors to work with a reformist approach that can be seen primarily in Samuel Beckett, Richard Foreman, Heiner Müller, and Robert Wilson’s respective productions. In the late 1960s, under US political influence, the estrangement of political issues, a shift towards a new spirit of experimentation in performance brought huge theatrical developments in its wake. The improvements in the new theatre generated a paradoxical flow of logic. Nick Kaye investigates the postmodern corruption of the boundaries in his book, *Postmodernism and Performance* (1994). Kaye emphasizes the memorable parts of Foreman’s theatrical approach by citing them as a “flow of fragments, incompletions, new beginnings and shifts in logic” (49). The importance of the method introduced by Foreman is to emphasize the distinctions between ‘dramatic’ and ‘not dramatic’. He portrayed the disintegration of dialogue in part by having the performers direct their attention to the audience breaking the fourth wall (52).

Additionally, Robert Wilson's use of language brought a new level of meaning to postdramatic theatre. Lehmann points out, "Over the last thirty years hardly any theatre practitioner has changed the theatre and the scope of its means and at the same time influenced the possibilities of reimagining theatre as much as Robert Wilson" (77). Yet, his practice can be perceived as a disobedience to conventional theatre. Clear distinctions, accustomed plot structure and acknowledged type of characters abandoned the stage after Wilson's innovations. According to Helga Finter at al., "in Wilson's theatre nothing remains of punctuation but the question mark" (508). I believe the techniques used in Wilson's theatre share certain similarities with the ones in Pite's dance theatre. Wilson is not only the founder of new theatre but also the pioneer who successfully blends multiple art forms. 'De-hierarchization' of theatre is center of attraction in Wilson's work.

Approaching *Betroffenheit*, I am also interested in how the production can be read as a postdramatic work. After attending the production and reviewing critical responses to the work, several of its features emerged as particularly relevant for my study: *Betroffenheit*'s generation and use of texts, textscapes, dream images, and finally, the relationship of all of these to the bodies on stage and their physical performance vocabularies.

2.4 What does Lehmann mean by Text/Textscapes, Dream Images and the Body, and Physicality and why are these relevant to *Betroffenheit*?

2.4.1 Text/ Textscape

The connection between text and stage is a longstanding concern of theatre theorists as evidence. Further, despite the fact that contemporary Western, Aristotelian conventional theatre is text-based and focused, the best means for harmonizing text and performance has been a further subject of considerable debate over time. Lehmann describes the battle as between the

“verbal” and “nonverbal” (Lehmann, 145). In response to Szondi’s articulations about the crisis in drama, Lehmann argued that “theatre without drama does exist” (30). Even though the connection between classical drama and postdramatic theatre cannot be denied, the main difference arises from the deconstruction of the text and abolishment of literature. After the crisis of drama occurred and artists rejected working with traditional forms of theatre, the discourse of new theatre claimed its autonomy as an “independent artistic practice” (50).

Lehmann also points out the importance of ““position of tones, words, sentences, sounds” are managed by the “scenic composition” emphasizing visual quality instead of “text oriented dramaturgy” (146). Unquestionably, as Lehmann describes, new theatre has become independent from dramaturgy, and dramatic theatre “is turned into *chora-graphy*: the deconstruction of a discourse oriented towards meaning and the invention of a space that eludes the laws of telos and unity” (146). As we will see in Pite’s work, the text does not dominate the creation process as in the dramatic theatre. For this reason, deconstruction of the use of text is one of the powerful qualities discernable in Pite’s dance theatre.

The term “textscape”, was established by Lehmann. It underlines the “connection between postdramatic language with the new dramaturgies of the visual” and still refers to the “landscape play” (148). Lehmann further described the form as a blend of text, voice, and noise (148). Rather than pursuing a creation process under the pressure of a text, directors developed their own logic and acted according to their own needs. Inarguably, postdramatic theatre has been shaped by the experimental practices in which the multiple art forms fuse. As a consequence, multi-genre productions focused on new production techniques promoting disordered soundscapes wherein words travel back and forth, develop overlaps or inconsistency within the flow of staging composition, and direct the audience to the following questions: Who

am I listening to? What is the source of the soundscape? Are those sounds part of the narrative? The fragmentation of sentences and use of music were created through experimental repetitive patterns with a focus on “electronic distortion” and “voices exposed as noise, scream and so on” (149). I aim to demonstrate how Pite crosses boundaries of theatre and dance, in her choices about soundscape and storytelling in *Betroffenheit*.

2.4.2 Dream Images

Postdramatic theatre introduced a new perspective to the theatre by dismantling past hierarchies between images, movements, and words. (Lehmann 84). Re-cast in this way dream images set free audience’s conventional perceptions. Postdramatic theatre, Kalb argues, underscores the importance of “clashes of images and subjects” (Kalb 76). Pite applies this approach to her works ingeniously. She often challenges expectations by mingling images and subjects in startling ways.

2.4.3 Physicality and Body

Finally, the focus on body and physicality is one of the most prominent features of postdramatic theatre. As I hope to demonstrate more fully in the next chapter, in both Pite’s work and postdramatic theatre, “breath, rhythm and the present actuality of the body’s visceral presence take precedence over the logos” (Lehmann 145). Furthermore, most of the movement Pite generates with her dancers interrogates the origin of pain and fear. Dance theatre specifically focuses on anxiety, agony, and diseases that have been in our daily lives from the beginning of time. In this respect, postdramatic theatre does the same. The body takes over the dominance of words with the aim of expressing eccentric themes such as personal experiences, losses, and hidden, taboo impulses and expressions. According to Lehmann; “The body becomes the centre of attention, not as a carrier of meaning but in its physicality and gesticulation” and the

performer's body is used as a tool to cause "amoral fascination, unease or fear" via the concept of "illness, disability or deformation" (95). Moreover, he argues for the relation between postdramatic and dance theatre:

The persistent boom of a *dance theatre* carried by rhythm, music and erotic physicality but interspersed with the semantics of spoken theatre is not by chance an important variant of postdramatic theatre. If in 'modern dance' the narrative orientation was abandoned, and in 'postmodern dance' the psychological orientation as well, the same development can also be observed in postdramatic theatre – with a delay compared to the development of dance theatre. This is so because the spoken theatre was always, incomparably more so than dance, the site of dramatic signification. Dance theatre uncovers the buried traces of physicality. It heightens, displaces and invents motoric impulses and physical gestures and thus recalls latent, forgotten and retained possibilities of body language. (96)

Lehmann further argues that human pain, sexuality, and collapse are core postdramatic themes that have been rendered most transparently through dance:

Not by coincidence, it is in dance that the new images of the body are most clearly visible. In dance we find most radically expressed what is true for post-dramatic theatre in general: it articulates not meaning but energy, it represents not illustrations but actions. Everything here is gesture. Previously unknown or hidden energies seem to be released from the body... This is evident in ritual cruelty exploring the extremes of what is bearable or when phenomena that are alien and uncanny to the body are brought to the surface (of the skin): impulsive gesticulations, turbulence and agitation, hysterical convulsions, autistic disintegrations of form, loss of balance, fall and deformation. (163)

Pite's work shares these impulses and interests in physical extremes and traumas. She transforms emotions into movements by disclosing pain. *Betroffenheit* provides a powerful example of work in this vein. It also, I hope to show, invites links with dance theatre in ways that resonate with Lehmann's arguments about dance's privileged position in relation to postdramatic theatre.

Chapter 3: The Establishment of an Independent Genre; Dance Theatre

3.1 Brief History of the Term

This chapter traces the history and characteristics of dance theatre. Since Pite's works are often referred to as dance theatre by artists and reviewers, discussing dance theatre will not only help us to understand the genre but also its links to postdramatic theatre. I will begin with the origins of the term and its associations. As we shall see the work of Pina Bausch is central to any discussion of this term.

The term dance theatre was first established by Wuppertal Dance Company, which was directed by Pina Bausch at the start of the 1973/1974 season. The term opened up new possibilities for innovative content and form. Bausch mobilized a new understanding of the body and dealt directly with physical energy. Norbert Servos underlines the significance of Pina Bausch's work in his book *Pina Bausch Wuppertal Dance Theater or The Art of Training a Goldfish Excursions into Dance*. According to Servos:

Pina Bausch broadened the concept of dance, releasing the term "choreography" from its narrower definition as a series of connected movements. Increasingly, dance theater itself became an object to be questioned. Outdated forms of expression were no longer taken for granted. Dance theater developed into something one could define as called 'theater of experience', a theater that by means of direct confrontation made reality. (19-20)

Bausch's new form broke the wall between dance and theatre, challenging or ignoring standard kinds of categorization or interpretation. Servos points out how Bausch's living theatrical process cannot be approached as "a single theme", but rather as a "process of reception" (20). Dance theatre requires active audience members who question their values and daily life experiences. Dance theatre builds this communication process with audiences with its

mimetic, gestural, and physical prospects and is interested in physical restrictions and constrictions. It is a form that is less interested in imitation and more focused on working with “undivided energies” (21).

The prominent difference between conventional dance and dance theatre is understanding what moves the performer rather than how they move. Servos argues that “with the development of this new genre, for the first-time performers appear on the stage with their absolute personalities instead of technically puissant characters” (23). The emotion of the form for performers and audience is rooted in authentic experience. Internalization of conventions and norms make the conditions to be read in the individuals’ behavior. Servos further notes that, “Bausch’s paradigm resists the demands for inconsequential and aesthetic edification and superficial attractions” (24).

With reference to another pioneer of dance theatre, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker of Belgium, and her 2002 production entitled *April Me*, Royd Climenhaga suggests that in dance theatre the “condition of the dramatic moment is enacted on the performers’ bodies” (Climenhaga 59). Indeed, he argues further that “The structure of the ballet is torn apart and mined for dramatic purpose, and the elements of the production coalesce into raw theatricality” (59). Moreover, the production provides an important example of how dance theatre “engages the central metaphor, and the boundaries between dance and theatre overlap” (60). To Keersmaeker the connection between the performers, the stage, and the audience are keys conceptions to consider while shaping a piece. Climenhaga mentions, with *April Me*, Keersmaeker’s purpose is to take as her “point of departure the purest formalism in order to evolve to the theatrical” (Keersmaeker qtd. in Climenhaga 60). Consequently, simple actions as “lying, standing, sitting, and walking” provide the basis of “character in a theatrical sense” (60).

Dance theatre encouraged dancers to present their bodies as a tool for expression in a form that takes its strength from the “nature of theatrical experience, that we set aside a time and space for designated actions to be seen, often borrowing and highlighting specific actions from our everyday lives “(62). The small actions of life gain new meaning and weight. Each movement reveals something bigger in the way it is contextualized or rendered specific. According to Keersmaeker, dance theatre pushes the audience to both receive the image emotionally and construct intellectual bonds with it (Keersmaeker qtd. in Climenhaga 65). Consequently, the performance makes the audience think and feel about ideas beyond the immediate onstage happenings. Climenhaga argues that Keersmaeker’s dance theatre is most evident in the process rather than the product of creation: “[Keersmaeker] developed a model for the connection between form and content, a model developed with the dance means at her disposal, but one which easily crosses the quickly eroding boundary to the world of theatre,” a world cast as a metaphoric ground to discover notions of expression and identity (65).

Ramsay Burt also discusses dance theatre in his book, *Ungoverning Dance: Contemporary European Dance and the Commons*. Burt talks about French choreographer Xavier Le Roy’s piece *Sans Titre* (2014) as an example of dance theatre. One of the most remarkable characteristics of Le Roy’s dancing is that it offers no connection to conventional dance vocabularies. As a pioneer of dance theatre, Le Roy’s approach breaks the usual arrangement of theatre space by separating the stage from the audience. It includes “zones of indeterminacy between animate and inanimate, object and subject, visible and invisible” (Burt 2). Therefore, Burt believes dance theatre seeks to find new ways of negotiating such relationships and questions the relationship between performer and beholder (4). Questioning those relationships engendered new ways of thinking about choreography that aim to challenge

beholders to reconsider their preconceptions. For example, Burt repudiates the idea “that an evening in the theatre offers an enjoyable spectacle and should, in effect, be a consumer experience” (5). Dance pieces such as *Sans Titre* disrupt prescriptive expectations about the commons of dance. Commons can be defined as a resource shared by a group of people. The artistic practices developed by dancers can be seen as commons within the dance world. Le Roy’s choreography demonstrated new ways of defending the commons against institutionalized dance.

3.2 Mother of Dance Theatre and Legacy of Pina Bausch

Like postdramatic theatre, dance theatre drew from rebellious feelings against conventional forms and understanding. Choreographers and dancers challenged orthodox ballet, for example, and began instead to experiment with more explicitly theatrical elements. In that sense, postdramatic theatre and dance theatre share a similar historical development. Yet, without Pina Bausch, the founder of dance theatre, there might not have been a new genre. Bausch trained in modern dance. However, her impulse to go beyond imagination and her discovery of a new way of storytelling set her apart. In addition to its combination of dance and theatre elements, Miranda demonstrates that “Bausch's work is non-linear (not following a clear beginning-middle-and-end structure)” (Miranda 164). Further, she adds, “the dancers can use movement, words, or any form they feel appropriate. The open approach to creativity thus breaks the rigid boundaries between dance and theatre” (172). More than simply rebelling against or experimenting with conventional approaches, Bausch led her audience and performers toward more miscellaneous, multilayered and unknown universes wherein various art forms could be discovered at the same time.

What can be explored in a dance theatre performer's body? In his book *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance and Film*, Patrice Pavis describes the dual nature of the dance theatre actor-dancer:

Tanztheater performers waver between two types of gestuality that they perform alternately: danced gesture and mimetic gesture. Actor-dancers' bodies convey this uncertainty as to their grounding to the spectator; they change strategies continually. Sometimes they allow their impulsion to come from muscular movement, sometimes they imitate and codify the world they represent. The movement choreography doubles up with a *mise-en-scène* (use of space, settings, text and narrative construction) that usually belongs to the theater. (126)

Moving between imitation and body-based authentic impulse, the wavering actor embodies the core tension of the form. It is a tension evident in postdramatic theatre as well. Indeed, Christopher B. Balme argues that “at its most experimental, dance theatre is hard to distinguish from some performances in the area of postdramatic theatre” (Balme 165). As I hope to demonstrate in the next chapter, *Betroffenheit* is just such a performance.

Bausch's approach generated new understanding of how multiple art forms such as theatre, music, dance, visual arts, and technological developments could function together with a new appreciation of space, time, and movement. In 2012, in his article titled, “Bodies Unbuilt in the Dance-Theatre of Pina Bausch,” Marcilio de Souza Viera describes how “Bausch offers to the spectator a dance structure that runs away from the conventional. Its interpreters assimilate movements, words and sounds and add to these its feelings that are evoked based in the form inherited and autobiographical of the impro-vised, broken up and repeated compositions” (Fernandes qtd. Vieira 63).

3.3 The Growth of Dance Theatre: Bausch's Creation Process

Bausch introduced a method that now defines the landscape of contemporary dance with her company The Wuppertal Dance Theater. Her focuses were history, psychology, and the daily experiences of her dancers. In the development process of both *Rite of Spring* (1975) and *Café Müller* (1985), Bausch prioritized the importance of the emotional landscapes of her dancers. Describing her formal aesthetic, Emily Coates suggests that, "Structure for Bausch consisted in an often incoherent collapsing of psychic layers: sexuality, violence, erotic fantasies about characters of inflated, exaggerated gender, and mundane, everyday life" (Coates 5). Bausch experimented with and mingled the conventions of traditional theatre and traditional dance. In his broad history of theatre, Oscar Brockett acknowledges that "Bausch broke down the barriers between dance and spoken or musical theatre by combining movement, speech, singing, spectacle, and other elements into nonlinear, nonliterary performances that expressed anxieties, obsessions, conflicts, and hopes ranging through the everyday and comic to the epic and terrifying" (Brockett 520). *Rite of Spring* has fundamental stylistic components of Bausch's dance theatre, chief among them is her mobilization of the principle of montage.

In the process of breaking down boundaries between genres, Bausch's focus had always been the actual motivations behind the movement of people. The reason for her observations of daily life experiences had been an attempt to answer the question of "what moves people?" Gabrielle Cody claims:

Bausch wants to be taken quite literally when she speaks of a *mise-en-scène* based in what "moves" people: that is, what emotions or psychic wounds physically shape the body's public and private trajectories, from what parts of the body is history recalled? (117)

The most distinctive characteristics of Bausch's dance theater have been its engagement with feelings; she found a way to go down deep to human being's primitive instincts. The creative process of both *Rite of Spring*, *Café Müller*, and many other works were shaped by a close observation of humans, relations, and situations. Questioning the relationships between individuals and groups has been a repetitive pattern in Bausch's pieces beginning with *Rite of Spring*. Servos points out, "the motifs danced include existential pain and longing and the futility of the search for genuine intimacy in relationships" (Servos 29). Once and again, Bausch's search of 'what makes people move' is reliant on people's daily life experiences and emotions.

With *Café Müller* Bausch's dance theater style crystallized even more. Accordingly, Servos states, "The tools of the new dance theater —the broken gestures, alienation. Repetition at varying speeds, the disjunction of processes into separate sequences are used throughout, and the mirroring of the working environment, the theater, or dance theater, becomes increasingly important" (109). Furthermore, *Café Müller* has been considered as a keystone by critics where a coalescence of various forms of the arts blend with one another. According to the analysis of Servos, "The dissolution of the barriers which exist between the various genres continues in *Café Müller*" (108). The field that she created has opened up endless possibilities for dance. Using theatrical elements such as text and focusing on performer's emotions, combining them with traditional dance techniques helped Bausch to identify her own dance theater style. Joshua Abrams confirms "She has redefined dance and produced an audience for much contemporary boundary-shifting work" (Abrams 50). Arguably, Bausch's core question of what moves people has also driven many subsequent choreographers, including Pite. Although she did not begin her

dance work doing dance theatre, she can certainly be considered an inheritor of its spirit and precepts.

Chapter 4: Crystal Pite as a Dance Theatre Artist

4.1 History of Pite's training as dancer

I managed to fake my way through the classical technique quite well, but I already had a feeling that ballet wasn't maybe going to be my final destination.
(Pite qtd. in Cappelle)

Kidd Pivot has been around for ten years, and in that time Pite has made a series of evening-length pieces that smartly blend dance, music, puppetry, text, and scenic design.
(Boynton)

Crystal Pite is a Canadian dancer/ choreographer who was born in Terrace, B.C in 1970.

At the age of one, she moved to Victoria where she started to take dance classes under Maureen Eastick, founder of Pacific Dance Centre.⁵ There Pite trained in jazz, tap, drama, musical theatre, and singing with a focus on the artistry of ballet in the Royal Academy of Dance Method. In 2008, in an interview with Emily Macel for *Dance Magazine*, Pite refers to her dance background and her inspirations when she was a teenager, “My main teachers were two very creative and generous women—Maureen Eastick and Wendy Green—who encouraged me to choreograph and improvise from a very early age. I think that being given the opportunity to think of myself as a dance maker as well as a dancer has had a profound effect on the way I've experienced the dance world.” During her training years with Eastick, Pite gained “her career-building tools: in addition to classical technique, her work ethic and discipline that has carried her forward” (Smart, *Choreographer Optimistic*). Her teachers used to give her keys to the studio, providing Pite with space to create her own choreographic pieces at a young age. Her training consisted of tap and ballet with increasing intensity. In an article for *The Guardian* in

⁵ Pacific Dance Centre is ballet-focused dance studio based on Victoria, BC.

2016, Judith Mackrell points out Pite's early impulses towards becoming a choreographer: "when she was little she thrived on beating off the competition when she entered—and won—various local dance competitions, and she demonstrated a precocious determination in her ambition to become a choreographer" (Mackrell). As a person who had no dance training in a professional academy, Pite managed to get her first job as an apprentice at Ballet BC in Vancouver in 1988. Even though she trained as a dancer, Pite has always been interested in creating her own choreography. Indeed, during her years with Ballet BC, from 1988 to 1996, she choreographed many works, including *Between the Bliss and Me* (1990).

After dancing and choreographing with Ballet BC for eight years, in 1996 Pite traveled to Frankfurt. Here she joined William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt, "a radical company which stretches classical dance beyond recognition" (Winship). As a great admirer of George Balanchine, Forsythe always recognized the importance of classical ballet's language. However, taking Balanchine's work as his base, he also became interested in disintegrating the conventional rules and pushing them forward. Consequently, former Encyclopedia Britannica editor, Barbara Whitney argues that Forsythe's "body of work which displayed both abstraction and forceful theatricality, deconstructed the classical ballet repertoire by incorporating the spoken word, experimental music, and elaborate art installations" (Whitney). Starting from 1984 when he became the artistic director of Ballet Frankfurt, he developed "his own concepts for his dances, using spoken word, video projections and electronic sounds and devising an extreme vocabulary" (Whitney).

In his analysis of Forsythe's career, Sanjoy Roy observes that "his dance style is from Russia, via New York. He lives and works in Germany where Pina Bausch's Tanztheater is another influence" on his works (Roy). Forsythe, like Bausch, "also typically messes with the

social conventions of ballet—not lighting the dancers ‘properly’, raising and lowering the curtain in the middle of a piece, making dancers talk” (Roy). Bausch’s and Forsythe’s innovative approaches and experimentation with classical ballet have similarities in more than one aspect. Maria Shevtsova connected Bausch and Forsythe in her article titled “Performance, Embodiment, Voice: The Theatre/ Dance Cross-overs of Dodin, Bausch, and Forsythe” in *New Theatre Quarterly* in 2003. Shevtsova links up Forsythe’s liaison to Bausch:

Speech in Forsythe, as in Bausch, is provocative in a traditionally non-verbal art. When they first began to use it, the field of dance, to paraphrase Bourdieu, had not incorporated this disposition, had not built up outlook and expectation along these lines on the part of dancers and audiences and within the organizing structures of the dance milieu...Further, they challenge the group *habitus* of dance practitioners, particularly the perceptual and evaluative predispositions of ballet professionals, as incarnated in their practice. (13)

Forsythe, as a mentor and teacher of Pite, has experimented with theatricality in the course of generating movement. Even though Pite moves away from strict adherence to classical ballet, its influences are evident. The presence of ballet has always been a base for Pite, where she constructed her own way of narrative over this foundation. While she was constructing her technique, she danced, watched, absorbed, and continued to create, “learning from Forsythe and starting to make pieces for her Nederlands Dance Theatre” (Crompton). Previously, Forsythe had created multiple pieces for Nederlands Dance Theatre. As a guest choreographer, consequently, Pite found an opportunity to introduce her work to the company relating her connection with Forsythe. Thus, exploring Pite’s work in relation to Forsythe’s influence allows us to see remarkable connections between their works. In a 2013 article for *The Guardian*, Luke Jennings points out how Forsythe has rewritten “the vocabulary of ballet, pushing the elements of speed, balance and co-ordination” to previously uncharted limits. Moreover, he argues, he

deconstructed “the very notion of theatricality” and has always been drawn to dancers who are “physically and imaginatively hyper-flexible” (Jennings).

Advancing her technique during her years with Forsythe, Pite created over 50 works for well-known dance companies including The Paris Opera Ballet, The Royal Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater I, Cullberg Ballet, Ballett Frankfurt, The National Ballet of Canada, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal (Resident Choreographer, 2001-2004), Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Ballet British Columbia. She is also an Associate Choreographer of Nederlands Dans Theater, Associate Dance Artist of Canada’s National Arts Centre, and Associate Artist at Sadler’s Wells, London (kiddpivotwebsite).

Pite’s ambition to create her own choreography and urge to experiment with the body lead her to a different stage in her artistic life. Consequently, besides her collaborative works with various dance companies, in 2002 Pite launched her dance theatre company, Kidd Pivot in Vancouver, BC. In 2017, Rachel Beaumont, in her review “Listen: Crystal Pite on why dance is a universal language”, described how the company’s names were inspired by what she had learned from Forsythe:

“Pivot” was a word I settled on because I liked the idea that it was a precise move, something that had a lot of specificity and a certain kind of skill or technique. There was also something of pivotal, like crucial importance. It also changed your direction, it could change your point of view – the idea of pivoting. And then “Kidd” was in counterpoint to that. It was for the outlaw and the pirate and the prizefighter, and this kind of recklessness that I had been so inspired by with Bill, this kind of irreverence and almost brutality, this willingness to take risks and to be unpredictable. (Pite qtd. in Beaumont)

Beaumont continues:

The tension between these two ideas—as Pite puts it, of ‘rigour inherent in that “pivot” word and the recklessness inherent in the word

“Kidd” —has become ‘really the engine for everything I do’. The idea informs not only the overarching ideas but the choreography itself: ‘the rigour of trying to achieve something that’s repeatable and has a certain set of ideals; and then in tension with that, the willingness to throw that away and think of the choreography as a kind of map, and just improvise along the map. (Beaumont)

Her technique became more pronounced after establishing Kidd Pivot. Throughout her experimentations with her performers, her movement language has become “more classically burnished, and more theatrically explicit, than Forsythe’s, and it’s also more eclectic” (Mackrell). While structuring her dance theatre with Kidd Pivot, she created *Lost Action* (2006), *Dark Matters* (2009), *The You Show* (2010), *The Tempest Replica* (2011), and *Betroffenheit* (2015), which made her an internationally renowned choreographer.

Contrary to general understanding in contemporary dance, Pite’s aim is to make people connect to her work rather than feel lost in something vague or obscure. In the process of generating movement, she works with “a lot of contrast” in the interest of finding “tension between things” (Harowitz). She aims to be clear, comprehensible, and resonant with her audience. On the other hand, leaving space for the unexplored and uncertain enables her audience to interpret her works from their daily life experiences. Generally, her works consist of “striking large-scale visual impacts, complex interactions of dance and storytelling” (Winship). However, what makes Pite exceptional among other choreographers is her ability to infuse theatricality into dance. For example, Mackrell provides a striking observation of Pite’s rehearsal with Nederlands Dance Theatre in 2016 where Pite says to a dancer who is trying to mimic her expression, “you are not stretching your face enough” (Pite qtd.in Mackrell). According to Mackrell, Pite’s are not typical rehearsals but a realm where “unsettling new energy” comes to the performer’s body.

According to Pite, “theatrics of choreography”, “the theatrical side of the making of work”, “structuring a performance”, and “following through with content” are the most challenging aspect of her choreography (Jowers). Furthermore, pushing the limits of the performing body, Pite treats it as a completely new means to generate energy rather than pure movement. Pite’s works also harvest from emotions and theatricality in the course of generating movement. Indeed, as one of the most prominent features of dance theatre, theatricality has been an inseparable part of Pite’s choreography. Regarding the association between theatre and dance, Lehmann also introduces the idea that choreographers such as Pite, collaborate with gestures in order to capture energy while they are experimenting with movement.

Lehmann claims, “in dance, we find most radically expressed what is true for postdramatic theatre in general: it articulates not meaning but energy, it represents not illustrations but actions. Everything here is a gesture. Previously unknown or hidden energies seem to be released from the body. It becomes its own message” (Lehmann 163). Lehmann was not the only person to claim connections between dance theatre and postdramatic theatre. Many critics have already discussed Pite’s works as multi-genre work. For example, in Vancouver’s weekly *The Georgia Straight*, argues that her work:

integrates original music, text, rich visual design, and a keen sense of wit and invention. Her distinct style fuses classical elements with the complexity and freedom of structured improvisation and a strong theatrical sensibility. Pite connects to her subject through her fascination and expertise with the dancing body, and with ‘her uncanny ability to take abstract intellectual ideas and give them vivid physical form. (qtd. in kiddpivotwebsite)

Pite’s integration of multiple art forms into her works and her relation to theatre have been noted in various sources. During my research into *Betroffenheit*, I was also attuned to the ways Pite’s work was described in the critical press. Undeniably, her work is being perceived as a true hybrid

that aggregates conventional aspects of dance and progressive insight of theatricality. In 2016, Jennifer Van Evra, *The Globe and Mail* critic, describes Pite as, “using a mix of *inventive theatre* and jaw-dropping movement that ranges from modern dance to showy tap and salsa, the work explores post-traumatic stress disorder and the coping strategies that people employ to survive it - including the illusory escape hatch of substance abuse” (Evra). Michael Crabb in *The Toronto Star* describes the show, “emotionally intense and unsettling as it often is, this gripping and visually arresting production exemplifies what can happen when theatre and dance combine to achieve what neither could accomplish alone” (Crabb). Also, Deborah Meyers, in the *Vancouver Sun*, defines *Betroffenheit* similarly, pointing out “stagecraft elements” are used to “build the narrative” along with dance. Consequently, the show moves “towards a *dance/theatre hybrid*” (Meyers). These and further examples not included here underline how critics have been interested in foregrounding the work’s mingling of dance and theatre elements.

As one can see, in numerous magazines and reviews it is stated that Pite’s work has constituted a true example of dance theatre. In that respect, during the years Pite worked with Forsythe’s Ballet Frankfurt, she shaped her narrative under the influence of Bausch, the mother of dance theatre. Both Bausch and Pite work with words and body in ways that challenge longstanding conventional norms of dance. Pite’s practice in this vein is evident from her earliest work with Kidd Pivot. As we shall see, building from the insights of Peter Dickinson and others’ prior analyses of these works, both *Dark Matter* and *The Tempest Replica* demonstrate how even Pite’s early work with the company resonates with postdramatic theatre precepts.

4.2 Why is Pite's Work Relevant to Postdramatic Theatre?

4.2.1 Dark Matters

First performed in 2009 at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, *Dark Matters* is a two-act performance that explores the challenging relationship between a Bunraku puppet and his maker. Robert Johnson, who is an author in NJ.com, summarizes the first act “a man creates a wooden puppet that is all too human in its loneliness and its penchant to commit murder. As cute as a toddler clambering onto a seat at the inventor’s table, this faceless homunculus becomes dangerous when its love is ignored” (Johnson). Pite describes the first act as a “theatrical fable” that illustrates the tension between creation and destruction (Smith). By contrast, the second act moves away from theatricality to offer a purer dance form, a strategy we will see repeated in *Betroffenheit*. Given my interest in postdramatic theatre form and theatricality in Pite’s work, I will focus my analysis here on this first act.

To build a context for reading *Betroffenheit* as postdramatic theatre in my next chapter, it is important that I explain to two fundamental strains of Dickinson’s arguments concerning *Dark Matters*. Firstly, Dickinson underlines the relationship between kinesthetic tension and the word. One of the most prominent theatrical elements in *Dark Matters* is its unconventional use of spoken words. For example, during this first act, a disembodied and distant-sounding voice reads aloud Voltaire’s “Poem in the Lisbon Disaster”:

What is the verdict of the vastest mind?
Silence: the book of fate is closed to us.
Man is a stranger to his own research;
He knows not whence he comes, nor whither goes.
Tormented atoms in a bed of mud,
Devoured by death, a mockery of fate.
But thinking atoms, whose far-seeing eyes,
Guided by thought, have measured the faint stars,
Our being mingles with the infinite;

Ourselves we never see, or come to know.
This world, this theatre of pride and wrong,

This frail construction of quick nerves and bones
Cannot sustain the shock of elements;
This temporary blend of blood and dust
Was put together only to dissolve. (Voltaire qtd. in Dickinson 261-2)

Words being spoken from Voltaire's poem propose anxious anticipation by the use of "sound and tone and rhythm of the voice-over" (66). Dickinson argues that the influence of words prepares the audience to react even before seeing any movement on stage. In that sense, *Dark Matter* deviates from classical means for generating movement as we do not see anything on the stage and the production starts with the words. Dickinson describes "hearing those words repeated in the dark as the voice-over loops and the follow spot sweeps across the stage is to begin the process of embodying and animating what we have assumed to be an empty and unpersoned space" (66). Audiences for *Dark Matters*, he argues, were "stimulated and made nervous" by Pite's approach of using "the sound and tone and rhythm of the voice-over," performance choices that put her audience into "kinesthetic anticipation of what's coming next" (66). Analyzing the first act of the show, Peter Dickinson has argued that it served as a "quasi-theatrical dumb show" where text presents an entrée into the exploration of how destruction so often follows creation (64). As we shall see again in the case of *Betroffenheit*, Pite plays with the words to generate an anticipation of action before the movement is seen. It is not a coincidence that in her previous works with Kidd Pivot's performers, postdramatic qualities such as unconventional text use manifests themselves.

Moreover, to make his arguments about postdramatic theatre qualities in *Dark Matters*, Dickinson builds from Susan Leigh's Foster's argument for re-imagining the performer's movement as "alternative theatricality," a direct challenge to a tradition of more "anti-theatrical"

analyses. Starting from this point of view, we can read Pite's work as reaching beyond pure dance and movement. For instance, in 2012, Aaron Scott in his review of *Dark Matters* in *Portland Monthly* portrays the opposition between the first and second act and underlines the contrast between pure movement and theatricality:

The first half of the show tells the story of a puppeteer whose simple, humanoid creation of cardboard, tape, and pins comes to life... While the puppet narrative is dark and ominous—its cinematic lighting and sound design giving it the feel of a sci-fi horror film—the puppeteers quickly devolve into B-grade kung fu slapstick, ultimately tearing down the set, the lighting, and the backdrop, leaving a naked, destroyed theatre... The second half is a complex, mesmerizingly beautiful series of dances that further explores the themes of unknown forces, control, and manipulation. Mixing modern dance elements with freestyle, improvisational, and street/rave dance styles, the dancers manipulate themselves and each other like puppets, getting tangled up in human puzzles that are simultaneously cooperative and competitive. (Scott)

Scott highlights the first act's theatrical elements and emphasizes the shift in the second act towards dance. As we shall see, this is a pattern that would be repeated in *Betroffenheit*. The second strain of Dickinson's argument that I wish to highlight here is his careful analysis of Pite's particular approach to generating movement. Her performers go back and forth between text and movement on stage. The audience members are therefore invited not only to watch bodies that move, but also to listen to bodies that speak to them. Dickinson describes how, "read in the context of the first half's more overtly theatrical exploration of the consequences of training a body to move to a set of authorial conventions or codes, to in effect perform according to a script" reminds him of Michel de Certeau's assertion that "walking is an enunciative act equivalent to speech" (Certeau qtd. in Dickinson 68). Movement in this production is entwined with speech, challenging traditional dance divisions in ways we will see repeated in *Betroffenheit*.

As we shall see in *Betroffenheit*, the sharp contrast in levels of theatricality between the first and second acts in many ways heightens the spectators' awareness of postdramatic theatre elements in the first act. The first act's voice-over, poetry, and the other elements of the "quasi-theatrical dumb-show" described by Dickinson are an integral part of preparing the audience for the effectively moving second act which demonstrates destruction's inextricable ties to creation. Pite connects the first act to the second one as a smooth transition between theatricality and dance. As we noted in chapter two, this kind of fusion of various art forms is a primary feature of postdramatic theatre. For Pite, choreography mingles with multi-layered experimentation and a deliberate blend of art forms.

4.2.2 The Tempest Replica

*Text, sound, light, and movement intertwine as
magically and swiftly as in a fever dream.*
(Upchurch)

For the creation process of *The Tempest Replica*, Kidd Pivot's 2011 adaptation of adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Pite collaborated with renowned Canadian theatre director, Robert Lepage. While they were adapting the original play for the project, Pite blended her choreographic approach with "Lepage's own theatrical aesthetic" (Dickinson, 70). In his analysis of the production, Dickinson argues that Lepage's aesthetic is particularly noticeable in the production's "technically sophisticated moments of design magic" wherein "simpler bits of imagistic minimalism" were applied. (70) For example, Dickinson describes the storm created by Ariel in which audiences:

witness pre-recorded digital images of a flailing Ferdinand, in casual rehearsal sweats, projected onto the stage left portion of the billowing curtain; these are then overlain with projected droplets of pelting rain. Behind the curtain, a live "replica" Ferdinand, all in white, his face

masked, struggles to maintain his balance in response to the lashings of the storm-or is it in response to his “real” digital image”? (71)

The example he shares demonstrates the production’s critical use of contemporary stage technologies to achieve its narrative arc and effects; Ariel’s magical power to conjure the storm is created and amplified by pre-recorded imagery, layers of digital projections, and windblown curtains. The imagery itself is meta-theatrical in its referencing of rehearsal costumes and layering of Ferdinand’s performance presence. This is not the only example of how Pite integrates imagistic minimalism aided by technology in her piece. Dickinson offers the following valuable descriptive summary of the scenographic elements at play in *The Tempest Replica*: “the digital projections create a visually immersive textscape in which an optical illusion of external movement at once amplifies the otherwise invisible kinetic forces buffeting the dancers on stage and, as result, the uncanny feelings of vertigo we experience in the audience” (71).

For Dickinson, the projections encourage more cinematic means for understanding the narrative, formal choices that he argues are akin to dance in their reliance on gestural and movement-oriented vocabularies (72). Strikingly, the same pattern that Dickinson and Scott identified in *Dark Matters* repeats itself in *The Tempest Replica*; the first act consists of theatrical elements, whereas the second half of the show favours more purely dance movement. In *The Tempest Replica*, Kidd Pivot condenses the narrative details of Shakespeare’s original play and makes these literally legible onstage, as Dickinson explains: “In the first half surtitles provide act and scene numbers, and a brief, one line synopsis of the corresponding action in Shakespeare’s play. And in the second half, actual lines from the play are projected on the screen, which are clearly meant to explicate the movement sequences we see taking shape before us” (73). In these ways, audiences with differing levels of familiarity with Shakespeare’s original

text are able to follow the production's core narrative. The synopses also boil Shakespeare's more elaborate and nuanced play and language down to key actions.

Furthermore, as it mingled their respective dance choreography and theatrical direction skills, Pite and Lepage's collaboration seems like a full realization of Lehmann's term "choragraphy." Lehmann has explained this term as meaning "the deconstruction of a discourse oriented towards meaning and the invention of a space that eludes the laws of telos and unity" (Lehmann 146). In other words, it is the abolishment of unity and order of words and words cannot dominate the stage as in the traditional theatre. Lehmann adds "instead of a linguistic representation of facts, there is a 'position' of tones, words, sentences, sounds that are hardly controlled by a 'meaning' but instead by the scenic composition, by a visual, not text oriented dramaturgy" (146). In this sense, Pite's scenic composition allows the revelation of visual language rather than text-based dramaturgy that we observed in classic theatre. As seen in *Dark Matters* and will be seen in *Betroffenheit*, Pite experiments with text in *The Tempest Replica*. In his 2012 review, Alastair Macaulay, the chief dance critic of *The New York Times*, explains, "Key lines from the play are uttered by voice-overs, echoed and reiterated. This Caliban is entirely incapable of the ravishing, wondering poetry that Shakespeare gives him in the speech from Act III, Scene 2, "The isle is full of noises"; instead, the resentful line from Act I, Scene 2, "This island's mine," is recycled expressionistically for him while he snarls and thrashes" (Macaulay). Relying for its narrative and language on one of Shakespeare's most metatheatrical plays, it is perhaps not surprising that text is so central in *The Tempest Replica*. It is important to note, however, that Pite uses words here in ways that are similar to her prior and subsequent works. Words are just a departure point for Pite, generating movement and kinesthetic energy. In other words, she benefits from the power of the text, yet is not beholden to its original terms of

reference. Indeed, in 2015 Amy Smart, one of the critics in *Times Colonist*, argued that the production is a blend of dance and visual experience that gathers “ambient music and whispered Shakespearean lines” together (Smart, Kidd Pivot). On the other hand, David Jays from *the Guardian* portrays the show as an “incisive dumb show, with silhouette projections adding backstory while lines from the play scud through Owen Belton’s sound score” (Jays).

During the European tour of *The Tempest Replica*, one of Kidd Pivot’s stops was Sadler’s Wells in London. Zoë Anderson, writing for the London based dance magazine *Dancing Times*, argued that the piece builds “a theatrical landscape” (Anderson). As Dickinson also notes, this description is reminiscent of Lehmann’s prior arguments: “Instead of a linguistic re-presentation of facts, there is a ‘position’ of tones, words, sentences, sounds that are hardly controlled by a ‘meaning’ but instead by the scenic composition, by a visual, not text oriented dramaturgy” (Lehmann 146). As we can see from the previous examples both in *Dark Matters* and *The Tempest Replica*, Pite implements multiple unconventional approaches that challenge classical dance traditions. She has consistently experimented in her works over time yet has also developed patterns for using text and infusing the first act with more theatrical elements while reserving the second act for a more purely dance approach. Building on this broader context of Pite’s past works and their critical reception, now I to aim to read *Betroffenheit* as a postdramatic work.

Chapter 5: *Betroffenheit*

Where words fail, movement can pick up and carry on. And become extremely articulate, poetic. And the production can go back and forth between contemporary dance and theatre. Our goal has always been to make those two parts essential halves of one whole. So that is not a piece of theatre with dance in the background or a piece of dance with narrative in the background, we really tried to create a true hybrid.
(Young qtd. in Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, *Betroffenheit: The Story* 00.01.51- 00.02.24)

First produced in 2015, *Betroffenheit* was directed and choreographed by Pite and written and performed by co-founder and artistic director of Vancouver's Electric Company Theatre, Jonathon Young. In addition to Young, the ensemble of performers also includes Christopher Hernandez, David Raymond, Cindy Salgado, Jermaine Maurice Spivey, and Tiffany Tregarthen (Salgado and Spivey also performed in *Dark Matters* and *The Tempest Replica*). Roger Levesque, in his review of the performance for the *Edmonton Journal* in 2018, explains that Pite and Young encountered the word *betroffenheit* in famed American director Anne Bogart's book *and then, you act: making art in an unpredictable world* (2007). Bogart's questions resonated with their own impulses:

(Bogart) was asking what it is to make theatre post 9/11, and for her, *Betroffenheit* meant a fertile silence, a place where only the limits of language can be taken in. Your choice is to act or not act, to make or not to make, and I think she was saying that we can't afford to stop trying, that we have to live and stay earnest and curious and keep creating, which is what we tried to do in our production. (Levesque)

To understand Bogart's use of *betroffenheit* precisely and to define what she indicates with it, it is useful to consider the original source:

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, people in the United States awoke in a profound and palpable silence. In German, the word *Betroffenheit* aptly describes the feeling. Simply translated, the word means to shock,

bewilderment, perplexity, or impact. The root of the word *treffen* “to meet” and *betroffen* is “to be met” and *Betroffenheit* is the state of having been met, stopped, struck, or perplexed. I see it as the shock of having met, stopped abruptly in the face of a particular event. (2)

To elaborate her understanding of her term, Bogart interprets the work of theologian Don Saliers’ on the limits of the language in response to shock:

The silence that follows a violent event is similar in quality to the speechlessness of a powerful aesthetic experience. Saliers describes a space and a time engendered by the shock of the event where language ceases. We are left only with an awareness of the limits of language and the limits of what can be taken in. In this gap, definitions disappear and certainty vanishes. Anything is possible- any response, any action or inaction. Nothing is prescribed. Nothing is certain. Everything is up for grabs. (Bogart 2)

Pite is clear about their particular centrality in *Betroffenheit*: “We’re talking about trauma, we’re talking about unimaginable grief, and what the path is through that kind of suffering, and how do they keep going, how do they move on?... If the words are broken, the question becomes: how can dance pick up the pieces?” (Pite qtd. in Harowitz). As an artist and dancer, Pite found the process full of uncertainty, yet rich in possibilities. Further, in a Banff Centre Talk with Dominic Gerard in 2015, Pite argued that *Betroffenheit* also indicates a “kind of suspended state” where your struggle comes across the limits of language (Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, *Betroffenheit: A Story of Trauma* 00:01:00). Consequently, words are not enough to express what is being felt in the wake of shock and trauma. In multiple interviews and press releases, indeed, Pite acknowledges her interest in conflict, darkness, and violence. Those themes have always been the starting point of her creative process throughout her career as a choreographer.

The immense trauma and unimaginable grief behind Young and Pite’s collaboration concern Young’s own real-life tragic experience. In July 2009 he, his partner Kim Collier and their family suffered the sudden and tragic loss through a cabin fire of his 14-year-old daughter,

Azra Young, and her 14-year-old cousin Fergus and 10-year-old cousin Phoebe Conway. The accidental tragedy had been widely reported in the media and, through the RCMP, the family released the following statement at the time: “The fire occurred at their family cabin which, together with their extended family, the Collier Family in Kamloops, has been their summer home for four generations. This tragedy is being grieved by three families of cousins, parents and grandparents as well as by their wide community of friends in both Kamloops and Vancouver” (Collier and Young qtd. in Werb). Five years after the incident, while Young was working through his recovery, he and Pite came together to create a performance about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In Electric Company Theatre’s 2017 forum that explored the topic of PTSD with Young, Pite, and Diane McIntosh (Psychiatrist, UBC Mood & Anxiety Disorders Program), Young was careful to assert that he did not experience full PTSD. He did argue, however, that his experiences had connected him with the importance and contours of the experience (ElectricCo Theatre, 00.02.00- 00.02.30).

The creation process of *Betroffenheit* began in 2014. After intensive preparation and rehearsal process held at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, *Betroffenheit* premiered at the Canadian Stage/Panamania Arts and Culture Program of the Toronto 2015 PanAm and ParapanAm Games in 2015. From the beginning to the end of the process, Pite and Young acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Province of British Columbia, British Columbia Arts Council, BC Gaming, the City of Vancouver, National Arts Centre, the Vancouver Foundation, the Koerner Foundation, the Charles and Joan Gross Family Foundation, and many other business supporters. The production toured to multiple Canadian stages including the Bluma Appel Theatre in Toronto, Babs Asper Theatre in Ottawa, Vancouver

Playhouse in Vancouver, and Royal Theatre in Victoria. The production then toured around the world visiting England, China, Australia, South Korea, USA, New Zealand, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Serbia, France, Netherlands, Ireland, and Taiwan. In 2017, the production won one of the most prestigious theatre awards, known as the highest honor in British theatre, the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production. In its fourth year of touring, *Betroffenheit* came back to its creators' hometown of Vancouver in March 2018. Based on its reputation and accolades, I had already decided to study *Betroffenheit* before the announcement of its 2018 tour plan. However, it has been a turning point for my thesis to be able to witness the show firsthand in Vancouver.

5.1 Why is *Betroffenheit* a Postdramatic Theatre Work?

In this chapter of my thesis, my aim is to explore how *Betroffenheit* moves beyond traditional dance forms in ways resonant with Lehmann's articulations of postdramatic theatre. My arguments build from a review of the related critical press as well as my own attendance at the performance and public talks by the artists. *Betroffenheit* took place at Vancouver Playhouse, a 668-seat venue built in 1962 that often features presentations by DanceHouse. Pre-show talks, titled "Speaking of Dance", were sponsored by Simon Fraser University and hosted Crystal Pite. I attended to one of the pre-show talks on 16th of March 2018 in DanceHouse. There, Pite described the original impulses behind the production as follows: "We always aspired to make that something was a true hybrid, we want to make dance and theatre that were inseparable, that needed each other, that inextricable from each other" (Pite).

Pite's comments, prompt further questions: How does dramatic text function in a production? What is the relationship between text and image? How does the dialogue develop among characters? (Pavis, 2009). What kind of words does the audience hear? How is plot

structured in a dance theatre piece? What are the vocabularies of movement/dance? What are the performing objects? How do they function differently than in conventional theatre? What kind of dance uses objects like that? When and why do we start using a different language? To what extent do the production's performers embrace theatricality? What are the postdramatic theatre features of the performance? What are the similarities and differences between postdramatic theatre and dance theatre? My initial intention was to analyze *Betroffenheit* elaborately in view of these questions. Thinking about the production in these ways has prompted me to focus on how postdramatic theatre helps to make sense of key choices in *Betroffenheit*.

5.2 Postdramatic Features

Lehmann starts his book by accentuating the significance of making a distinction between the dramatic and non-dramatic. The discussion of this disjuncture, indeed, has been the engine for establishing a new genre that defies traditional means of theatre-making. In the first step of my analysis, I propose to look into non-dramatic qualities of *Betroffenheit*. More specifically, I have identified three key postdramatic theatre aspects that have particular relevance to *Betroffenheit*. These are its use of text and textscapes, its particular mobilizations of physicality and the body, and its generation of dream-like images.

5.2.1 Text and Textscape

Contrary to Pite's *Dark Matters* (2009) and *The Tempest Replica* (2011), in *Betroffenheit* the words of other poets (eg. Voltaire, Shakespeare) do not drive movement. Instead, the words included in the performance are all written by Jonathon Young and drawn from daily language to favour repetition, abstraction, and obstruction. Further, they are pre-recorded and sometimes mingled with music or other sounds. They also sometimes seem to emanate from objects rather than bodies onstage. Text has not vanished but has lost its dominance on staging. As we can

recall from Lehmann's arguments about postdramatic theatre, this kind of deconstruction of literature reorients the objective of words onstage. Here they prompt movement and play with the logic of regular speech. Pite addressed the role of text in the creation process in an interview with Dominic Girard for Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in 2015:

We have been experimenting with lots of different ways to work with text in this production. There are many voices in the show, but all are Jonathon's voice. A lot of the text is pre-recorded. He is in dialogue with his own voice, his own mind. And sometimes those voices are delivered through the objects, speakers, doorways and light bulbs. So, you hear the voice is being embodied in a light bulb, for example. Or you see the voice is being embodied in a dancer. We have had lot of fun with working with the text and using it as kind of music, tried to animate with the physical. Sometimes the dancers actually lip-sync his words, sometimes they dance to his words or sometimes they do both. I have been really enjoying that process of working with the music of the language. Having the music of the language and content of the language, and the dancers all come together in a moment is so satisfying. (Pite qtd. in Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, *Betroffenheit: A Story of Trauma* 00.08.58- 00.10.07)

In *Betroffenheit*, as in much postdramatic theatre, the supremacy of theatre dialogue usurped by abstracted, extra-daily, monologic language patterns. Although there are six characters onstage and many objects which seem to speak, the aural text is more suggestive of a one-man show. As Pite explains above, the audience hear only one human voice throughout the performance and it belongs to Jonathon Young and unfolds in two types of register: live and pre-recorded. The sentences are fragmented, incomplete, and free from previous conventional methods used in staging. For example, phrases like "wake up, sit down, get up, you run", "whole show is set to go", "the user gets used", and "the accident happened". Furthermore, the text overlaps, divaricates or transforms its rhythms and tones to approach musicality.

The show begins with the snakelike movement of the wires. Then the protagonist finds himself in a surreal and imaginary space, in the following scenes we come to know that he names

it *the room*, in the middle of assorted sounds and performing objects. In 2017 David Dougill, critic in *The Sunday Times*, portrays the opening scene:

The strong sound-score, opening with jangling bells and ominous crackles, is riven by an explosion and a jumble of terried voices. The set is the stark grey walls of a room — hospital or institution perhaps — but "the room" is a refuge of the mind. A relentless interrogation, with much repeated dialogue, is a bit too close to psychobabble, but is relieved when the dancers become involved: the movement and the words interrelated or counterpointed. (Dougill)

The moment the protagonist realizes where he is, he starts to talk to the objects. The monologue develops in an unconventional way; objects on the stage respond back revealing the background story, the accident and the trauma Young faced and continues to face. The narrative is multi-layered, requiring a high level of concentration from the audience in order to find coherence, logic or narrative in the offered text. Contrary to the common usage of literature in classical theatre, the staging of *Betroffenheit* triggers multiple and sometimes competing senses of the audience. Befitting Pite and Young's interest in *betroffenheit's* place at the bewildering, perplexing, and shocking limits of language, text is not privileged as the single unifying principle of the work. It does not make clear its relationships with the dancers, objects, lighting, scenic, costume, and sound design. While they are ever-present in the performance text, they do not ultimately rule the show. Pite has explained, however, the critical role text played in the creation process of the work. In the development process, text was one critical means for generating movement and triggering the emotions in her performers' bodies. Pite, likewise Bausch, allows her performers to improvise, experiment, and discover with movement, text and any other form they feel appropriate by providing complete freedom in her creative space. Words that were used are assimilated with movement and theatricality. On the other hand, words build their power through their repetition and provocation of movement. Young describes the use of text and

movement onstage as an “image language system” (Young qtd. in Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, *Betroffenheit: A Story of Trauma* 00.04.39-00.04.40). Aspects of the text reveal the story of the tragic accident and Young’s responses to it, but these utterances, in their aural complexity, also obscure the logic of the narrative. They clearly drive movement, however, and demand that meaning be searched for in the plastic expressions and movement vocabularies of the performers’ bodies. Young, in character as the central protagonist, appears first in an institutional space, generic in its form and replete with two doors, a loudspeaker, wires, a telephone, and central post. The scenography creates a controlled space in which he can avoid external influences and follow a protocol to manage himself emotionally and physically. In this space, his is the only voice but it emanates from different sources, including his own body and the chief objects in the space. He can be witnessed responding to unheard interjections but the only voice on offer, pre-recorded and live, is his own.

The disintegration of dialogue, complex narrative form, and ambiguities in the textual sources put the audience in an uncomfortable place. Like the protagonist, audiences are hard-pressed to find fixed, logical, meaning in the layered textual fragments. The production stages the limits of language alluded to in Bogart’s interpretation of *betroffenheit*.

5.2.2 Dreamlike Images

As Lehmann states in *Postdramatic Theatre*, the fundamental quality of the dream is its “non-hierarchy of images, movements and words” (Lehmann 84). As I note above, text plays a critical role in the production but it is not privileged above other signs. So too, the performers’ dance vocabularies, movements, interactions with props, puppets, costumes, lighting, and scenery are not ordered according to a set hierarchy. Rather, each of these elements is foregrounded at different moments in the production. Costumes, for example, are striking and

elaborate, used in some cases to link performers (the protagonist's blue suit is also worn by other characters, including a puppet) or challenge the typical human form (one performer's headpiece gives her an almost cartoonish, grotesque shape). At another moment, lighting produces startling effects when the dancer with the grotesque form is backlit so that her performance produces a series of shadows amplifying her every move. Performing objects are foreground in the opening scene in which a pile of wires seemingly uncoils on its own like a pile of snakes. In another such moment, a puppet version of the protagonist takes focus. The production's non-hierarchical theatre aesthetics use abstract visuals and autonomization of the signifiers. Lehmann describes the phenomenon of autonomization: "Once the formerly 'glued together' aspects of language and body separate in theatre, character representation and audience address are each treated as autonomous realities: once the sound space separates from the playing space, new representational chances come about through the autonomization of the individual layer" (51). In other words, it is the emancipation of the conventional relations between theatrical elements.

All of the theatrical registers of the stage mingle, moving focus between them in ways that build a dreamy and abstract world. For example, at the beginning of the show, performers enter the stage without make-up and costume. They are not part of the room truly until the protagonist hails them as real characters on the stage. They carry all the necessary theatrical properties for this transformation: including costumes and objects that are taken up at different moments of the show. They enter from the right side of the stage, pass through the room and disappear into one of the doors. There are no clear beginnings or endings apart from the performers' actions. Indeed, Pite accepts that she works with non-hierarchical theatre aesthetic:

I've always been interested in working with narrative and fragments of a story. It's evocative and a great source to build movements from, but I'm

not necessarily interested in having a beginning, a middle and an end in a linear way. I do love searching for ways for the body to illustrate ideas that are emotional, that can connect the audience to what we're doing or to the stories in their own bodies. (Pite qtd. in Levesque)

5.2.3 Physicality and Body

As Lehmann states in *Postdramatic Theatre*, the fundamental quality of the dream is its “non-hierarchy of images, movements and words” (Lehmann 84). As I note above, text plays a critical role in the production but it is not privileged above other signs. So too, the performers’ dance vocabularies, movements, interactions with props, puppets, costumes, lighting, and scenery are not ordered according to a set hierarchy. Rather, each of these elements is foregrounded at different moments in the production. Costumes, for example, are striking and elaborate, used in some cases to link performers (the protagonist’s blue suit is also worn by other characters, including a puppet) or challenge the typical human form (one performers’ headpiece gives her an almost cartoonish, grotesque shape). At another moment, lighting produces startling effects when the dancer with the grotesque form is backlit so that her performance produces a series of shadows amplifying her every move. Performing objects are foreground in the opening scene in which a pile of wires seemingly uncoils on its own like a pile of snakes. In another such moment, a puppet version of the protagonist takes focus. The production’s non-hierarchical theatre aesthetics use abstract visuals and autonomization of the signifiers. Lehmann describes the phenomenon of autonomization: “Once the formerly ‘glued together’ aspects of language and body separate in theatre, character representation and audience address are each treated as autonomous realities: once the sound space separates from the playing space, new representational chances come about through the autonomization of the individual layer” (51). In other words, it is the emancipation of the conventional relations between theatrical elements.

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I've always been interested in working with narrative and fragments of a story. It's evocative and a great source to build movements from, but I'm not necessarily interested in having a beginning, a middle and an end in a linear way. I do love searching for ways for the body to illustrate ideas that are emotional, that can connect the audience to what we're doing or to the stories in their own bodies. (Pite qtd. in Levesque)

In conventional theatre, broad social and political questions have often been primary sources of creative inspiration and narrative focus. Therefore, instead of acknowledging an individual performer's particular body or specific experience artists' focused on finding ways to address communal issues. The performer's body in this kind of practice was conceived of as a tool to tackle social and political questions. The mimetic imperative of traditional drama invited audiences to understand the performer as wholly distinct from character and ensconced in a fictive world. However, a tremendous shift occurred when directors and choreographers started to experiment with alternative ideas about play and the inclusion or acknowledgment of the real onstage. Pite, likewise, is interested in performer's emotions and realities during the creative process and onstage. There is a proverb she uses frequently in interviews that attests to her belief in the power of human reality onstage: "Talk to a man about himself and he will listen for hours"

(Pite qtd. in Jowers). Even though *Betroffenheit* draws from Young's particular personal trauma and journey, the details are left oblique enough for audiences to be able to resonate with his broader narrative of relapse, collapse, and recovery.

With the intention of speaking to universal human suffering, Pite chooses to work with the performer's body as a communication medium. Like Bausch, Pite eschews focus on pure movement, in favour of exploring how bodies are intimately connected to and expressive of particular emotions. Characters in *Betroffenheit* respond back to states of fear, being lost, trauma, loss, and finding hope. As the protagonist goes deep to explore more in the room, imaginary characters accompany him via dance to reflect his emotional metamorphosis. What distinguishes *Betroffenheit* from being a pure dance piece, is its often hyper-theatricality. It foregrounds the layers of different theatrical elements like extraordinary and highly theatrical costumes (boas, sequins, suspenders, Stanley-Kowalski tank tops), puppetry, performing objects, elaborate and complex soundscapes, and lighting. Further, all the performers, besides being professional dancers, act as actors. Their facial expressions and gestures build from the dense emotional journey shared by the protagonist, himself an artist who speaks repeatedly in the first act about being called to, seeking a place in or being used by "the show." Towards the end of the first act, as the variety show that consists of dance, theatre, puppetry, singing, musicality, and physical theatre falls spectacularly apart, more than the protagonist gets lost. While the audience hears pre-recorded lines, repeating "his body is collapsing", performers exhibit the sentimental chaos through moving, acting, and speaking over recordings. Performers move their body synchronously to the lines, where the whole show transforms into a multi-genre ceremony.

Pite acknowledges that working with her dancers for a long time makes her life easier, she knows the potential of their bodies and how to push their capacities forward. Mimetic,

gestural, and physical movements are her primary means. Dance theatre, like postdramatic theatre, emphasizes these means over the literary. Pite focuses on undivided energies in ways that resonate with the principles of postdramatic theatre. In 2015 Pite, in her interview with Dominic Girard, “Telling Stories Through Dance Part 2,” explains why she works with doubt as the source of creating interplay between physicality and undivided energies. She suggests that the, “kind of doubt I find inspiring is the experience of not knowing, a dialogue with what I cannot understand and trying to create something with that or inside that... I need tension in order to create things. A kind of a vibrating tension, becomes an engine that helps me to make things (Pite qtd. in Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Crystal Pite: Telling Stories 00.02.13-00.02.53).

For Pite and Young, the mingling of the real and fictive, dance and theatre, live and pre-recorded utterance, live performer and puppet, quotidian and hyper-theatrical costume, light and shadow generated doubt, and uncertainty. Pite’s long-standing interest in anxieties, pleasures, and paradoxes is everywhere at play in *Betroffenheit*, translating perplexing emotions into performance and finding the limits of the dance and theatre languages for expressing these.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This investigation of Crystal Pite as a dance theatre artist and focus on her work in *Betroffenheit* (2015) has aimed to recognize shared features between dance theatre and postdramatic theatre. Connecting *Betroffenheit* and Pite's work on that collaborative project to Lehmann's postdramatic theatre, highlights the theatricality of the production and the ways these resonate with dance theatre and multi-disciplinary performance.

Pite's work both draws from and innovates with various art and performance traditions: dance, theatre, puppetry, spoken text, music, costume, shadow play, scenic design, sonic design and other performance genres. After evaluating dance theatre and postdramatic theatre scholarship, book reviews, performance reviews, press releases, and numerous public interviews with Pite and Young, it became clear to me that reading *Betroffenheit* for its resonance with other postdramatic theatre helped to make sense of the production's formal choices and aesthetic values. The production adds a further, rich, award-winning, internationally successful example to the examples of postdramatic theatre in Pite's oeuvre first identified by Peter Dickinson. In my analysis of postdramatic theatre features in this contemporary and internationally-recognized example, I have highlighted in particular *Betroffenheit*'s generation and use of texts, textscapes, dream images, and finally, the relationship of all of these to the bodies on stage and their physical performance vocabularies.

Hans-Thies Lehmann's path-breaking book *Postdramatic Theatre* [first published in 1999 and translated into English in 2006] drew together under a single new term performance works that involved interaction of multiple art forms: "'Devised' experimental performance work, physical theatre and dance, multimedia theatre, and 'new writing', as well as innovative stagings of classical drama that push this drama into the postdramatic" (2). Lehmann analyses

postdramatic theatre characteristics in his book with the expanded examples of world-renowned artists such as Robert Wilson, Jan Fabre, Robert Lepage, Pina Bausch, William Forsythe, Richard Foreman, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, and so on. Having said that, encountering the same names during my research of the history of dance theatre was not a coincidence. Dance theatre artists have been named in the discussion of postdramatic features since dance theatre shares many of the latter's aesthetic impulses and formal features. For example, Bausch's experimentations and explorations of "choreography" have introduced a new level of theatricality into dance forms in ways that lead "a theatre that by means of direct confrontation made reality, communicated in an aesthetic form, tangible as a physical reality" to describe her work as "theater of experience" (Servos 19). With relation to the revolutionary works of those artists above, I would like to suggest that neither of dance theatre and postdramatic theatre could have existed without the innovative creative work of the other.

Crystal Pite is one of several internationally-recognized contemporary dance theatre artists working in ways that resonate with dance theatre and postdramatic theatre precepts. Pite has had numerous collaborations with theatre directors and choreographers during her artistic career that, as Dickinson first demonstrated, add rich examples to contemporary theorizing about connections between dance theatre and postdramatic theatre. This thesis has built from my opportunity to witness *Betroffenheit* firsthand, listen to public forums in which Pite and Young shared their ideas, follow the critical responses to the tour of their work and read all of this alongside histories and theories of postdramatic theatre and dance theatre provided. Dickinson's work has been extremely helpful not only in its suggestions of links between these two forms but also in its detailed account of Pite's previous dance theatre works with her company Kidd Pivot. Looking into *Dark Matters* (2009) and *The Tempest Replica* (2011) helped me to detect

repeating theatrical performing elements in Pite's work. Additionally, investigation of Pite's training as a dancer and choreographer provided me with valuable historical contexts for key dimensions of her artistic approach.

A key limit in this study is one that I discovered through more careful review of dance theatre scholarship. As Miranda recognizes, a precise categorization of dance theatre is challenging because of its mingling of performance genres: the tendency to define dance theatre as a single genre, either dance or theatre, perplexes the process of classification. For example, Miranda mentions the difficulties that Bausch encountered during her early experimentations with dance and physical theatre; "some dance critics do not think that Bausch's work belongs in the medium of dance, there are critics who argue that her work is dance and not theatre. On the other hand, some theatre critics state that her work should be categorized as theatre" (179). Similarly, postdramatic theatre also includes numerous art forms such as theatre, dance, puppetry, opera, performance arts, and multimedia. Its definition is also challenging for the same reasons that Miranda identifies in relation to postdramatic theatre. These limits of definition also indicate the opportunities for practice to innovate and experiment with the mingling of forms in the manner that Pite regularly pursues.

While working on my thesis, Cristal Pite and Jonathon Young announced their second collaboration, *Revisor*. As in *Betroffenheit*, it is written by Young and is choreographed/ directed by Pite. It will be first performed in Theatre Maisonneuve in Montreal in April 2019. According to the Kidd Pivot's official website, *Revisor* "is one of the 200 exceptional projects funded through the Canada Council for the Arts' New Chapter Program" and this time "eight Kidd Pivot dancers embody the recorded dialogue of some of Canada's finest actors, exploring conflict, comedy and corruption in the potent relationship between language and the body" (Kiddpivot

website). That the work will build again from the voices of Canadian actors and explore such longstanding theatre staples as conflict and comedy is suggestive of their continuing commitment to theatricality in their collaborative work. This brief description also suggests that, like *Betroffenheit*, the production will play with language and the body. Where *Betroffenheit* built from Bogart's assertion of the German term's ability to account for the limits of language in the face of shock, how will *Revisor* explore the "potent relationship between language and the body"?

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Appendices

Appendix A : *Betroffenheit* Tour Dates and Venues

Tour Dates	The Venues
June 5-7, 2018	FTA, Montreal, Québec, Canada
May 29-30, 2018	Vulkan Oslo, Oslo, Norway
May 24, 2018	Concertgebouw Brugge, Bruges, Belgium
May 17-18, 2018	Teatro Stabile Torino, Turin Italy
May 11-12, 2018	Teatro Central, Sevilla, Spain
May 2, 2018	Dance Festival Steps, Fribourg, Switzerland
April 28, 2018	Dance Festival Steps, Zurich, Switzerland
April 19-22, 2018	Canadian Stage, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
April 6-7, 2018	NAC Theatre, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
March 30-April 1, 2018	Citadel Theatre, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
March 23-24, 2018	On the Boards// Seattle Theatre Group, Seattle, Washington, USA
March 14-17, 2018	DanceHouse, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
March 2-3, 2018	New Zealand Festival, Wellington, New Zealand
February 23-25, 2018	Taiwan International Festival of Arts. Taipei, Taiwan
February 14-16, 2018	The Broad Stage, Santa Monica, California, USA
July 15, 2017	American Dance Festival, Durham, North Carolina
July 4-5, 2017	Julidans, Amsterdam
May 29-June 2, 2017	Théâtre de la ville/La Colline, Paris, France
May 23, 2017	La Passerelle, Saint Brieu, France
May 17, 2017	La Comète, Chalon en Champagne, France
May 10-11, 2017	Maison de la danse, Lyon, France
April 28-30, 2017	Mercat de les flors, Barcelona, Spain
April 11-12, 2017	Sadler's Wells, London, UK
April, 2017	Belgrade Dance Festival, Belgrade, Serbia
March 21-22, 2017	University of Minnesota, Northrop, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
March 17-18, 2017	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA
March 10-11, 2017	University of California, Berkeley; Cal Performances, Berkeley, California, USA
March 3-4, 2017	Adelaide Festival, Adelaide, Australia
February 23-26, 2017	Perth International Arts Festival, Perth, Australia
May 31-June 1, 2016	Sadler's Wells, London, UK
May 24-25, 2016	Dublin Dance Festival; O'Reilly Theatre, Dublin, Ireland
April 21-22, 2016	TITAS Presents; Dallas City Performance Hall, Dallas, Texas, USA

March 31-April 2, 2016	White Bird, Newmark Theatre, Portland, Oregon, USA
March 18-19, 2016	On the Boards and Seattle Theatre Group; Moore Theatre, Seattle, Washington, USA
March 11-12, 2016	Dance Victoria, Royal Theatre, Victoria, Canada
February 25-27, 2016	DanceHouse; Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
February 18-21, 2016	Canadian Stage; Bluma Appel Theatre
February 12-13, 2016	National Arts Centre, Ottawa, Canada
July 23-24, 2015	Canadian Stage/Panamania Arts and Culture Program at Toronto 2015 PanAm and ParapanAm Games; Bluma Appel Theatre, Toronto, Canada

Appendix B Critical Press Associated with *Betroffenheit* Tour

B.1 2015

Crabb, Michael. "Betroffenheit: Beauty born out of tragedy." *The Star*, 19 July 2015, <https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/stage/2015/07/19/betroffenheit-beauty-born-out-of-tragedy.html>.

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B.2 2016

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