

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit
„The Plays of Andrew Bovell“

Verfasserin
Mag. Elisabeth Bergauer

angestrebter akademischer Grad
Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2011

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:
Betreuerin:

A 343
Anglistik und Amerikanistik
o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Margarete Rubik

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor, O. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Margarete Rubik. Not only was my topic inspired by one of her very interesting seminars, but she also gave helpful advice and her suggestions and comments on my work were insightful and encouraging.

Equally, I want to thank my mother Elisabeth for her emotional and financial support. Without her, I would not have been able to pursue my studies. I will be eternally grateful for her belief in me and for never letting me down.

I also want to thank my friends and family for all their help and encouragement. My special thanks go to my partner Werner who encouraged me in my plans and whose continuous support enabled me to stay focused on my thesis.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	ANDREW BOVELL'S LIFE AND CAREER	1
1.2	WORKS CHOSEN FOR MY THESIS	4
1.3	CRITICAL RECEPTION.....	11
2	THEATRE BACKGROUND: OUTLINE OF AUSTRALIAN DRAMA SINCE THE 1950S ...	15
3	DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE	22
3.1	TIME	22
3.1.1	<i>Shifts in time.....</i>	<i>22</i>
3.1.2	<i>Memories and flashbacks.....</i>	<i>29</i>
3.2	PLACE.....	33
3.2.1	<i>Shifts in space.....</i>	<i>33</i>
3.2.2	<i>Defined and undefined space</i>	<i>34</i>
3.3	ACTION.....	38
3.3.1	<i>Simultaneity.....</i>	<i>38</i>
3.3.2	<i>Repetition</i>	<i>41</i>
3.3.3	<i>Coincidences and chance meetings.....</i>	<i>45</i>
4	GENRE.....	47
5	CHARACTERS	53
5.1	LONELY CHARACTERS	54
5.2	DISSATISFIED CHARACTERS	60
5.3	DISILLUSIONED CHARACTERS	65
5.4	TRAUMATIZED CHARACTERS	69
5.5	HOPEFUL CHARACTERS.....	72
6	THEMES.....	77
6.1	POLITICAL THEMES	77
6.1.1	<i>Rehabilitation of Australia's colonial past.....</i>	<i>77</i>
6.1.2	<i>Unemployment and economic difficulties.....</i>	<i>81</i>
6.2	NON-POLITICAL THEMES.....	84
6.2.1	<i>Unhappy marriages and relationships.....</i>	<i>84</i>
6.2.2	<i>Disturbed parent-child-relationships.....</i>	<i>87</i>
6.2.3	<i>Longing for closeness.....</i>	<i>91</i>
6.2.4	<i>Tragic losses</i>	<i>93</i>
7	CONCLUDING REMARKS	97
8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	101

INDEX..... 107

APPENDIX 110

 ABSTRACT..... 110

 CURRICULUM VITAE 112

1 Introduction

With plays like *Speaking in Tongues* and *When the Rain Stops Falling* Australian playwright Andrew Bovell gained a worldwide reputation as a contemporary dramatist dealing with contemporary problems and the hardships of modern life. Bovell has been writing plays since the 1980s, creating sixteen plays for the Australian stage and twelve screenplays for television and popular cinema. “While contemporaries such as David Williamson and Louis Nowra are better known, Bovell is nonetheless among the front rank of Australian playwrights” (Makeham 70). Since he has not yet received the academic recognition he deserves, I want to dedicate the following diploma thesis to the analysis of all plays by Andrew Bovell published to date, from the beginning of his writing career in the mid-1980s to his latest play to date, *When the Rain Stops Falling* (2008). An analytical interpretation (rather than a chronological one) shall answer the following questions: (1) whether the dramatic technique used by Bovell varies from play to play or is consistent in all of his plays, (2) whether a certain genre is predominant in Bovell’s writing for the stage, (3) whether Andrew Bovell creates stereotypical characters or rather characters that stand out because of their individuality, and (4) whether the plays have specific topics and themes in common. The structure of this thesis follows these questions and the outcome of this thesis hopefully will be a guide for everyone who is interested in one of Australia’s leading contemporary dramatists.

1.1 Andrew Bovell’s life and career

Andrew Bovell, born on 23 November 1962 in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, is one of Australia’s most acclaimed playwrights at present (Makeham 70). Nevertheless, there certainly has been a lack of recognition of his work in literary criticism so far.¹ One explanation for this fact could be that Bovell rather neglected his writing for the stage in recent years, and laid the focus on his writing for the popular screen. The ratio of the number of plays written for the stage to the number of screenplays developed considerably in favour of the latter. While Bovell started his career as a playwright in the second half of the 1980s with plays for the stage, he turned to screenplay writing in the

¹ The state of research about Andrew Bovell’s work will be discussed in detail in chapter 1.3.

early 1990s, still writing for the stage as well, but since 2000 the writing of screenplays has dominated his career.

Bovell was educated in Perth and Melbourne. He completed his secondary schooling at Scotch College in Perth in 1980, and graduated with a BA from the University of Western Australia in 1983. Then he moved to Melbourne, where he studied at the Victorian College of the Arts, completing with a BA in dramatic arts in 1986 (Makeham 70 and AustLit, *Bovell Biography*). In 1988 he married the actress Eugenia Fragos, with whom he has two sons and one daughter (Makeham 70).

Bovell started his career with the play *An Ocean out My Window*, first produced by the Ensemble Theatre Project at the Gorman House Community Arts Centre in Canbarra in July 1986. One year later he became writer-in-residence for the Melbourne Workers Theatre. His first play staged by the company was *State of Defence* in 1987, a portrayal of marital conflicts. Another play of the same year is *Ship of Fools*, in which Bovell contrasts two journeys, one in medieval times and one in contemporary Australia, showing that the world has only changed little over the centuries. Bovell's best-known play from his early career is *After Dinner*, first performed at La Mama in Melbourne in 1988. Another play, *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, also premiered in 1988, and again was staged by the Melbourne Workers Theatre. It explores "the public and private in the lives of trade union activists" (AustLit, *Bovell Biography*). Bovell's collaborative work with the Melbourne Workers Theatre focused on underprivileged and marginalized characters, for example, blue-collar workers, homeless youth, street workers and nightlifers (Makeham 71).

In 1989 Bovell became writer-in-residence for the Melbourne Theatre Company, which staged his adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels* in 1992 (AustLit, *Bovell Biography*). In the same year, Bovell wrote his one-act play *Like Whisky on the Breath of a Drunk You Love*, "a bitter portrayal of lust and disappointment" (Makeham 71). This together with his next play, *Distant Lights from Dark Places*, forms the beginning of a working process that ultimately led Andrew Bovell to his screenplay for the celebrated film *Lantana*. *Distant Lights from Dark Places* was first performed at La Mama in Melbourne in 1994. It is a dark portrayal of contemporary life and its "unanswered cries for help" (AustLit, *Distant Lights*). His radio adaptation of the play won him several awards, including the

AWGIE award for best radio adaptation in 1997 (AustLit, *Bovell Biography*). His plays generally proved well suited to radio. Two other of his plays have also been adapted for radio, *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* and *After Dinner* in 1989 and 1993 respectively (Makeham 70). Bovell's following two plays, *Scenes from a Separation* (cowritten with Hanne Rayson, 1995) and *Shades of Blue* (1996), are notable for their "incisive humour" combined with "ironic, sometimes despondent bleakness" (Makeham 71). The next stage in the working process leading to *Lantana* was Bovell's highly celebrated play *Speaking in Tongues* (1996), which received the AWGIE award for best stage play in 1997. It forms the basis of the screenplay *Lantana*, and was only marginally changed for the screen. Following *Speaking in Tongues* was a collaborative work with writers like Nick Enright, Daniel Keene and Joanna Murray-Smith on a music theatre piece devised by Diedre Rubenstein with the title *Confidentially Yours*, which was produced by the Playbox Theatre in Melbourne in 1998. Bovell contributed two monologues *Jane* and *Paula*. Bovell's next project again was a collaborative one, this time with the Melbourne Workers Theatre. The outcome was the play *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* It was first staged at the Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne in 1998. Bovell contributed the scenes entitled *Trash*. The play received, among others, the Green Room Award for best new play, and was adapted for the screen as the movie *Blessed* in 2009 (AustLit, *Bovell Biography*).

Bovell's first play in the new millennium was his historical play *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*, first produced by the State Theatre Company of South Australia in 2001. The play is set in the 1850s in Australia's outback. It is Bovell's only play dealing with Australia's colonial past. Bovell's to date latest play is the highly celebrated *When the Rain Stops Falling*, which premiered at the Scott Theatre, University of Adelaide, in 2008, again winning several awards including the AWGIE Stage Award in 2009 (AustLit, *Bovell Biography*).

Apart from Bovell's many achievements for the Australian stage, he is also much in demand as a scriptwriter for film and television, as mentioned above. His greatest achievements are his co-authored screenplays for the Baz Luhrmann film *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) and *Head On* (1998), the adaptation of Christos Tsiolakas' novel *Loaded* (1995). For television, Bovell wrote the screenplay for *Piccolo Mondo* (part of the *Six Pack* series, 1992), *Lust* (part of the *Seven Deadly Sins* series, 1993), *Fisherman's Wake*

(part of the *Naked* series, 1995) and the TV mini-series *Dogwoman* (2001). Apart from the adaptations of two of his own plays, i.e. *Lantana* (based on *Speaking in Tongues*) and *Blessed* (based on *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*), Bovell also wrote the screenplay for *The Riders* (an adaptation of Tim Winton's novel) in 1997 and *The Book of Revelation* (an adaptation of a novel of the same name by Rupert Thomson) in 2006 and the screenplay for *Edge of Darkness* in 2010 (AustLit, *Bovell Biography*).

Currently, Bovell is in New York with his family, working on several projects, including an adaptation of Arthur Miller's play *A View from the Bridge*, which is to be released in the United States in 2012; a screenplay for a film by Anton Corbijn (director of the movie *The American*, 2010); and a joint commission for Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre and London's National Theatre. Although Bovell owns a farm south of Adelaide, outside the town of Willunga, he spends most of the time in big cities like New York, Melbourne and London in order to get inspirations for further projects by observing the "human condition" (Sloley, *Australian*).

1.2 Works chosen for my thesis

In the following thesis, the analysis will concentrate on Andrew Bovell's published plays, the one reason for this selection being that the manuscripts for unpublished plays would be difficult to obtain, and the other reason being that an analysis of all of Bovell's stage plays, not to mention his screenplays as well, would get beyond the scope of a diploma thesis. This leaves me with ten plays, published between 1989 and 2009, covering two decades of Andrew Bovell's writing career.

The earliest work that shall be analysed in this thesis is the play ***After Dinner***, which premiered on 20 April 1988 at the La Mama Theatre in Melbourne. The play was transferred to Theatre Works in St Kilda and then to the Universal Theatre in Fitzroy in November 1988, where it completed a fifteen weeks run. Furthermore, it was produced in New Zealand, London and Dublin (AustLit, *After Dinner*). Bovell said about the genesis of the play:

It was a moment glimpsed at the Tankerville Arms in Fitzroy in 1984. Three women were sitting at a table in the empty bistro arguing about how to divide

the bill. One woman in particular was insistent that it should be done fairly. She seemed so concerned that she would have to pay more than her share. It was an excruciating moment, mundane and quintessentially Australian. It wasn't the comedy of the situation that immediately struck me. It was its pathos. It said something to me about loneliness and the absence of love, about being stuck in a place and not knowing how to move forward, about coming up against your own limitations, about being furious with life and what it has failed to provide. (Bovell, *Author's Note* vii-viii)

This is exactly what *After Dinner* is about. It is a play about three lonely female office workers (Dymphie, Paula and Monika) and two just as lonely male bank workers (Gordon and Stephen) all in their mid thirties who accidentally meet at a suburban pub on a Friday evening after work, pretending to let their hair down. The play is a mixture of comedy, tragedy and a bit of satire. As Bovell stated, the play managed to walk the thin line between tragedy and comedy, humour and pathos. The play as it is now staged has developed from an early short play called *Dinner and Then Entertainment*, which Bovell wrote at the Victorian College for the Arts in Melbourne. His later wife Eugenia Fragos played the part of Paula then and in the later premiere at La Mama Theatre (*Author's Note* viii-ix).

The play ***The Ballad of Lois Ryan*** was staged the same year at numerous venues in Victoria by the Melbourne Workers Theatre. It was also produced at the Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney (also 1988), in Brisbane (1989) and New Zealand (1990). Moreover, it was adopted for the radio in 1989 (AustLit, *Ballad*). It is one of Bovell's overtly political plays dealing with the hardships of factory workers and it is his second script written for the Melbourne Workers Theatre. "*The Ballad of Lois Ryan* embodies the strengths of MWT's best work: it is concise, thoroughly and sensitively researched, and in close touch with the life experience of the audiences for which it was made, which accounts for the fact that the script is unashamedly multilingual" (Watt 87). The limited cast consists of three characters: Lois Ryan, Georgina and Mick, all based on real-life models (Watt 87). The play on the one hand depicts the disagreeable working conditions in a factory, namely freezing half to death because no heating is provided for the workforce and working with insecure machines that ultimately lead to the death of the main character Lois Ryan, and on the other hand it shows how the workforce forms a union to enforce their needs of better working conditions. Moreover, the play deals with problems that may occur in marriage and may lead to divorce like in the case of Lois

and Mick. Here we are confronted with a wife who is dissatisfied with her life, which only consists of working, at home and at the factory. Her husband is too much occupied with his work for the trade union, thus he is not able to satisfy her needs.

Most of Bovell's published plays were written in the 1990s, the first of the new decade being *Distant Lights from Dark Places*, first produced by Chameleon Theatre at La Mama in 1994. A radio version produced by Libby Douglas was first broadcasted on ABC Radio National in February 1996. It is a very short play for four actors, published in the journal *Meanjin Quarterly* (Bovell, *Distant Lights* 197). Different stories are coincidentally linked with each other. Bovell's use of letting the characters speak alternatively in different places emphasizes the connection between the characters. The stories that are told are (1) Valerie's car breakdown and her vain attempt to reach her husband, (2) Sarah's speaking to her therapist (i.e. Valerie) about Neil, an ex-lover who is not able to let her go, (3) Neil's desperate love for Sarah expressed in a letter to her, and (4) Nick's driving home on a Friday night after having had some drinks with friends, giving Valerie a ride home, which unfortunately ends in disaster due to misunderstandings between the two. All four characters are further developed in Bovell's later play *Speaking in Tongues*, and most of them are part of Bovell's screenplay *Lantana*. Apart from the characters, also Bovell's dramatic technique of simultaneous speaking and interconnecting stories through coincidence gain further importance in *Speaking in Tongues*.

The play that followed chronologically was *Scenes from a Separation*, cowritten with Hannie Rayson, one of the most important female playwrights of contemporary Australia. The initiative for this cooperation was taken by Rayson. After seeing the performance of *After Dinner* and working together with Bovell on the *Seven Deadly Sins* series for ABC, she continually asked him to work on a play together (Matheson, *The Process* vii-viii). The outcome was *Scenes from a Separation*, first produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company at the Fairfax Theatre in Melbourne, on 15 November 1995. The play is about the breakdown of a marriage seen from two perspectives: the male and the female. The first act dealing with Mathew's story was written by Bovell and the second act about Nina's feelings by Rayson. Hannie Rayson first wanted to write the male part, but in the end both writers decided to tell the perspective of their own sex, one major point for this decision being that Bovell wanted to write the story of a man who had been left. Bovell begins the play with Matthew's part because he wanted to write about

the breaking up, whereas Rayson preferred to tell the story from the point where the couple had left. So her part goes forward in time and tells the story from the perspective of one year after the separation (Matheson, *The Process* xiv-xv). What Hannie Rayson's and Andrew Bovell's plays in general have in common is the use of humour and topics dealing with contemporary relationships, but they differ stylistically. Thus they needed a motif that would link their two parts together, which finally evolved into the driving to what becomes the beach house in the final draft (Matheson, *The Process* viii-xi). Both writers enjoyed the cooperative writing process, but it was a hard process as well "because you don't have full control over your material, and you do have to make allowances for what the other person is inventing" (Matheson, *The Process* xiv).

The next play that shall be discussed in this thesis is *Speaking in Tongues*, which was first produced by Griffin Theatre Company at The Stables in Sydney, on 6 August 1996. Four years later the play was performed in Europe for the first time, in Hampstead Theatre in London, on 8 June 2000 (Shuttleworth, *Financial Times*). From London it was transferred to New York City, where it had its American premiere at the Gramercy Theatre, on 15 November 2001 (Weber, *New York Times*). In 2009 *Speaking in Tongues* was revived at the Duke of York's Theatre in London (e.g. Billington, *Guardian*). Andrew Bovell described the play the following way:

Speaking in Tongues is about the right and wrong of emotional conduct. It's about contracts being broken between intimates while deep bonds are forged between strangers. It maps an emotional landscape typified by a sense of disconnection and a shifting moral code. It's about people yearning for meaning and grabbing on to small moments of hope and humour to combat an increasing sense of alienation. (Bovell, *Introduction* 5)

Speaking in Tongues takes up the ideas and also the characters of Bovell's play *Distant Lights from Dark Places*. In the later play the lives of nine different characters are interlocked by coincidences. The play starts with four infidelities. Two couples (Leon and Sonja; Pete and Jane) accidentally swap partners. Both couples are on the point of betraying their partners, but only Leon and Jane go through with the infidelity. Part one of the play continues with the consequences following the adultery and ends with two narratives, one told by Leon to Sonja, the other told by Jane to Pete, about strange occurrences that happened during the absence of their partners. The first is about Leon's literal collision with a man wearing brown brogues (i.e. Neil), and the second is about

Jane's seeing her neighbour Nick throwing a woman's shoe into a vacant block in the middle of the night. These two narratives lead over to parts two and three of the play, where the background of these occurrences is made clear. The woman's shoe belongs to Valerie, a therapist, who is in need of a ride home after her car's breakdown and is picked up by Nick. Neil is desperately in love with the wrong woman (i.e. Sarah) and is likely to have committed suicide by drowning himself in the sea. Sarah, again, is Valerie's client. She has problems with committing herself to another person and therefore she builds up a relationship with a married man to decrease the danger of a real commitment. This married man is Valerie's husband John, which explains Valerie's subconscious dislike of Sarah. Apart from these coincidences linking the nine characters, Bovell again uses overlaying and repeating dialogues, shifts in time and flashbacks to structure the play.

In 1998 Andrew Bovell contributed the two monologues *Jane and Paula* to the music piece *Confidentially Yours* by Deidre Rubenstein. It was first performed in the Playbox Theatre Centre, C.U.B. Malthouse, Melbourne on 11 February 1998. Other authors writing monologues for Rubenstein to perform were Debra Oswald, Nick Enright, Michael Gurr, Janis Balodis, Daniel Keene and Joanna Murray-Smith. Woven into the collection of women monologues were songs also performed by actress and singer Rubenstein. One of Bovell's female characters, Jane, already took part in his previous play *Speaking in Tongues*. Both characters will later play a role in *Lantana*. Jane is a fairly lonely woman who suffers from insomnia and one night sees how her neighbour throws a shoe into a vacant block opposite of her house. This is the beginning of a whole journey of imagination, and projection upon the neighbours of what their life is and whether he has been involved in something improper. It reveals how easily and fast people make judgments and accusations about their fellow beings. The second monologue then is about Paula, the wife of the man who threw the shoe and her life and feelings.

On 1 May 1998 the premiere of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* was staged by the Melbourne Workers Theatre at the Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne. The play is the outcome of a three-year collaborative work between Andrew Bovell (*Trash*), Patricia Cornelius (*Money*), Melissa Reeves (*Dream-Town*), Christos Tsolkas (*Suit*) and Irine Vela (musical score). It was directed by Julian Meyrick, who said about the genesis of the play:

Early in 1997 the writers and composer went to a pub in West Melbourne famous for its vibrant, resistive, blue-collar atmosphere. What they found was a commercial shell, rattling with cable TV and pokies. In its hollowness and venality it seemed to sum up the vast betrayal the Kennett Government had perpetrated on all Victorians. Here indeed was an answer to the question the writers had been briefed with: who was afraid of the working class – *no-one*.

(Meyrick 3)

Nobody is afraid of the working class today, the importance of the working class has declined due to the development of Australia into a market-driven society. Glenn D'Cruz rightly states: "[...] the working class is powerless and impotent in the face of a triumphal neo-liberalism. The play forces us to consider a number of vital issues concerning the social and political status of people marginalized and dispossessed by the values of the free market" (207). The characters shown in the play are no typical working class characters, but characters mostly unemployed and marginalized due to, for example, poverty and racial prejudices. They live at the fringes of society and struggle for survival. Bovell's part *Trash* is about a brother (Orton) and a sister (Tracey) who share the same mother, but have different fathers. They grow up in poverty and are victims of abuse. They spend one night together on the street and dream of a "normal life". The night ends in disaster. The siblings die in a fire they accidentally set on while sleeping. In the final monologue, their mother – herself victim of neglect and abuse – openly shows her love for her dead children.

Andrew Bovell's next play to be published was *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*, first produced by State Theatre Company of South Australia at The Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre, on 21 August 2001. It is Bovell's most discussed plays in academic circles. The reason is likely to be its historical setting and the content that deals with the question of the lost generations and the appropriation of Aboriginal land by white settlers. The play centres around a halfway house between distant settlements, called "The Traveller's Rest" run by Nora Ryan.

Bovell provides us with an unsparing fictional portrait of a colony anchored in violence and relentless self-interest. Nora, the Irish owner of the lodging is a bitter pragmatist, a Mother Courage of the Outback, who sees every encounter as commerce, even when she whores herself to protect her adopted Aboriginal daughter, eerily named Obedience. (Bramwell, *Australian*)

The life of the two women is disturbed by the arrival of three travellers, Samuel Epstein, Nathaniel Goundry and Edward Cornelius. At first Nora welcomes them as paying guests, but as the play continues it becomes clear that Goundry is a cruel, dangerous fellow. He abuses his adopted son Cornelius openly and there seems to be hidden a dark secret behind Cornelius' muteness. The main plot focuses on a missionary's wife, Elizabeth Wilkes, who arrives at the inn totally confused claiming that her husband has been murdered and her baby stolen. Then there is an Aboriginal female traveller called Linda, who will be accused of the theft of Elizabeth's baby as the play progresses. In the end, all mysteries are solved and the real delinquent is found. *Holy Day* is a complex play dealing with difficult topics. Bovell had been working on it for about ten years before he completed it in 2001. It was fostered by the Centenary of Australian Federation support. It maybe is an uncomfortable play, but it is necessary for Australia's society that it "openly states that there are consequences – material and spiritual – arising from the cruelties of the past" (Bramwell, *Australian*).

Bovell's latest play to date, ***When the Rain Stops Falling***, is also likely to be his most famous one. It premiered at the Scott Theatre in Adelaide, on 28 February 2008, and was co-presented by Brink Productions, the State Theatre Company of South Australia and the 2008 Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts. One year later, on 15 May, it already received its European premiere at the Almeida Theatre in London. It is a family play that covers the stories of four generations over a period of eighty years (1960s to 2039) and is set in England as well as in Australia. Interconnected stories, shifts in time and space and flashbacks play a significant role in this play. Bovell developed the dramatic technique he used in earlier plays, especially in *Speaking in Tongues*, further and so created a wonderfully structured epic play. The main story focuses on Gabriel Law's departure from England and journey to Australia in search of his father Henry, who left the family when Gabriel was still a little boy. His mother Elizabeth does not support his search and refuses to speak about the past. In Australia Gabriel falls in love with Gabrielle York, but their happiness does not last long. Gabriel dies in a car accident. Gabrielle informs his mother about Gabriel's death and about her pregnancy. She calls her son Gabriel after his father. Years later in 2039, the now 50-year-old Gabriel York is confronted with a phone call of his estranged son Andrew. The none-existent father-son-relationship of the first two generations (Henry and Gabriel Law) has been repeated by

the latter two generations (Gabriel York and Andrew Price). The play leaves open if the latter two will succeed in building up a stable relationship.

1.3 Critical reception

Although Bovell's plays receive wide attention all over the globe, literary criticism of his work is lagging behind. Only two of his plays have been discussed in academic circles so far. One of these two is *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. It is the only play by Bovell that deals with Australia's colonial past. Since an ongoing public debate over the interpretation of the history of the British colonisation of Australia is omnipresent in Australia today, this may be the reason why especially this play by Bovell has been recognized in academic circles. In her thesis of 2006, Alison Lyssa compares Bovell's play with three other contemporary plays, all dealing with Australia's past and its effect on present-day Australia.² These other plays are Katherine Thomson's *Wonderlands* (2003), Tammy Anderson's *I don't Wanna Play House* (2001) and Richard J. Frankland's *Conversations with the Dead* (2002). Bovell's and Thomson's plays represent white perspectives on Australian history, while Anderson's and Frankland's plays represent indigenous perspectives. According to Lyssa, the plays by Bovell and Thomson are overtly non-racist, but if you look at them in greater detail it becomes obvious that the viewpoint of the indigenous characters in the plays is restricted in a specific way. (Lyssa, *Black and White* 203). On the one hand, the indigenous characters appear strong, but on the other hand, they are not able to live an alternative life outside the colony, but are fixed within it. The characters are separated from their traditional culture and are not able to reunite with their people. In this way Aboriginal culture and tradition is not introduced to the audience at all (*Black and White* 221). The plays by Anderson and Frankland, on the other hand, flout the closed orders of an imperial narrative by using various traditional Aboriginal dramatic forms and providing the audience with testimony that is non-restrictive (*Black and White* 220). Lyssa's arguments are quite convincing, although based on very specific views of what drama about Australia's colonial history should be like. In the course of the interpretation of *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* in this thesis, her arguments will be taken up and reconsidered to some extent.

² A condensed version of this thesis was published in *Australasian Drama Studies* in April 2006.

Donald Pulford, the second critic discussing Bovell's *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*, sides with Bovell and his original intention of bringing Australia's past onstage in order to confront the audience with the silenced cruelties of Australia's history. He brings the play into connection with 'the history wars', i.e. with the public debate over Australia's past mentioned earlier. The main focus of this debate lies on the following question: "Was Australia settled or invaded"? There are two contrasting approaches to this question. The 'Three Cheers' speak in favour of settlement and see the past as glorious, whereas the 'Black Armband' insists that present-day Australia is based on injustices and wrongs (Pulford, *History Wars* 150). Pulford thinks that Andrew Bovell sides with the latter approach and wants to demonstrate these wrongs and injustices onstage. Pulford sees in Bovell's play "an attempt to lead Australians towards reconciliation with each other and their country by knowing it more thoroughly, free from lies and silences about its past" (152). In a second article, Pulford emphasizes that Bovell stages past and present simultaneously in *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. The play blends past and present by demonstrating how history shapes present culture (Pulford, *Staging Past* 148). This is especially obvious when the tongue of the Aboriginal girl Obedience is cut out. She is silenced in the cruellest way, symbolizing the fate of thousands of Aborigines who have been silenced throughout Australian history. This is only one aspect of Australian history that causes present distress.

The second play that has been discussed to some extent is *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* Glenn d'Cruz analyses the play as a case example of the work of the Melbourne Workers Theatre and the notion of 'class' and political theatre. He states that in our time of globalization and mediatization³ a re-examination of our understanding of class and political theatre has to be undertaken (207). For some time now issues of ethnicity, gender and sexuality have become more immediately important than issues of class. The Melbourne Workers Theatre "remains committed to the idea of making theatre 'for, with and about working-class people', despite finding itself in a political and cultural context that displaces class as a primary category of identity" (208). D'Cruz thinks that the success of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* partly lies in "the fact that the writers created vivid characters who find themselves struggling for survival in a unforgiving political milieu that rewards material success and punishes the weak" (209).

³ Mediatization "refers to the way in which various communications and entertainment technologies such as film and television mediate our experience and conception of reality" (D'Cruz 207).

Not all critics are as positive about the play as D'Cruz, the journalist Michael Connor, for example, voices a dissenting (rather angry) opinion about the play – and other Left political plays or plays by who he calls “vanity-liberals” (e.g. Connor 26). He, for example, says about Christos Tsiolkas’ “Kennett Boy Monologue”, which opens the play:

In this piece a boy crudely fantasises about a sexual encounter with – Jeff Kennett. In demeaning and derogatory language he abuses Kennett, and John Howard. Kennett’s penis is described in detail as are several imagined acts of homosexual intercourse. This is not undergraduate abuse but postgraduate obscenity constructed to hurt a liberal democratic political enemy. [...] is a paedophile fantasy. A boy in his mid-teens, and not old enough to vote, is depicted with the vocabulary and sexual tastes to be found on an Oxford Street toilet door. (Connor 23)

Coming back to *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*, Michael Connor also briefly mentions this play in the same article about contemporary Australian political theatre. What he says about *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* is even more pejorative than the quotation above:

Bovell is an establishment writer, and *Holy Day* is stage Tarantino with blood over our past but without the jokes. You can tell it is a history play because it covers all the perversions the playwright can spell. [...] The women are unbelievable, idiotic, feminist caricatures. The men are unbelievable, idiotic, feminist hate figure. The history is a travesty, the melodrama noisy and boring. Normal Australian theatre. (Connor 24-25)

As one can see from this quotation, Connor does not hold a very high opinion of contemporary Australian drama; whatever the reasons for his dislike may be, they are definitely not objective ones.

Holy Day (The Red Sea) and *Who’s Afraid of the Working Class?* surely are very important plays and need to be discussed in detail; nevertheless, Andrew Bovell’s other plays should gain the same attention. They are not at all less remarkable. What is especially noteworthy about them is the dramatic technique used by Bovell; “he is one of Australia’s most technically skilled dramatists” (Makeham 70). He structures his plays very skilfully and uses intercutting, overlaying, and repeating dialogue, as well as sudden shifts in time and flashbacks. Coincidences and chance meetings play an important role in most of his plays (Makeham 70). *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* is the only play dealing with Australia’s past. All of his other plays have a contemporary setting recording the

lives of “ordinary people”. His characters range from working-class to middle-class people struggling with their lives and relationships. His plays are characterized by a cosmopolitan worldview. According to Paul Makeham, he “emerged from what is sometimes called the second wave of Australian drama, a period beginning in the early 1980s” (70). Since Andrew Bovell obviously can be related to a specific phase of Australian drama, it is worthwhile to look at different accounts of Australian literary history and position Bovell’s work in contemporary Australian drama, which is what the next chapter will do.

2 Theatre background: Outline of Australian drama since the 1950s

“Two hundred years may have produced no masterpieces but they have produced a drama with authentic vigour which is worth studying,” stated Katharine Brisbane, owner of Currency Press, Australia’s publishing house for performing arts, in 1976 about Australian drama (*Australian Drama* 249). With this statement she holds the common view that Australian drama is lagging behind other genres, and it certainly is true that Australian drama needed more time to be recognized as valuable for Australian culture and the building of a national identity. To understand this delay, one has to recognize that there was no tradition of Australian playwriting. From the beginning of British settlement in Australia until today plays have been imported from England and later the United States. Therefore, a distinction has to be made between ‘theatre in Australia’ and ‘Australian drama’ (Fitzpatrick, *Australian Drama* 182). A significant consequence of this import of foreign plays, as Richard Fotheringham puts it, is “that few local playwrights read or saw any stage works of other Australians, and even if they did were more likely to ignore them than to participate in the growth of a national school of playwriting. [...] Each new generation of writers looked to current international models” (148). This is still true for contemporary drama. Nevertheless, it can also be noticed that the styles and conventions borrowed from British and American playwriting traditions have been actively transformed since 1960 – especially since the later 1960s (Sturm 237).

Although dramatists writing in the first two decades of the 20th century, like Louis Esson, tried to establish a national theatre in Australia (Sturm 213), a significant change towards an Australian drama can only be recognized in the 1950s. In 1954 Australia’s first official funding body for the arts, the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, was founded. Two years later the play which is eminently associated with the Trust, Ray Lawler’s *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, was taken up for a national tour and acclaimed as “the birth of Australian drama” (Fotheringham 154). Today it is one of the plays every schoolchild in Australia knows. It has been widely translated, filmed and studied, and is now part of *The Doll Trilogy*, the other two plays being *Kid Stakes* and *Other Times* first performed in 1976 and 1978 respectively (Brisbane, *Theatre from*

1950 392). Both the *Trust* and *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* are often seen as part of the end of one era as well as the beginning of a new one (Fotheringham 155). *The Doll* marked the end of the well-made play modelled on British examples, “and the rise of a drama uniquely Australian in its theatrical language” (Akerholt 209). *The Doll* became a model for further plays in the late 1950s, namely Richard Beynon’s *The Shifting Heart* (1957), Peter Kenna’s *The Slaughter of St Teresa’s Day* (1958) and Alan Seymour’s *The One Day of the Year* (1960), all being three act-plays like *The Doll* and echoing *The Doll*’s urban working-class theme (Brisbane, *Australian Drama* 266-267).

With the turn of the 1960s several changes occurred influencing Australian drama significantly. The most important of them were (1) the dramatic work of Patrick White consisting of four plays that were performed in quick succession in the first four years of the new decade, and (2) the establishment of the Australian Council for the Arts in 1968, which gave freedom to writers like Jack Hibberd, David Williamson and Alexander Buzo (Brisbane, *Australian Drama* 268). Patrick White, Australia’s only Nobel Prize winner in Literature, is an internationally acclaimed novelist, but his four plays of the early 1960s influenced several of the playwrights and directors of the next two decades who were to shape Australian drama (Akerholt 217). These four plays are *The Ham Funeral* (1961), *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (1962), *A Cheery Soul* (1963) and *Night on Bald Mountain* (1964). White’s achievement was the turning away from naturalism and the three-act formality which had bound Australian dramatists since the 1920s (Brisbane, *Australian Drama* 272). The forms that he used were partly realist, partly expressionist, partly poetic and presentational (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 394).

In the second half of the 1960s two significant theatre groups developed, one being the experimental Jane Street Theatre in Sydney (1966) and the other being the La Mama Theatre in Melbourne (1967), later developing into the Australian Performing Group (1969). The programme of the Jane Street Theatre focused on contemporary themes, experiments in style and revealed a new historical consciousness. The same is true for the La Mama Theatre, where New Wave playwrights like Jack Hibberd, John Romeril, Alexander Buzo and David Williamson had their works performed (Sturm 244-246). Many of the New Wave writers were stimulated by Patrick White’s “challenge to conventional theatre” (Akerholt 219).

Jack Hibberd was the most prominent figure of the initial performances at La Mama. His plays of the late 1960s are satirical and critical of “stereo-typical Australian

behaviour and of its underlying myths and values” (Sturm 254). The first of these plays was *White With Wire Wheels* (1967).

John Romeril, a friend of Hibberd, is the most overtly political dramatist associated with the Australian Performing Group. His plays include *I Don't Know Who To Feel Sorry For* (1969), *Chicago, Chicago* (1970) and *The Floating World* (1974). The latter of the three is said to be one of the best New Wave plays of the 1970s (Sturm 251-252), “a deep and penetrating study of Australian xenophobia” (Brisbane, *Australian Drama* 276). Romeril is one of the few New Wave playwrights that still contribute to contemporary Australian theatre (Akerholt 219). He, for example, worked as dramaturg of Bovell’s play *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*.

Alexander Buzo is a further important New Wave writer, his achievements for contemporary Australian drama were the introduction of the suburban vernacular as a theatrical language style and the discovery of the comedy of manners for the Australian stage. His most important plays are *Norm and Ahmed* (1967), *Rooted* (1969), *The Front Room Boys* (1969) and *Coralie Lansdowne Says No* (1974) (Brisbane, *Australian Drama* 281-282).

David Williamson is a much more conservative playwright coming out of the New Wave, but only concerning form (Sturm 256). He wrote social satires that soon gained popularity not only nationally but worldwide, namely *The Coming of Stork* (1970), *The Removalists* (1971) and *Don's Party* (1971) (Akerholt 220). He became so successful “that his audiences came to depend upon him for a new play each year” (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 404).

One important female playwright cannot be left out when discussing the New Wave movement, namely Dorothy Hewett. She was a generation older than her fellow New Wave writers, and she had already been a famous poet when she started writing for the stage (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 399). Her plays include *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home* (1966), *The Chapel Perilous* (1971), *Bon-Bons and Roses for Dolly* (1972) and *The Tatty Hollow Story* (1974). All of her plays have three specific themes in common: (1) “an exploration of women’s experience in Australian society”, (2) “a fascination with [...] mythic and legendary perspectives on human life, and (3) “a [...] celebration of the psychic realities of dream, nostalgia and illusion as [...] motivations in human behaviour” (Sturm 263-264).

In 1970 the small Nimrod Street Theatre was founded in Sydney. It was committed to the production of new Australian plays, like La Mama and the Australian Performing Group. Like in Melbourne a close interaction between actors and audiences should be established and “a rough, unpretentious style of theatre” was executed (Sturm 247). The Nimrod was responsible for the return to the stage of Peter Kenna. His play *The Slaughter of St Teresa’s Day* was revived in 1972. Further plays by Kenna were *A Hard God*, *Furtive Love* and *An Eager Hope*, which were published as a trilogy, named *The Cassidy Album*, in 1978 (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 404).

In the early 1980s the so-called second wave of Australian drama produced plays by dramatists like Louis Nowra, Stephen Sewell, Alma de Groen, Nick Enright and Daniel Keene. These writers started to explode the borders of Australia. Their plays are characterized by a more cosmopolitan worldview, setting Australia in a larger geographical and historical context (Akerholt 221).

Louis Nowra started writing at La Mama but moved to Sydney when the Nimrod Street Theatre performed his play *Inner Voices* (1977), with which he emerged in the Australian theatre scene (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 405). This and his following two plays, *Visions* (1978) and *The Precious Woman* (1980) are plays with international settings. His fourth play, *Inside the Island* (1980) then turned directly to Australia (Akerholt 221). In his plays he exposes the public world as blunt and greedy. An underlying theme in his plays has always been imperialism imposed upon barbaric human nature and territory (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 405-406).

Stephen Sewell started his career as “an angry and politically passionate playwright” with his family play *The Father We Loved on a Beach by the Sea* (1977) (Akerholt 222). His plays were performed by the Nimrod Street Theatre like Nowra’s. He wrote political plays like *Traitors* (1979), *Welcome the Bright World* (1982), *The Blind Giant is Dancing* (1983) and *Dreams in an Empty City* (1986). Topics that are raised in his plays are “individual identity and need [and] the conflicting relationship between men and women released from the bondage of traditional domestic roles” (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 406-407).

Alma de Groen, a New Zealander by birth, wrote plays about outsiders and the problems they have to live with: *The Joss Adams Show* (1970), *Going Home* (1976), *The Rivers of China* (1987) and *The Woman in the Window* (1998) to name but a few (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 402). She makes use of innovative forms and heightened

language (Akerholt 223). Her main subject is described by Terry Sturm as “the psychology of deprivation and eccentricity, depicted in ordinary domestic worlds” (265).

Nick Enright was a very versatile writer, actor and theatre director, and so are his musicals and plays, versatile in form and theme. He became famous with his musical *The Venetian Twins* in 1983, and his screenplay *Lorenzo’s Oil* received an Oscar nomination in 1993. His most popular play has been *Cloudstreet* (1998), a five-hour epic adapted from the novel by Tim Winton (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 415). Enright, like Bovell, wrote a monologue for Deidre Rubenstein’s music piece *Confidentially Yours* in 1998.

So did Daniel Keene. Keene, like Bovell, also wrote for the Melbourne Workers Theatre. His characters are socially disadvantaged. They long for a better life, but on the other hand passively accept life’s inevitability (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 410). His plays include *Cho Cho San* (1984), *The Hour before My Brother Dies* (1985) and *Silent Partner* (1989). *The Nightwatchman* (2005) is regarded as his major work to date.

Around the bicentenary year of British colonisation of Australia in 1988, new areas of theatre were developed as part of social and political changes, namely multicultural theatre and Aboriginal theatre (Akerholt 224). A number of second-generation immigrant writers were exploring the meaning of ‘home’ (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 409) and looking into Australian stories from new perspectives (Akerholt 224). The most lasting play in the multicultural area of Australian theatre is likely to be Janis Balodis’ drama *Too Young for Ghosts* (1985), followed by *No Going Back* and *My Father’s Father* (published as *The Ghosts Trilogy* in 1997). The trilogy focuses on the post-war migrant experience (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 409). Balodis was also one of the contributors to Rubenstein’s *Confidentially Yours*. Other important writers with migrant backgrounds were Tes Lyssiotis, Barrie Kosky, Teatro Doppio and Bogdan Koca.

Regarding Aboriginal theatre the 1980s were significant for the consolidation of an indigenous drama. Text-based Aboriginal theatre was a relatively new art form; “during the 1970s several explorations were made into the creation of a black theatre”. The most influential play of the early attempts to raise awareness of an Aboriginal literature was Kevin Gilbert’s *The Cherry Pickers*, published not until 1988 but performed much earlier (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 407). Other outstanding figures in Aboriginal drama were Robert Merritt, Jack Davis, Jimmy Chi and the Kuckles Band and more recently Wesley Enoch. Topics they wrote about were, for example, white prejudice and

discrimination, dislocation, Aboriginal history, mixed-raced marriage, injustices of bureaucracy, questions of ownership rights and family relationships.

At the time Andrew Bovell started his writing career in the late 1980s/early 1990s there was a strong trend moving away from “exploring Australian political systems and social structures” [...], “towards a dramatisation of the intensely personal”. The exploration of the inner self became increasingly fascinating (Akerholt 228). Considering Bovell’s plays as a whole, this trend towards a personal drama is clearly predominant. His plays often deal with isolation, loneliness, martial conflicts and the loss of family members. But on the other hand some of his plays are also directly political, namely *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, *Who’s Afraid of the Working Class?* and *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. The first two plays mentioned were collaboratively composed with the Melbourne Workers Theatre, which was founded in 1987. All projects by the Melbourne Workers Theatre include one or more writers (Bovell and Patricia Cornelius were among the most regular), a director (usually an outsider selected by audition), a musical director (in the case of these two plays Irene Vela), and a dramaturg (in the case of *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* the already mentioned John Romeril). Actors are usually involved in the research phase in order to be able to shape the characters they are playing in the later performances. The scripts are produced in a hurry and then undergo “a fairly public workshopping” (Watt 87). The outcome are multilayered collaborative works that usually uncover stories from lives of the working class or the unemployed and underprivileged.

Bovell also collaborated with a number of major female playwrights of today’s Australian stage. The most important of these collaborations is *Scene from Separation*, which was the outcome of an intense collaborative working process with Hannie Rayson. Rayson’s first play to gain attention was *Room to Move* (1985). According to Brisbane, she is a storyteller painting a broad picture of Australian society and creating characters that are “not complex but express themselves boldly and liberally confide their hidden stories in flashbacks” (*Theatre from 1950* 412). Further female playwrights Bovell worked with are Joanna Murray-Smith, Debra Oswald and Janis Balodis, all contributing to Rubenstein’s *Confidentially Yours*. Murray-Smith, unlike Rayson, offers a narrow picture of Australian society. “Her subject matter is intensely domestic and her theme limited quite rigorously to middle-class marriage and its breakdowns” (Brisbane, *Theatre from 1950* 413).

Concluding, one has to agree with Paul Makeham (70) that Andrew Bovell emerged from the so-called second wave of Australian drama in the 1980s, offering a more cosmopolitan worldview than the first generation of ‘truly’ Australian playwrights. Most of his plays tell stories about the problems of modern-day societies. They are not restricted to an Australian setting, though most of them imply that they are set in Australia. They may occur all over the globe. Issues like coping with isolation, loneliness and loss are worldwide phenomena and, therefore, appeal to a global audience. Bovell is firmly placed in the Australian theatre scene. He collaborates with major figures of the Australian theatre and his plays are frequently staged all over Australia. Looking at the statistics provided by AusStage, a research facility for investigating live performance in Australia funded by the Australian Research Council, the results for Andrew Bovell confirm the popularity of his plays in Australia. His plays have been performed 88 times to date. His latest play, *When the Rain Stops Falling*, has been staged every year since its premiere in 2008. *After Dinner*, his first play to be published, has been staged 23 times since its premiere in 1988 and *Speaking in Tongues* has been staged nearly as often (22 times) even though it is eight years younger. These figures speak for themselves, showing that Andrew Bovell holds a significant position in Australia’s contemporary theatre scene.

3 Dramatic technique

Andrew Bovell is a playwright who has experimented with various formal mechanisms in the course of his writing career. The dramatic technique he employs in the majority of his plays deviates from the three classical unities of time, place and action. The structure of most of his plays is not chronological. His characters share memories and dreams with the audience. Flashbacks often provide an insight into the characters' personal histories. Some of his plays also involve a change of place to some extent. *When the Rain Stops Falling* is the most extraordinary example in this case. It provides not only a London setting, but it is also set in several Australian places. The majority of Bovell's plays can be located in Australia, but most of the time the places are not explicitly mentioned, and so could easily be transferred to other parts of the world, which makes Bovell's plays very interesting for global audiences. Further characteristics of Bovell's formal writing style are his use of simultaneous speaking, repetition and coincidences and chance meetings. These techniques, which do not adhere to the unity of action principle, are used to highlight the similarities of Bovell's characters and their lives. The difficulties and problems the characters in his plays usually have to face are of social and/or political origin.

3.1 Time

Regarding the factor 'time', five of Bovell's plays are especially interesting. These are *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, *Distant Lights from Dark Places*, *Scenes from a Separation*, *Speaking in Tongues* and *When the Rain Stops Falling*. To some extent, all of them share an unchronological structure, and memories and flashbacks are included to understand the past of the characters better and its consequences for the present and future.

3.1.1 Shifts in time

Of these five plays *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* is the one with the fewest shifts in time. Here only the first and the last scene are set in a different time sphere, namely the present. These two scenes frame the middle part nicely, which is set about one year before the present action. The play starts with a song called 'Past Midnight'. It reports about a

work accident at ten to four in the morning, when a female factory worker working alone is dragged into a machine and dies in the factory alone. In the following first scene, it becomes clear that the female worker has been Lois Ryan, the title heroine. This scene as well as the last scene of the play are set on the day when the news of Lois' death is announced in the daily papers. During a shop floor meeting in the textile factory where Lois worked before she moved away to Melbourne, her ex-husband Mick, her best friend Georgina and other workers are discussing the accident, an accident which could have happened in their factory as well. Work-related questions like "why did it happen [and] what are the chances of the same thing happening here" are raised as well as personal questions like "[h]ow do I tell them their mother's been killed?" (Bovell, *BLR* 93). The scene ends with a music interlude and leaves the questions unanswered. The last scene of the play returns to the first scene and Georgina finally answers the questions raised before by Mick. In between these two scenes past events are staged, in which Lois is introduced as a dissatisfied working mother. Her husband Mick is fully occupied with his work for the trade union. He is no help in the household and has no time for raising their two children Neil and Leanne. When Lois herself wants to support the trade union and demands some free time for herself, the couple quarrels angrily, which finally leads to Lois' leaving the family and moving to Melbourne, where the accident happens at her new work.

Scenes from a Separation also is a play about the breakdown of a marriage, and considering the factor 'time', it is similarly interesting as *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*. Both acts (the first telling the husband's version of the story and the second the wife's version) start in the present. The following scenes go back in time for about twelve months. In between these backwards shifts in time are several scenes concerned with the present, in which Mathew and Nina are both driving in their cars to the beach house of the family to have a final talk about the breakdown of their marriage. In the final scenes of each act, they have finally arrived at the beach house. While Mathew tries to win Nina back, she sees no future for the two of them. The scenes set in the past focus mainly on three specific events, first from Mathew's perspective, then from Nina's point of view. These three events are (1) one day showing a typical working day at the Molyneaux House, (2) one evening showing Nina, the biographer of Lawrence Clifford, at work with the subject of her book and (3) the evening of the break-up of Nina's and Mathew's marriage. The Molyneaux family owns an established publishing house. Mathew and his brother

Darcy are the main owners since the death of their father. Nina is writing her first book for them, a biography of a famous Australian businessman that underwent a miraculous transformation from “Satan to Saint” (e.g. Bovell, SS 15), as Mathew and the rest of the family jokingly put it. Nina’s work with Lawrence, and Mathew’s subconscious attraction to his employee Siobhan are partly the reasons for their marriage breakdown. The three events are described from the male and the female perspective. Some additional parts told by Nina (Nina’s attempt to rescue their marriage by arranging a nice dinner for two, buying a new dress, etc.) are representative of the failure of their marriage.

Distant Lights from Dark Places and *Speaking in Tongues*, two closely related plays as has been said before, have the same unchronological structure in common. *Distant Lights* is indeed part of *Speaking in Tongues*, functioning as the second act of the later play. *Speaking in Tongues* is divided into three separate parts. Part one is rather chronological. The audience is first confronted with two couples who are on the point of committing adultery, with one difference: only one couple goes through with it. Secondly, the couple who was not adulterous confesses its almost betrayal only to find out that their spouses really committed adultery. Both couples break up. Thirdly, due to chance meetings the two men get to know each other and the two women meet as well. In each case only one of them recognizes the connection. Finally, the married couples meet again and speak about their time alone. One couple is reunited, while the second one breaks up for good.

After reading or watching this first act of the play, one would not anticipate a second act that offers constant shifts in time. In the second act (or in *Distant Lights from Dark Places*) six different time layers are linked with each other. These are, in chronological order: (1) Neil writing love letters to Sarah before Valerie’s disappearance, (2) Sarah talking to Valerie in her office, (3) Valerie trying to phone her husband from a telephone booth, (4) Nick at a police station being questioned about the night when Valerie disappeared, (5) Neil writing letters to Sarah after Valerie’s disappearance and (6) Sarah reading Neil’s last letter. The act starts with Valerie calling her husband and is interrupted by a short image of Nick sitting in a police interview room and afterwards by an alternation of Neil’s first letters to Sarah and Sarah speaking to Valerie. Valerie’s answers to Sarah’s questions are not known at the moment, later in act three they are revealed. For the moment Valerie’s only response to Sarah’s talking are coughs. After Neil has finished reciting his letters, Sarah’s speech is interrupted by Valerie speaking

on the phone. Then Valerie is interrupted by Nick's testimony at the police station. Later on this sequence is interrupted by four dream sequences alternately told by all four protagonists. Sarah is standing on a beach at the foot of a steep cliff when she sees a woman standing at the top of the cliff (i.e. Valerie). Valerie dreams of the same situation, seeing a woman at the foot of the cliff (i.e. Sarah). Neil is dreaming about swimming naked in the sea suddenly recognizing that a man on the other side of the water is watching him (i.e. Nick). Nick again dreams of watching a man in the sea behaving like a child (i.e. Neil). Sarah and Neil feel self-conscious for being caught doing something wrong, as they call it, whereas Valerie and Nick feel the same way for having intruded on something private. After these dream sequences Valerie's and Nick's parts continue. We are in the car with Valerie and Nick when Nick takes a shortcut to bring Valerie home and Valerie jumps out of the car, being afraid of Nick. Then passages about Nick's search of Valerie and Neil's final letter to Sarah alternate. The act ends with Neil ending the letter and Sarah reading the end of the letter simultaneously. The points in time naturally differ, but in this way the audience receives a complete account of the letter from two different characters.

The third act of *Speaking in Tongues* is also unchronologically structured and contains simultaneous accounts of different points in time. The act starts with Valerie's husband John being questioned about the night Valerie disappeared by Leon, a police officer introduced in the first act. After first refusing to play Valerie's messages from the answering machine because they are too personal, John finally gives in. Then Valerie's messages alternate with Valerie speaking to Sarah in her office. Afterwards John talks to Leon about Valerie's fear of strangers and tells him about an incident on the street (cf. act one when Pete is accused of assaulting her). This incident is further underlined by going back into the past and showing how Valerie screams at Pete, while John reports the incident to Leon. Nearly at the end of the play, the present action is again interrupted by a scene from the past, namely Sarah's talking to Valerie about the dream mentioned earlier. The play ends with John phoning Sarah for emotional support, which is an ironical ending since Sarah is not capable of giving emotional support and making a commitment to another person.

Andrew Bovell's use of shifts in time creates one particular effect: suspense. Thus, for example, the reader or viewer gets to know in the second act that Valerie for some reason does not get on well with Sarah, but only later the exact account of their

therapy session is given and we learn that Valerie has an instinctive dislike for her since she senses that Sarah has an affair with her husband John.

The same is true of Bovell's latest play *When the Rain Stops Falling*. The highly unchronological play also creates suspense by shifts in time. Furthermore, these shifts in time highlight the parallels and contrasts between the characters. They link the life of four generations of one family. There is the first generation in 1960s London, Henry and Elizabeth Law; the second generation consisting of their son Gabriel Law and his short-term girlfriend Gabrielle York in 1988 in Southern Australia and the Uluru area as well as Gabrielle and her later husband Joe Ryan in 2013 in Adelaide; and the third generation and fourth generation, namely Gabriel York, the outcome of the short romance between Gabriel Law and Gabrielle York, as well as his own neglected son Andrew Price in 2039 in Alice Springs. The play does not start with the story of the great-grandparents, but with the story of the third and fourth generation. Gabriel York, living all by himself in a humble one-room-flat, receives a phone call from his son whom he has not seen the past twenty years. Too terrified to speak a word, Gabriel hangs up. Returning to the book he has been reading before, he recognizes that he is crying and phones his son back. He apologizes and invites him for lunch the next day. When he realizes that he has nothing to offer to his son, he gets increasingly afraid of the meeting. He feels ashamed of his room, which looks filthy, and of the fact that he cannot afford proper food. He is scared of the questions Andrew might want to ask, for example about his origins. "The past is a mystery" (Bovell, *WRSF* 13), Gabriel states. The scene breaks off with Gabriel's desperate attempt to improve his home and going out to buy something to eat. In the pouring rain a fish falls from heaven, an almost extinct delicacy in 2039. The next scene introduces the first two generations: the older Elizabeth, the younger Gabrielle, Joe Ryan, the older Gabrielle, the younger Elizabeth, Gabriel Law and his father Henry. In the scene one after the other performs the same motions:

[They] enter and shake the water from [their] black umbrellas. [They] close [them] and hang [them] on a hook. [They] remove [their] raincoats and hang [them] beside the umbrellas. [They] cross to the window and stare down into the street. [They] move from the window into an adjacent bathroom. We can hear [them] urinating. [They] enter from the bathroom and stop, lost in a moment's thought. [They] take a bowl and a spoon and fill [their] bowls with soup from a

large pot on the stove. [They] take a place at the table and proceed to eat [their] soup alone. (Bovell, *WRSF* 14-16)

These movements performed by each of them on the stage at different points in time and the fact that all of them are eating fish soup highlights the continuity within this family, the continuity of passing on “patterns of betrayal, love and abandonment” (Bovell, *WRSF* cover back side). The following scenes reveal the past and the origins of Gabriel York and his son Andrew. In alternating time sequences the stories of Elizabeth and Henry Law, of Gabriel Law and Gabrielle and of Gabrielle and Joe Ryan are told. In the 1960s Elizabeth, a frustrated housewife, discovers that her husband is a paedophile. She sends him away and forbids him to ever see his son again. In 1988 Gabriel Law desperately tries to build up a better relationship with his mother, who started drinking back in the 1960s when she discovered Henry’s secret. Since she is not able to fulfil Gabriel’s yearning for more parental intimacy, he leaves for Australia, where he knows his father has lived after the separation. It is a journey of searching his roots. On the southern coast of Australia he gets to know Gabrielle York, who herself has suffered a series of family tragedies. Her brother Glen was abused and killed by a stranger, which her parents could never forget. Her mother Georgia killed herself soon after the death of Glen and her father Peter committed suicide when Gabrielle became of age. Gabriel and Gabrielle fall in love with each other, but even their mutual love ends in tragedy. While driving home from Uluru, they find out that the stranger who killed Gabrielle’s brother was indeed Gabriel’s father. Consequentially Gabriel drives furiously, which leads to an accident in which Gabriel dies. Gabrielle is rescued by Joe Ryan, who becomes her later husband and raises Gabriel’s boy. Gabrielle makes it hard for Joe and her son to live with her. In grief she names her son Gabriel after his father, but is not able to pronounce the name. She is cold to Joe and Gabriel. Gabriel turns away from her when he is of age, but Joe still loves her and bears her growing dementia even though she never shows her love for him. The stories of the first two generations are not revealed chronologically as it now may seem after the short outline of the events. A short list of the scenes should illustrate the arrangement of the individual stories⁴:

- (1) Elizabeth and her son Gabriel are eating lunch together in 1988.
- (2) Elizabeth and Henry are eating lunch together in 1959.

⁴ The following numbering of the scenes does not occur in the actual play. The numeration is added by the author for a clearer outline of the scenes.

- (3) Joe and Gabrielle are eating lunch together in 2013.
- (4) Gabriel meets Gabrielle in a roadhouse on the Coorong in 1988.
- (5) Scene (1) continues.
- (6) Elizabeth and Henry are eating lunch together in 1962. Henry tells Elizabeth about a shameful incident in the train when he was caught absent-mindedly pleasuring himself.
- (7) Joe writes to Gabriel to inform him that his mother's dementia is getting worse. He remembers how he rescued Gabrielle from the broken car.
- (8) On a beach in Southern Australia Gabriel and Gabrielle get to know each other better. In the same scene Elizabeth starts clearing the plates after the lunch with her son.
- (9) Scene (1) continues. Gabriel tells his mother that he will leave for Australia.
- (10) In 1965 Henry comes home from the park injured. Elizabeth wants to call the police, but Henry refuses. At the same time the older Elizabeth pours herself a drink after the lunch with Gabriel in 1988.
- (11) Gabriel and Gabrielle in the graveyard where Gabrielle's family is buried. Gabriel offers her to accompany him to Uluru. At the end of the scene the older Gabrielle remembers how she accepted Gabriel's offer.
- (12) In 2013 Gabrielle does not remember Joe and sends him away.
- (13) Gabriel writes a letter to his mother from Uluru. In the same scene the older Elizabeth reads the letter and the younger Elizabeth pours herself a drink.
- (14) Henry comes home to Elizabeth in 1968 and finds her drinking. The police has visited her. Henry is accused of sexual abuse of a seven-year-old boy. Elizabeth cannot believe the accusation at first, but then she finds pornographic photos of young children in an old bag of Henry. She throws Henry out.
- (15) In this scene Henry and Gabriel both climb Ayers Rock in the dark, in 1970 and 1988 respectively. Henry falls and dies, while Gabriel is held back by Gabrielle.
- (16) In 2013 Gabrielle thinks clearly again and looks for Joe, who is sitting in the park in his pyjamas. For the first time he tells her that he regrets their marriage. Gabrielle asks Joe to help her commit suicide.
- (17) Gabrielle and Gabriel are in the car driving home from Uluru. They discover that Henry is responsible for Glen's death. The car crashes against a tree. The older Gabrielle remembers the night of the accident.

- (18) Elizabeth is drinking when she receives a call from Gabrielle telling her that Gabriel has died and that she is pregnant by him. In 1968 the younger Elizabeth prepares a table for two after she has thrown out Henry and in 2013 the older Gabrielle pours Gabriel's ashes into her fish soup and starts eating the soup. Joe writes a letter to her son that she has died peacefully.

The individual members of the family do not know what dark secrets lie in the past. They only gain small insights into the life of their ancestors. The readers and viewers of the play are in a much better position. Step by step they gain a complete picture of the family's history. Bovell's use of shifts in time creates a high amount of suspense. We do not know at first why Elizabeth has a drinking problem or why Henry left his family. Small references lead us to suspect the dark hidden past of the family. Maybe it would be unbearable for the later generations to know the full truth. Andrew Price, the great-grandson of Henry, tries to establish contact with his father and in this way he refuses to accept the fact that his father abandoned him. As in *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, the final scene of *When the Rain Stops Falling* as well as the first are set in the future, in the year 2039, and frame the scenes set in the past. Andrew and his father Gabriel have lunch together eating fish like their ancestors. Gabriel invites Andrew to stay for a while and hands a suitcase with things from past to him. Gabriel does not know the meaning of most them, but he thinks Andrew would maybe like to have them.

3.1.2 Memories and flashbacks

Memories and flashbacks are other mechanisms used by Bovell to create suspense and curiosity. The first scene in *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* is especially interesting in this respect. The scene includes action from the shop floor meeting, as said before, and furthermore action from Georgina's memory of a picnic she had with Lois. The trigger for remembering this specific event is a photo of Lois in the morning newspaper reporting about her death. Georgina took this picture of Lois at the picnic. While Georgina is talking about the memory, Lois is on the stage taking a position like posing for the picture. Then she is talking to Georgina and their kids. Though it is clear that Georgina is telling a memory, the past action becomes tangible because of Lois' acting onstage. In between the telling of the picnic memory, Lois' ex-husband Mick is still speaking to the other

workers to discuss the industrial accident. Work and personal grief are mixed, as the before mentioned questions asked by Mick underline. In scene ten, the last but one, the picnic is revived. It is not only crucial for the play because Lois' picture was taken on this occasion, but because Lois tells Georgina that she will leave her husband and her children on this day. Another memory plays an important role in this scene. Lois tells Georgina that her own mother left the family when Lois was sixteen. A week later she came back happily and told Lois that she had the best time of her life. She felt free for the first time. Lois also needs time for herself. Maybe the memory of her mother helped her form the decision of leaving her own family.

In *Scenes from a Separation* memories play an important role in the recapitulation of Mathew's and Nina's marriage and separation. Their different memories underline their differing perspectives and diverging points of view regarding reconciliation. Mathew's memories of Nina are full of yearning for her company:

It's when I'm driving that I miss her the most. I look across and the passenger seat is empty. That's when her absence strikes me ... I drove. That was the nature of our marriage. I drove and she sat beside me snipping her split ends with a small pair of scissors she kept in the glove box. They're still in there. She forgot to take them and I haven't the ... will to throw them away. [...] Nina was the only person in the world who I could be silent with. Yeah, it's when I look across and see that her seat is empty, that's when I'm reminded that something is over. It's the smell of her, the shape of her face in profile, the way her hair fell across her shoulder, the kinaesthetic sense of her. That's what's gone. It's as though somebody has torn my right arm away. (Bovell, SS 1-2)

Mathew is later attacked by Nina as being lazy. A new start of his life would be too hard for him. A reconciliation is the easiest way to go back to normal. Nina thinks: "[I]t's not me that you want. It's not me that you're missing. It's being married. It's being safe. Being known" (Bovell, SS 93). All of Mathew's memories are looking back in a nostalgic way. He hates himself for being nostalgic, but he cannot help himself. The passage above is just one example, others are the memories of big moments like the days their daughters were born, or ordinary family matters like discussions with Nina about what bikes their daughters should have. Mathew misses the "mess of being married to Nina", as he puts it (Bovell, SS 17). Nina's memories on the other hand are much more negative. Nina herself likes driving, but Mathew only allows it when he is drunk. She remembers how bossy he could be about raising their daughters, although he never came

home at a reasonable hour to help her with the children, or how unjust he was concerning the members of Nina's book group: "They are disgruntled single mums. Separated, divorced and looking down the barrel at a very desolate middle age" (Bovell, SS 76). More and more negative memories occupy Nina's mind, and in one of the last scenes in which Nina reminisces about her night with Lawrence, she comes to the conclusion "that Mathew didn't really deserve me. I was much more beautiful and erotic and clever and entertaining than someone like Mathew could ever appreciate. Our marriage was a matter of pearls before swine" (Bovell, SS 82). The combination of these memories with actual scenes from the past showing Mathew's and Nina's perspective makes *Scenes from a Separation* a successful play describing difficulties that may arise in a marriage when one partner tries to dominate over the other.

Distant Lights from Dark Places and *Speaking in Tongues* are more remarkable for their constant shifts in time, rather than the use of memories and flashbacks, but there are nonetheless some examples in them, too. In the first act of *Speaking in Tongues*, for example, Pete tells Leon about a woman who passed him and started screaming at him; Leon talks to Sonja about his encounter with a strange man with brown brogues at the beach; and Jane tells Pete about her seeing how their neighbour Nick throws a woman's shoe into a vacant block opposite of their house. These are memories of occurrences that have happened to them recently. In *Distant Lights from Dark Places* (i.e. the second act of *Speaking in Tongues*) some statements of Valerie on the phone are memories of her session with Sarah, other statements imply memories from a happier past of John's and Valerie's marriage. Furthermore, Neil remembers his mutual time with Sarah, while Sarah's memories of Neil are rather vague. She successfully represses any memory of him. Nick is reporting what happened on the night Valerie disappeared. Then in the third act of *Speaking in Tongues*, John remembers that Valerie was worried because of a client whom she had to see in the afternoon of that day and he remembers the incident when Valerie screamed at Pete in the street. These memories or rather recapitulations of recent events make the play lively and interesting. In this way past actions are reconsidered from a later point in time. Thus the action of the play is not only performed, but also simultaneously interpreted from different viewpoints.

In *When the Rain Stops Falling* memories are rare. One major theme in the play is the search of personal origin. Since Gabriel Law, Gabriel York and Andrew Price are de-

prived of a their fathers and their mothers refuse to talk about the past, memories are not communicated to the next generation. Thus in *When the Rain Stops Falling*, the absence and avoidance of memories is as important as the memories communicated in the plays discussed before. Instead of verbal memories, there are things from the past passed on without the characters knowing the story behind them. In the last scene, for example, Gabriel York hands over the following things to his son Andrew: a piece of driftwood Gabriel's mother kept on her dressing table; a boy's shoe, which Gabriel does not know who it belonged to; the urn that contained his father's ashes, he does not know what happened to the ashes; a book written in French that arrived from England when Gabriel was twelve years old; his stepfather Joe's hat; letters from Joe telling Gabriel that his mother is dying; and Gabriel Law's postcards from his father Henry. Before he hands this accumulation of things to Andrew, he states:

I wanted to give you something all the same. You see, I have spent my life running from the past and yet I have carried fragments of it around in this old suitcase ... And I don't know if these few things will make much sense to you ... they hardly make sense to me but it's all I have to give you. (Bovell, *WRSF* 78)

The reader or viewer of the play of course knows that the suitcase before belonged to Gabriel Law. In it he started collecting memories from the past. When he dies the suitcase is handed over to Gabrielle, and after her death to her son Gabriel. Needless to say, we also know what the specific things mean. We have a better insight into the family's history than the individual members of the family. The piece of driftwood, for example, is a symbol of the first time when Gabriel and Gabrielle had sex with each other on a beach in Southern Australia. The boy's shoe belonged to Gabrielle's dead brother Glen, and the French book is the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des art et des metiers* written by Denis Diderot, whom Elizabeth admired to a great extent for his revolutionary ideas and for being ahead of his time (Bovell, *WRSF* 40).

The handing over of these things from father to son is the symbolic climax of the play and represents a new beginning of an improved relationship between the generations. It is also symbolic because the other members of the family, although already dead or disappeared, are also present at the moment, all except Henry. The stage directions say:

He [Gabriel] opens the suitcase and, with each object he removes, he passes it to the ancestor who sits in the place next to him who in turn passes it on down the table until it reaches ANDREW at the other end. ANDREW takes each object with reverence and curiosity. (Bovell, WRSF 78)

Thus, all family members are peacefully joined and share the same memories, not through words, but through symbolic objects.

3.2 Place

Most of Andrew Bovell's plays conform to the unity of place principle of classical drama. Thus, *After Dinner* is set in one specific suburban pub, *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* is set in one specific country town with a special focus on one textile factory, *Scenes from a Separation* focuses on two houses of one family, the monologues *Jane* and *Paula* are set in one suburban neighbourhood, and *Holy Day* is set in one specific area in the Australian outback. It can also be argued that the four parts of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* are set in the same city, which can be identified as Melbourne, and that *Speaking in Tongues* and *Distant Lights from Dark Places* focus on one specific Australian suburban area. Since all the characters are coincidentally linked with each other, they have to live in the same area. They meet at the same bars (Leon, Pete, Jane and Sonja). Leon meets Neil on the beach while jogging. Pete and Jane are Nick's neighbours. Valerie is Sarah's therapist and Sarah is the affair of Valerie's husband. Leon investigates the case of Valerie. But there is one play that does not conform to the principle of unity of place at all: *When the Rain Stops Falling*.

3.2.1 Shifts in space

As mentioned above, *When the Rain Stops Falling* links several different time layers. But the play also links two continents and several places, which can mostly be assigned to individual family members. The home country of the young Law family is England. In 1959 Elizabeth, aged twenty-seven, pregnant with her first and only son Gabriel, and Henry, aged thirty-one, are living in a small flat in London. Elizabeth stays in London all her life, while Henry moves to Australia in 1968 after Elizabeth finds out about his secret passion. His emigration has a symbolic meaning. Henry is somehow banished

from the family and deported to Australia like the convicts in the time of first British settlement in Australia.

Twenty years later, his son Gabriel also sets out for Australia in search of his father or rather to see the same places that his father has seen before he disappeared on Uluru. Postcards by Henry help Gabriel to reconstruct the route his father had once taken. His starting point is the Coorong, a lagoon system in Southern Australia near Adelaide, where he meets Gabrielle. Together they travel to Uluru in the Northern Territory. At the top of Ayers Rock Gabriel feels the presence of his father very clearly. Gabrielle rescues him from falling like his father. But soon after, he is killed in a car accident on a road on the Hay Plain. Uluru is a sacred place to the Aboriginal people of the area. It is a place deeply connected with the origins of this people. It surely also has a symbolic meaning in the play. Gabriel looking for his roots, his origin and his ancestor is most likely to find him here.

After Gabriel's death, Gabrielle marries Joe and settles down in Adelaide. Thus, although she always wanted to move away ("I think it's the ugliest place in the world." Bovell, *WRSF* 30), she stays in the same area in which she was born and in which her family is buried. Her own son Gabriel, though, moves to Alice Springs, which is the nearest large town from Uluru. His moving to the Northern Territory can be interpreted as an unconscious search of his ancestors as well. In this way he is near to his dead grandfather and the place where his father died.

The fourth link in the father-son-chain, Andrew Price, also finds his way to Alice Springs. Thus, this special area somehow connects all four male generations. All four men are on the move, restlessly looking for answers on the one hand (Gabriel Law and Andrew Price) and starting a new life without their families on the other hand (Henry Law and Gabriel York). The two female characters, on the other hand, seem to be stuck in the same places. Although both of them are unhappy, they do not have the strength to change anything. Elizabeth stays in London and gets addicted to alcohol, while Gabrielle stays on the Australian south coast, caught up in grief and sickness.

3.2.2 Defined and undefined space

As in the case of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, Andrew Bovell often clearly defines the places his plays are set in. Some real life places are explicitly named, like London, Alice

Springs and Adelaide in *When the Rain Stops Falling*. Other examples are *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* and *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. In the former the place where Lois Ryan dies in a textile factory is explicitly named as Melbourne (Bovell, *BLR* 92). Nevertheless, Melbourne is not the actual place in which the play is set. The play itself is set in a fictitious country town. But a connection with Melbourne is nonetheless made, since the working conditions in the textile factory in which Lois worked before moving to Melbourne and in which Georgina and Mick are still working, are the same as in the textile factory in Melbourne, as Georgina states:

She [Lois] was killed because she was working by herself at 10 to 4 in the morning. Because the threads wound around her hand and dragged her in. Because she couldn't reach the shut down switch. She was killed because the noise of the machines drowned out her screams for help. Those machines aren't safe. And they're exactly the same as the one's [sic] we work here. What happened to Lois Ryan could have happened to any one of us. (Bovell, *BLR* 115)

Thus, although the play is set in a fictitious town, it implicitly criticizes safety regulations in Melbourne factories. Of course dissatisfying safety regulations cannot only be found in Melbourne factories, but the unsatisfactory working conditions in Melbourne factories served as a role model in the creating process of the play. Bovell composed *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* together with the Melbourne Workers Theatre and several Melbourne workers had been interviewed in the working process of the play. Bovell wanted to highlight the weaknesses of Melbourne factories and factories comparable to those in Melbourne.

Holy Day (The Red Sea) is another example making use of a clearly defined spatial setting. It is set at the British white frontier in mid-nineteenth century Australia, i.e. an area somewhere in Queensland. The main locations in the play are the Traveller's Rest (a halfway house between distant settlements), the farm of the settler Thomas Wakefield, the missionary's house and church that has been burned down before the play starts (this location is only mentioned and not actually staged) and a waterhole nearby. These four locations make up a typical newly settled space. While the houses function as homes and resting places, the outside locations (the roads, the waterhole and the bush in general) are seen as cruel and dangerous. The buildings and the cultivated area remain the domains of the white settlers, while the nature that surrounds them belongs to Aboriginal tribes. Aboriginal people may cross the border to the settlers' space and take part in their lives, but they are not seen as equals and they are not paid for the

work they are doing. A clear line between ‘us versus them’ is drawn. The spaces belonging to the two groups are clearly defined.

In some of his plays Bovell does not identify the spatial setting as explicitly as in the three plays already mentioned. Some places can only be made out by implications. For example in *Who’s Afraid of the Working Class?* real life persons like Jeff Kennett and John Howard are named in Christos Tsiolkas’ part *Suit*. The play was written and performed in 1998, when Jeff Kennett was Premier of Victoria and John Howard Prime Minister of Australia. This and the mentioning of Dandenong, which is a suburb of Melbourne, clearly identify the spatial setting of the play (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 11-14). Tsiolkas gives further references to, for instance, the discussions between the Australian Minister of Education of the time, Phil Honeywell, and the Victorian Union of Teachers. He also mentions more general Australian topics like the Native Title Legislation. Another of his characters, Jamie, works for Southern United, which is a seafood company set in Melbourne (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 21 and 35). Jamie also turns up in one of the other parts, i.e. Bovell’s *Trash*. The fact that he works in Melbourne, the fact that Orton and Stacey are standing on a sea wall in one of the scenes, and that Melbourne is a city located at the sea, are additional factors indicating that the play is set in Melbourne (Bovell, *Trash* 50).

Not only the parts *Suit* and *Trash* are linked, but all four parts are connected by references. The main reference that links all of them is the incident of a dead body being found. In scene three of *Who’s Afraid of the Working Class?* (part *Suit*) the radio news report about an unidentified body that has been discovered in a charity clothing bin at a service station in Dandenong (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 21). In the following scene (part *Dream-Town*) two girls, Trisha and Katina, are talking about an incident of a dead body being found. Katina insists that the body was not decomposed as the news report, but that it was just turgid because it was actually not found in the city square but in the river. She further is sure that the body could not be identified as male or female because the person has recently undergone a sex change. In the scenes fourteen and fifteen (part *Trash*) we then encounter the truth behind the dead body. It concerns Orton and Stacey, who spend the night in a brotherhood bin, lightening a candle and falling asleep. Closely hugged they die in each others arms. Rhonda, their mother, tells us in the following monologue how the police informs her about the death of her children. She wants to see them:

[...] and they advise against it and I say I don't care what you advise, I want to see my kids so they show me in. And there they are, my Orton and Stace, all black from the fire and burnt together like one. But I can tell, I can see him. That's Orton, he's lying with his arm 'round Stace. Holding her. Like I knew he would. (Bovell, *Trash* 69)

In scene sixteen Katina tells her theory about the dead body to a policeman after having been arrested for shoplifting. He rectifies that the body was neither found in the river Yarra (which is running through Melbourne, i.e. another reference to the city), nor found in the city square, as Trisha believes. The body was actually two bodies melted together by fire and was found in a brotherhood bin (Reeves, *Dream-Town* 76). It can be seen that a lot of rumours are afloat concerning this dead body. These rumours are a linking device. So, for example, the mother of the Kennett Boy in scene one, Gina de Stanzo, also believes that the body is her dead son who has been missing for about a year. The only part which is just loosely connected to the other three is *Money*. There is only one reference that could be linked to the city Melbourne as the location of the play. This is a street name, namely Sydney Road (Cornelius, *Money* 81). Although there are several Sydney Roads in Victoria, the connection with Melbourne is justified, since all the other parts clearly are set in the city and since the play as a whole is a project of the Melbourne Workers Theatre.

A second example of localisation by means of implication is *Scenes from a Separation*. Small references refer to a general Australian setting. The Molyneaux family, for example, is publishing Australian literature (Bovell, SS 8) and Nina is writing the biography of Laurence Clifford, who has been nominated Australian of the Year (Bovell, SS 15). Apart from these there are no further reference to Australia. But for this play an explicit localisation is not really necessary, since it deals with a general topic, the breakdown of a marriage, which is a worldwide phenomenon.

Several of Bovell's plays are set in unknown areas and towns, which could be associated with various areas worldwide. What they have in common, though, is a westernized, industrial setting. Mainly four plays share such a global setting: *After Dinner*, *Distant Lights from Dark Places*, *Speaking in Tongues* and *Jane and Paula*. In them no explicit naming of a place or person takes place. In *After Dinner* maybe one reference could be made out as being specifically Australian, namely one of the songs being performed in the pub in which the play is set, *The Boys Light Up* by the Australian rock

band Australian Crawl. Since the other three plays are closely connected by content, they also share the same setting. Although the content of the plays is very general and global, a small reference to Australia can be found even be found in *Distant Lights from Dark Places* and *Speaking in Tongues*, which is the bush in which Valerie gets lost and eventually dies. But apart from these, couples like Leon and Sarah, Pete and Jane, John and Valerie and people like Nick, Sarah and Neil could be found anywhere. Topics like unsatisfied marriages, unemployment, inability to make a commitment to somebody else or love the wrong person are universal. Therefore, no explicit localisation is needed.

3.3 Action

Apart from the factor ‘time’, Andrew Bovell’s plays are most interesting for the way in which the action of the plays is presented. The two plays that are quite fascinating in this respect are *Speaking in Tongues* (which of course includes *Distant Light from Dark Places*) and *When the Rain Stops Falling*. They contain simultaneous speaking and repetition and make use of coincidences and chance meetings. Bovell’s other plays also make use of these devices but not in such a condensed way as these two plays.

3.3.1 Simultaneity

Already the first scene in *Speaking in Tongues* is marked by simultaneity. A short passage will clarify the phenomenon:

PETE/LEON. It’s not much.
 SONJA. It’s what / I expected.
 JANE. I expected – I don’t know what I expected. It makes me feel / cheap.
 SONJA. Cheap. Sordid.
 PETE/LEON. Do you want to leave?
 SONJA/JANE. No.
 SONJA. I like it. / Do you?
 JANE. Do you?
 LEON. We could go somewhere else.
 PETE. I’m not sure.
 JANE. We’re here now.
 PETE. I’m sorry.
 SONJA. Why?
 PETE. It’s just that / I haven’t done this sort of thing before.

LEON. I haven't done this sort of thing before.
 SONJA/JANE. Nor have I. (Bovell, ST 9-10)

The (/) symbol indicates that the remainder of the speech is spoken simultaneously with the speech following. The simultaneity of speech in this case highlights the simultaneity of the situation. Both couples are on the verge of betraying their spouses. In the course of the scene not only the male characters and the female characters use the same words, but also the married couples at one point utter the same words. For example, while Leon and Sonja make the first move, Pete and Jane break away. Their bad conscience at first seems to be greater than Leon's and Sonja's. Later Leon and Sonja move to go, but in the end only Sonja leaves. In the next scene the adulterous ones, Leon and Jane, and the betrayed ones, Pete and Sonja, utter the same words. Thus, while in the scene before the connection between the married couples is closer, in the second scene the link between the unfaithful ones on the one hand and the faithful ones on the other hand is stronger. The emotional ties are expressed by the simultaneous speech acts. In part two of the play (i.e. *Distant Lights from Dark Places*) Neil and Sarah express some linking words simultaneously, like 'and' and 'why'. These words occur while Neil is writing his letters and Sarah is talking to Valerie about the letters, so at different time layers, as mentioned above. Although these are rather unimportant words, they show that there is a connection between Neil and Sarah. On the one hand they are connected by their old love affair, but on the other hand they are also connected by their confusion. This confusion is triggered by their lack of being able to understand each other's feelings. Neil cannot understand why Sarah does not love him anymore and Sarah respectively is not able to understand why Neil cannot let her go. Simultaneity also occurs later in the scene, when Neil, Sarah, Valerie and Nick talk about their dreams:

ALL. I get this dream.
 NEIL. All the time
 VALERIE. Every night.
 NICK. Over and over.
 SARAH. I'm standing on a beach at the foot of a steep cliff. The wind is cold and I don't have a coat.
 NICK. I'm walking along a track through thick woods. It's hot and I'm sweating. To my left I can hear the sound of water running over rocks.
 SARAH. The tide is coming in and I'm afraid that if I don't move I'll be trapped.
 NEIL. I'm standing on the edge of a crystal-clear pool of water. I can see the smooth rocks on the riverbed.

NICK. I find the opening of a small path and start to walk down to the water.
 VALERIE. I'm walking along a track at the edge of a high cliff. Parts of the cliff-face have fallen away. The further I go, the more dangerous it becomes.
 (Bovell, *ST* 66)

The telling of their dreams continues. At some point Neil and Sarah use the same words, since both feel like somebody is watching them, and later on Valerie and Nick speak simultaneously because both feel like having intruded on something private. Though these are four individual dreams, they are connected by simultaneity on the one hand and parallels on the other hand. The dreams complement each other and to some extent foretell the future. Neil is likely to drown himself in the sea and Valerie may fall from a cliff, but we cannot be sure about their fates. The lack of closure stimulates the reader's and viewer's mind.

Simultaneity of speech as well as of action is used in *When the Rain Stops Falling*. The most obvious example is the already mentioned scene in which the older Elizabeth, the younger Gabrielle, Joe Ryan, the older Gabrielle, the younger Elizabeth, Gabriel Law and Henry Law perform the same set of actions in different time spheres, namely the coming home on a rainy day and eating fish soup (Bovell, *WRSF* 14-16). Another example is the scene set simultaneously in 1970 and 1988 on top of Uluru. It seems as if Gabriel and Henry speak to each across time, while Gabrielle is trying to rescue Gabriel from falling from the edge:

GABRIEL. Dad?
 GABRIELLE. Gabriel?
 HENRY. Come with me.
 GABRIELLE. Step back from the edge.
 HENRY. Please, Son, I'm so lonely.
 GABRIELLE. Look... it's snowing.
 And it is. He looks at GABRIELLE, illuminated by the snow. And then back to HENRY.
 HENRY. Forgive me.
 Then HENRY falls into darkness.
 GABRIELLE. Come back from the edge.
 GABRIEL walks back toward GABRIELLE as the snow lights the way.
 It's beautiful, Gabriel... it's so beautiful.
 They stand on Uluru in the falling snow. (Bovell, WRSF 64-65)

This passage anticipates already another device used by Bovell: repetition. While the action is presented simultaneously in this example, it is also a repeated action and a re-

peated setting. Father and son not only walk the same path and look from the same mountain. The natural setting itself is repeated: snow is falling, which is an exceptionally rare occurrence in the area around Uluru. That it happens to father and son may be a symbol of their belonging together in eternity.

Other plays that use simultaneous speech or action to some extent are the two plays composed together with the Melbourne Workers Theatre. In the first scene of *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* Georgina and Mick are talking simultaneously about Lois' death. Georgina takes a more private perspective, whereas Mick looks at the industrial accident from a trade unionist's point of view (Bovell, *BLR* 92-93). In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* the action of the four individual parts itself is presented not one after the other, but rather simultaneously by intermingling the plots and giving cross references to each other to form a coherent play.

3.3.2 Repetition

Repetition is another major device of Andrew Bovell. In *Speaking in Tongues* several examples of multiple telling of events from different perspectives can be noticed. Pete talks to Leon about his encounter with a screaming woman on the street, who is exposed as Valerie later on. In the third act John is retelling the same incident to Leon to underline his belief that his wife has a pathological fear of strangers (Bovell, *ST* 27-28 and 88). Another example is Leon telling Sonja about his encounter with a strange man with brown brogues on the beach. The incident is not exactly retold later on. But Neil's already mentioned dream could be seen as a recapitulation of the same event (Bovell, *ST* 46 and 66-68). Then Jane tells Pete about the night when she saw how Nick threw a black woman's shoe away. Nick later on tells the police why he did throw the shoe into the vacant plot opposite of his house (Bovell, *ST* 50-53 and 71-72). Neil's and Sarah's relationship is also retold and negotiated on various levels. Neil reviews his relationship with Sarah and expresses his feelings in letters to her, while Sarah talks about their relationship to Valerie, remembering a rather different version of their relationship (Bovell, *ST* 60-65). Part of their story is retold by Leon to Sarah after he has met Neil on the beach: for example, the incident when Neil finally meets Sarah again after all these years of neglect and she does not recognize him. Sarah talks about the same incident

with Valerie, declaring that she only pretended not to see him (Bovell, *ST* 47-48 and 60-61). Another example of repetition is the retelling of the night of Valerie's disappearance. Nick reports to the police what happened on the night. He repeats word for word what Valerie and he spoke in his car. Simultaneously Valerie joins him on the stage and speaks her part of their conversation, although of course she has already disappeared at the time of Nick's police interview. Thus, two different time spheres are staged simultaneously. Later on Neil tells the parts of the story he knows to Sarah in his last letter. As mentioned above, Sarah on the other hand is retelling the story by reading Neil's letter (Bovell, *ST* 65-74). In act three Valerie's messages on the answering machine are repeated. In this way the effect of phoning every fifteen minutes is recreated (Bovell, *ST* 60-69 and 81-87). Other repetitions in the last act concern Sarah. Firstly, Sarah's dream is repeated. This time Sarah continues by acknowledging that the woman who looks down from the cliff is Valerie (Bovell, *ST* 66-68 and 91). Finally, at the very end another repetition is enacted. Sarah is not answering the phone, breaking off her relationship with John as she has done before with Neil, when she realizes that her lover really needs her (Bovell, *ST* 95). The repetitions and the multiple telling of events are a means of gaining insight into many different perspectives, viewing the story from different angles, like in a movie. Andrew Bovell's work as a screenplay writer surely has influenced his writing for the stage. The representation of different perspectives effects the emotions of the audience. The judgments the readers and viewers may make about the individual characters at the beginning of the play may vary tremendously as the play continues.

In *When the Rain Stops Falling* also numerous examples of repetition can be noticed. But they are of another kind as in *Speaking in Tongues*. The events are not retold, but incidentally repeated by different family members. One example is Elizabeth's cleaning and painting her room, which is repeated by her grandson Gabriel York years later:

Alice Springs 2039

GABRIEL. [...] So I found an old tin of leftover paint in the cupboard. White. Or off-white. Pure white being too stark. Like a hospital. And I pulled the furniture to the centre of the room and covered it with sheets. I took the pictures off the walls. I took the books from the bookcases. And I painted. And I painted. And I painted. And when I finished I looked around and it still looked exactly the same. Only whiter. (Bovell, *WRSF* 12)

London 1968

ELIZABETH. [...] So I found an old tin of leftover paint in the cupboard. And as the tanks rolled into Prague I painted. And I painted. And I painted. Then I hung the pictures back on the walls. And put the books back on the bookshelves and moved the furniture back into position and it was when I was moving the wardrobe that it tilted slightly and something slipped from the top... and landed at my feet. (Beat.) A leather satchel. (Bovell, *WRSF* 61)

The cleaning and painting of the two rooms is triggered by important events in their lives. Gabriel paints to make a good impression on his son Andrew, whom he has not seen for twenty years. Gabriel feels filthy, as Elizabeth does. But her bad feeling is caused by a visit of the police, who accuses her husband of child abuse. She cleans and paints in order to distract herself. But the cleaning only confronts her with the truth, when she finds Henry's leather satchel with pornographic pictures of little boys inside. In a way, by painting the rooms both Elizabeth and Gabriel try to whitewash their past. Elizabeth's painting is repeated a further time twenty years later before her son Gabriel visits her, which again can be compared with Gabriel York's painting his room before Andrew visits him. The two instances of Elizabeth's small talk about the paint first with Henry, later with her son Gabriel resemble each other as well. Even Gabriel York's expression of the paint being off-white goes back to Elizabeth, who uses the same words in 1968 (Bovell, *WRSF* 59-60 and 17). Further examples of repetition are the constant small talk about the weather and about fish. Concerning the complaints about the rainy weather a constant expression is used: "Still, there are people drowning in Bangladesh/East Pakistan so we shouldn't complain" (Bovell, *WRSF* 17, 20, 26, 29, 74). The proverb is not a universal one known by everybody. For example, Joe has never heard of it before. It is passed on from Henry to Elizabeth, then from Gabriel to Gabrielle and lastly to Gabriel York. In the last scene the figure of speech has become true:

ANDREW. I know. It's terrible.

GABRIEL. What?

ANDREW. What's happening in Bangladesh. (Beat.)

You haven't heard the news.

GABRIEL. No, I don't follow it.

ANDREW. There's unprecedented flooding. Large parts of the country are underwater. The death toll is near half a million and rising. And it's not just Bangladesh. Severe flooding is threatening low-lying areas of Northern Europe and Southern America... There are people out there saying this is the end. (Bovell, *WRSF* 74-75)

Thus, the figure of speech is not repeated verbatim, but varied. The same is true of the value of fish. While fish in the 1960s is associated with a rather low price (“ELIZABETH. It’s fish, I’m afraid.” Bovell, *WRSF* 20 and 37), fish is seen as healthy in the 1980s (“ELIZABETH. They say it’s good for you. And it’s simple. Easy to prepare. [...]” Bovell, *WRSF* 19). Gabriel nonetheless cannot stand it; after eating Elizabeth’s fish he has to throw up in the bus (Bovell, *WRSF* 29). In 2013 the reputation of fish as being very healthy has increased further (“JOE. [...] They say it’s good for you. Good for the brain. Not sure what it does exactly but they say we should have it three times a week at least.” (Bovell, *WRSF* 26). Finally in 2039 fish has become a very rare delicacy, being nearly extinct, due to climate change and maybe also due to eating habits:

GABRIEL. [...] Are you hungry? Lunch is almost ready... It’s fish... I hope you eat it.

ANDREW. What, fish from the sea?

GABRIEL. Well... strangely, yes.

ANDREW. I don’t think I’ve eaten that.

GABRIEL. They say it’s very good for you. Good for the brain. Or something. (Bovell, *WRSF* 75)

Climate change is traced back to a lack of responsibility for nature, which also symbolizes the lack of responsibility of the individual characters for their family. The natural catastrophes in this way reflect the inner lives of the characters. A hopeful picture is drawn at the end: when father and son are united and are determined to start their future life together the rain finally stops falling (Bovell, *WRSF* 80).

Two further plays of Bovell make use of repetition: *Scenes from a Separation* and *Jane and Paula*. Both plays look at specific events from different perspectives. In *Scenes from a Separation* these perspectives are a male and a female one. While Mathew, for example, truly thinks that Nina has an affair with Lawrence, we learn from Nina that her relationship with Lawrence is a mere business one. Nevertheless Mathew’s inappropriate behaviour and his accusations push Nina more and more into a personal relationship with Lawrence. This can be seen best in scene five of Mathew’s part and scene eight and nine of Nina’s part, when Nina and Lawrence spend the night in the beach house, being interrupted in their work by Mathew. First we encounter Mathew’s perspective of the situation and later on Nina’s version of the story (Bovell, *SS* 22-27 and 77-82). Another example would be the issue of driving. Remembering their relationship, both

Mathew and Nina take this issue on. Whereas Mathew thinks the driving was his domain alone and Nina did not mind, Nina on the other hand would have liked to drive as well from time to time (Bovell, SS 1-2 and 43).

In the two monologues *Jane* and *Paula* the incident of Nick throwing a woman's shoe into a vacant plot is described first from the perspective of the neighbour who saw him throwing the shoe, and secondly from the perspective of his wife. In this way the situation is repeated by multiple telling, like in *Speaking in Tongues*. As in some of the examples mentioned above Bovell's use of repetition here is a means of viewing one and the same story from different angles and leaving the audience the possibility to judge for themselves. Multiple telling of the same events stimulates the reader's and viewer's mind.

3.3.3 Coincidences and chance meetings

Finally, Bovell's use of coincidences and chance meetings shall be discussed. In this case *Speaking in Tongues* (including *Distant Lights from Dark Places*) is the most interesting example. Here several coincidences occur and chance meetings take place. The first major examples are the chance meetings between Leon and Pete on the one hand and Sonja and Jane on the other hand. In each of the conversations, one of the characters recognizes the other person as the spouse of his/her lover, namely Leon recognizes Pete and tries to gain forgiveness for Jane, and Sonja recognizes Jane as her husband's affair and tells her that she is Leon's wife (Bovell, ST 33 and 40/42). Other examples are Leon's coincidental connections with both of Sarah's lovers. First he meets her ex-lover Neil on the beach. Then he meets her present lover John, while investigating Valerie's case (Bovell, ST 43-48 and part three). Other coincidences of course are that Valerie works therapeutically with her husband's lover Sarah and that Neil knows a man at work who knows John and who tells Neil John's story, i.e. Neil coincidentally gets to know the story about the missing wife of Sarah's new lover (Bovell, ST 71-74). The play as a whole is full of coincidences and chance meetings. The purpose of this dramatic device may be to show by means of interrelations that the characters share similar problems and behave similarly. They are able to identify with each other. Themes like trust in a relationship occur repeatedly, and by Bovell's connecting the characters coincidentally these themes are stressed as universal topics.

In *When the Rain Stops Falling* some coincidences occur as well, but they are by far not as overwhelming as in *Speaking in Tongues*. One is rather trivial: Gabriel and Gabrielle share the same name. They are astonished by the fact:

GABRIELLE. What's your name?
 GABRIEL. Gabriel.
 GABRIELLE. It's not.
 GABRIEL. It is. What's yours?
 GABRIELLE. Gabrielle.
 GABRIEL. What are the chances of that? (Bovell, *WRSF* 31)

The names link the two characters as does the next more serious coincidence: Gabriel presumably is the son of the murderer of Gabrielle's brother (Bovell, *WRSF* 70). Thus, in this case Bovell again uses coincidences as a form of connecting characters and of showing their similarities. After all, both characters suffer from their past and the missing love of their parents. In a way Gabrielle's naming her own son Gabriel as well already anticipates his future life: she refuses him parental love and drives him away from herself as her parents had done with her and Elizabeth did with Gabriel.

Summarizing, it can be noticed that Bovell's plays are often highly artfully constructed. Most of the time Bovell neglects the usual Aristotelian unity of place, time and action principle and makes his plays demanding and interesting by the use of unchronological structures, narrative devices like flashbacks, simultaneous dialogues, repetition and coincidences and chance meetings. His dramatic technique often tries to stress parallels and contrasts between the characters and in this way creates a coherent world onstage, which most of the time represents itself as quite negative and pessimistic.

4 Genre

Andrew Bovell's plays are quite difficult to assign to just one dramatic genre. Most of them are a mixture of several genres, in which comic, tragic, satirical as well as pathetic elements can be identified. In connection with his play *After Dinner* Bovell stated:

It received an enthusiastic response from a demanding audience of industry heavyweights. It was a great feeling watching a theatre full of agents and artistic directors laugh their heads off. I can remember being surprised that something I had written could make people laugh like that. I had always regarded myself as a fairly serious young writer and my work more akin to the tragic side of life. I guess the lesson was that the line between tragedy and comedy is very thin and *After Dinner* managed to walk it. (Bovell, *Author's Note* viii)

Not only *After Dinner* is able to walk this line. Several of Bovell's later plays also deal with rather tragic situations, but are nonetheless humorous as well. Regarding their content Bovell's plays can be divided into two major groups: political plays on the one side and non-political plays on the other side. *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* and *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* are written obviously to achieve a specific political purpose. While the purpose of the former two is concerned with class issues, the latter is concerned with racial and ethnic matters, namely the establishment of equal rights for Aboriginal people in Australia. Since these topics are serious and important for the national well-being, these plays can be allocated much nearer to tragedy than to other dramatic genres, which certainly was Bovell's intention when he wrote them. His non-political plays, which deal with more universal and personal matters, like the loss of a beloved one, the breakdown of marriages or the longing for love, are more humorous despite their sometimes rather bleak content.

The underlying situation in *After Dinner*, for instance, is rather unhappy. All five characters are trying hard to pretend to have a good night out, but in reality all of them are longing for someone to share their life with. Although the topics of loneliness and longing are present throughout the play, Bovell does not let the audience slip into melancholia and despair. The characters he created are on the one hand pathetic, but on the other hand also unintentionally funny. Especially the three women unconsciously create situations which make the audience smile:

DYMPIE: When we go to the toilet we won't be able to go together.
 PAULA: No.
 MONIKA: Why not?
 DYMPLIE: In case somebody takes our table.
 MONIKA: They're not likely to do that, are they?
 DYMPLIE: We don't know that.
 PAULA: We could leave our bags. Then they would know it was taken.
 DYMPLIE: They might be stolen.
 MONIKA: I don't think that's likely.
 DYMPLIE: Nevertheless.
 PAULA: We'll take it in turns. Two can go at a time, but one should stay here.
 MONIKA: I don't mind going by myself.
 DYMPLIE: Well nor do I Monika, but sometimes it's nice to go with someone else. Of course, when it's just Paula and me, we can't do that.
 MONIKA: You two go first then.
 DYMPLIE: I don't need to yet.
 PAULA: Nor do I.
 DYMPLIE: Monika?
 MONIKA: Ah ... no. (Bovell, AD 10)

This passage is funny in several ways. The two most intriguing questions arising from this conversation are firstly, why should one worry about going to the toilet at all and secondly, why should one discuss the matter even before it is actually required. Several further conversations between the three women deal with rather trivial matters, but are nonetheless discussed at great length, which makes the audience laugh. These conversations, for example, are concerned with which table they should choose, which drinks and which food they should order, and so on (Bovell, AD 2-3, 16, 22-24).

What makes *Scenes from a Separation* a comic play despite the serious issue of the breakdown of a marriage, are the two diverging perspectives of the couple and the different reactions to their marriage crisis. Mathew's outburst on the verandah of the beach house is very funny since his jealousy is totally far-fetched at this moment (Bovell, SS 22-27). Ironically, this outburst leads to Nina's having a one-night-stand with Lawrence. Other humorous situations arise through Nina's use of sarcasm as a means of showing how hurt she is by Mathew's behaviour:

NINA is setting the table for dinner al fresco. She is wearing a chic sleeveless red dress. MATHEW comes in from work. He kisses her cursorily.
 MATHEW: Have we got any fax rolls here?
 NINA: Hi, Nina. How are you?
 MATHEW: Sorry, I just needed to get this organised or else I'll have to go out again.
 NINA: Have a look in the top drawer.

He does so.

MATHEW: [*slamming the drawer shut*] Where else would I find them? [...]

NINA: Oh, Mathew?

MATHEW: What?

NINA: On the desk there's a receipt for this dress. I bought it today. It cost three hundred dollars. My sister seems to think it's a small price to pay if it means saving our marriage. But I tend to think it's a lot of money when your husband doesn't even notice. What do you think? (Bovell, SS 87)

Speaking in Tongues has also been declared to be a comedy by some critics (e.g. Makeham 71). The play surely contains some funny incidents like, for example, when Sonja and Jane simultaneously ask Pete and Leon if they think their wives would ever betray them and they answer with an absolute negation (Bovell, ST 17). All in all the tragic side of the characters' stories dominates, though. It is hard to classify *Speaking in Tongues* as well as *Distant Lights from Dark Places* and the monologues *Jane* and *Paula* into one specific genre. Andrew Bovell once stated about the genre classification of his film *Lantana*:

It has been difficult to classify the film according to genre and its complicated multi-plot-lines made it a nightmare to pitch to investors. Yet I'm proud of both these qualities in the face of a film industry that increasingly attempts to reduce any story to a one-sentence logline. Suffice to say *Lantana* is part mystery, part thriller and part journey through the labyrinth of love. (Bovell, *Writer's Note to Lantana* 11)

Bovell's classification of *Lantana* as being a mixture of mystery, thriller and love drama can also be transferred to the four plays mentioned above. The suspense created by Bovell's use of multiple perspectives, retelling of the same events and open closure, which leaves the audience uncertain about Valerie's and Neil's fate, makes *Speaking in Tongues* and its related plays *Distant Lights from Dark Places* and *Jane* and *Paula* truly mysterious plays.

Summarizing one can classify the non-political plays so far mentioned as being on the one hand rather comic despite their bleak content, and on the other hand mysterious and thrilling. We are left with one more non-political play that can be identified as being mysterious and thrilling as well, but with an additional melodramatic touch, namely *When the Rain Stops Falling*. Here again Bovell's technique of slowly revealing the mystery by a structure that is not chronological and that constantly reveals different perspectives creates suspense and curiosity. Additionally, strong emotions are excited.

We feel pity for the suffering characters and fear that their miseries will be repeated continuously. But in the end, as is genre-specific of melodrama, a happy ending leaps into view: the last father-son-relationship seems to make a change and the rain stops falling.

Bovell's political plays, as said before, contain more tragic elements than his non-political plays. At the heart of the two plays composed together with the Melbourne Workers Theatre stand two tragic events. In *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* the title heroine dies in an industrial accident, whereas in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* two homeless children are accidentally burnt to death in a charity clothing bin. The effect these plays want to achieve is that the audience becomes sympathetic and emotionally involved with the characters. In this way the political purpose of giving a public voice to the working class and socially neglected groups like homeless and unemployed people is achieved. Their problems become important and the audience feels with them. Since the plays by the Melbourne Workers Theatre aim at a working class audience, a sympathising with the characters is naturally predictable. The audiences of these plays are furthermore male-dominated. As David Watt states regarding *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, the play,

through its examination of the intersections of working and domestic life, manages to confront its predominantly male audiences with a problematisation of the position of women in a conventionally male ethos while also ensuring that the death of Lois is continuously seen as an 'industrial' as well as 'personal' issue, and that the lives of all the characters are presented as shaped by the broader realities of working-class life. (Watt 87)

Thus the political dimension of this play is not only concerned with the working class, but within this class also with gender issues. The same fact is true of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*, which not only investigates problems of male underprivileged characters, but furthermore gives a voice to 'the homeless and shoplifting youth' as well as to 'the unemployed woman', 'the prostitute' and 'the poor old abandoned lady'. The description of their lives is serious and leaves out any comic relief in order to convey to the audience that these people are neglected by society and are in need of help in order to improve their lives.

Bovell's most tragic play is his political history play *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. The tragic content of the play is enhanced by the use of the classical dramatic structure

consisting of five acts. In the first act the characters are introduced and background information is given to understand the story. In the second act the rising action takes place. The leading character Obedience, Aborigine by birth, is getting increasingly interested in the Aboriginal traveller Linda and meets her secretly at the waterhole without the consent of her foster mother Nora Ryan. The climax occurs in the third act, when Obedience gains independence and self-confidence by sleeping with the young traveller Cornelius. In the fourth act the falling action takes place. Obedience stands up against Nora by telling her that she wants to look for her real mother and by overtly standing up for Linda. The fifth act ends in a catastrophe. After Obedience has left the Traveller's Rest, Nora asks Goundry to bring her back, although she knows Goundry's methods of subduing people. Goundry brings Obedience back, "her dress ripped, her mouth bleeding, her stare vacant" (Bovell, *HD* 68). He has raped her and cut out her tongue. Nora selfishly put her own happiness before Obedience's. Through her doing Cornelius also has to suffer further. Nora hands him over to Goundry, who takes Cornelius with him. Andrew Bovell's use of this tragic mode is well chosen since Australia's past lies heavily on its present society, and therefore cannot be dealt with lightly. As Alison Lyssa states, "Bovell expresses an urgent conviction that non-Indigenous Australians must engage emotionally and cognitively with their experience of being part of the dispossessing culture" (*Performing Australia's History* 26). This is exactly what Bovell does in *Holy Day*. He may even go a step too far by creating a settler's society that has developed into a thoroughly negative community, a dystopia, as Lyssa puts it. "Andrew Bovell's *Holy Day* depicts Australia's frontier past as a place of horrors, where white characters commit atrocities and depredations against Indigenous people and themselves, while fabricating historic records and creating myths to conceal what they are doing" (*Performing Australia's History* 12). Concerning Bovell's chosen genre for *Holy Day*, Lyssa identifies elements from the "thriller-suspense drama" adopting a "linear and realist form" (12). These borrowings of the thriller genre could be interpreted as being too sensational and shocking for a serious play. One example of such a bloodcurdling passage shall be illustrated here:

NORA takes the piece of paper, unfolding it with care.

NORA: It's a letter [*She looks at CORNELIUS.*] From his mother... [*Reading*] 'My name is Emily Cornelius. A convict labourer named Nathaniel Goundry holds my son and me hostage here. He has murdered my husband and keeps us in terror. I fear he will kill me soon and take my son. I pray he is spared this fate,

but should he survive then let this letter survive with him. I have told him to give it only to a person he trusts. I write this as a last gesture against fate. God help us. God help all who have come to this place. Emily Cornelius.' [Pause.] He killed her then?

CORNELIUS nods.

And your silence?

CORNELIUS touches his mouth.

He cut out your tongue? (Bovell, *HD* 49)

With this last question the present scene ends and the audience is left in shock. There are several additional scenes that create the same feelings. These are mostly connected with Goundry's violent behaviour. Often only the results of his actions are shown on-stage, for example when Epstein enters carrying the broken body of Cornelius after the boy has been raped and battered by Goundry (Bovell, *HD* 48) and the already mentioned scene when Obedience is brought back to Nora carried by Goundry after he has raped her and cut out her tongue, like he has done before with Cornelius (Bovell, *HD* 68). These examples maybe are too overtly cruel and sensational for a play dealing with such a serious matter as the silencing of the indigenous people in Australia. Nevertheless, Bovell's use of such dramatic contents could also be interpreted as an honest expression of guilt. The situation at the frontier is in no way trivialised, rather the contrary is true. The guilt of the white settlers and the white people living in Australia today, who are part of the dispossessing culture, as Lyssa puts it, is expressed in the most drastic way by Bovell's creation of white characters who are thoroughly selfish and cruel. The play ends in utter despair without leaving any hope for improvement of the situation at the white frontier.

Summing up, it can be noticed that the more serious and politically important the topics in Bovell's plays are for the general condition of his home country Australia, the more Bovell tends towards a serious dramatic genre like, for example, tragedy. Bovell's non-political plays on the other hand are more concerned with entertaining his audience. Although most of his themes concern serious human problems, he nonetheless never forgets to depict the funny side of life as well. Furthermore, Bovell tries to entertain the readers and viewers of his plays by writing thrilling, mysterious and suspenseful plays.

5 Characters

The most obvious observation concerning Andrew Bovell's characters is that the majority of them is quite unhappy. We encounter lonely characters in his plays as well as dissatisfied, disillusioned and traumatized characters. There can only be found a handful of optimistic characters, who look into their future hopefully. Bovell depicts characters from different classes and backgrounds. In most of his plays middle-class characters are predominant, but he also creates working-class characters and underprivileged characters like, for example, neglected street children in *Trash*. Loneliness, dissatisfaction, disillusion and trauma are phenomena that may occur across-the-board. In Bovell's plays it seems to be, though, that some phenomena are more predominant in specific environments. Thus, loneliness and dissatisfaction can be found mostly, but not exclusively, in middle-class environments and disillusionment is more likely to be found in lower class and unemployed environments. Trauma seems to be the only phenomenon that is experienced equally in the lower and middle classes. The following character analysis will deal with all characters appearing in Andrew Bovell's plays. This also includes characters created by other writers, like in the case of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* The characters in this play need to be seen as belonging together, although they are created by four different authors. Therefore, all of them will be considered in this discussion. As a whole the characters represent a small part of society which is disadvantaged by the greater part of society. The characters were created collaboratively to give a common political statement, namely that underprivileged people need to gain more attention in our modern society. Problems of our society need to be addressed and dealt with in a constructive way.

Before the detailed discussion of the individual characters an overall observation has to be mentioned first: Bovell's characters are consistently equally important for the action of his plays. There usually are no central characters who dominate the action. In only one of his plays, *Scenes from a Separation*, minor characters can be found who somehow operate in the background of the play, while the central action is dominated by the dissatisfied couple Nina and Mathew. What makes Bovell's plays quite demanding is the fact that most of his characters are rather flat characters, at least at the beginning of his plays. As the action develops the individual characters become more tangible. Since

they often share character traits with one another, they often seem quite similar to each other and even exchangeable. A good example of this exchangeability is to be found in the first scene of *Speaking in Tongues*, when the two adulterous couples are simultaneously introduced onstage. They equal each other to such a great extent that they even speak the same words and act in the same way. By creating these flat, rather similar characters, Bovell highlights the universality of the themes he employs. Loneliness and dissatisfaction, for example, occur frequently in our modern world and are not dependent on specific personal backgrounds. Thus, for example, loneliness is triggered and expressed in similar ways, regardless of which character suffers from it.

5.1 Lonely characters

Many of Bovell's middle-class and some of Bovell's lower-class characters suffer from loneliness and long for companionship. Their loneliness is expressed in different ways. We encounter characters who speak honestly about their need of another person and act accordingly (Gordon, Georgina, Neil, Gabriel Law and Andrew Price). Other characters do not speak about their loneliness, but their speeches and actions constantly imply that they are lonely (Paula, Monika and Jane). A third group of characters seems not to be lonely at first sight, but in the course of the play their loneliness is unveiled (Stephen, Dymphie, Linda, Elizabeth Law, Joe Ryan and Gabriel York). A few examples will clarify how the loneliness of these characters is expressed in the plays.

The most obvious examples of loneliness can be found in the first group mentioned. In *After Dinner* Gordon honestly expresses his need of a friend and his need to talk, which Stephen, not used to having serious conversations with a male friend, cannot understand:

GORDON: I thought we might just talk.

STEPHEN: Talk!

GORDON: Yes.

STEPHEN: What, all night?

GORDON: Yes, well over dinner.

STEPHEN: And after dinner?

GORDON: Well, yes, then too. You see I haven't had the chance to talk about it with anyone yet. When Brendon was kind enough to ask me to join you for dinner, I became quite excited. The thought of spending an evening with two of my

fellow men excited me. [...] Yes, you see I don't think I've been out with just men since I was a teenager. I've been looking forward to it all week. I thought that if anyone could possibly understand how I felt then it would be another man. (Bovell, *AD* 34-35)

After the separation from his wife, Gordon needs to talk about the divorce with somebody. He obviously lacks a close friend, and therefore, feels lonely. Otherwise he would not have needed to go out with a casual acquaintance from work and a friend of the latter, whom he does not know at all.

In *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, Georgina does not feel lonely because she lacks a friend, but because she longs for male companionship. In a conversation with Lois she explicitly states why she wants to marry again:

GEORGE: I miss it Lois. I miss not having a body in my bed.

LOIS: Why? They only snore and fart.

GEORGE: But sometimes it's good to wake up being held.

LOIS: I wouldn't mind sleeping in a double bed by myself for a change.

GEORGE: I miss the companionship.

LOIS: Your husband pissed off on you. How can you miss anything to do with him?

GEORGE: Don't get me wrong. I don't want him back. But I don't want to be on my own for the rest of my life either and this town's not exactly swarming with unattached men. (Bovell, *BLR* 111-112)

Georgina longs for something that she once had, although her marriage was not very happy. In *Speaking in Tongues*, Neil is also longing for a relationship he once had, with the difference that he cannot let go of the past. He wants his relationship with Sarah renewed. He expresses his sincere feelings in letters to Sarah. While Georgina looks for a brighter future with a new man, Neil holds on to his wish of gaining Sarah back. Both characters are lonely, the consequences they draw from their loneliness nevertheless differ considerably. Georgina is on the hunt for a new man, whereas Neil commits suicide because he cannot live a life without Sarah.

Two further characters also express their feelings (i.e. their longing for fatherly love) quite frankly, namely Gabriel Law and Andrew Price. Gabriel on several occasions tries to speak with his mother about his father. He longs to know something about him, but Elizabeth does not speak about Henry at all (Bovell, *WRSF* 34-37 and 47). Gabriel is eight years old, when Henry leaves for Australia. What is astonishing is that he does not remember Henry at all:

GABRIEL: [...] I wish I could say that I remember the touch of his bristles on my face, or the scent of his aftershave, or the sound of his laughter in the morning. But I remember none of that. He's a mystery. What I remember is his absence and my mother's silence. (Bovell, *WRSF* 47)

Thus, the foundation of Gabriel's loneliness does not only lie in his father's absence, but also develops because of his mother's silencing the past and her seeming lack of maternal love. Gabriel's loneliness is similar to Andrew's loneliness and longing for fatherly love. The parallels between the two characters are made explicit by the use of repetition with variation. While Gabriel does not remember his father at all, Andrew remembers "[t]he touch of [his father's] bristles on [his] face, and the smell of [his] aftershave, and the sound of [his] laughter in the morning" (Bovell, *WRSF* 77). Both characters admit to themselves that they are lonely and take the initiative to change their lives by seeking their fathers' presence.

While the characters mentioned so far are honest about their feeling of loneliness, the second group of characters discussed here, silences their need of closeness. Nevertheless, their actions and conversations reveal that they are lonely and long for companionship. Two of the female characters in *After Dinner* obviously feel lonely, but neither Paula nor Monika openly admit it. Paula's only close friend is Dymphie. She does not seem to have anybody else in her life. Their friendship is not without difficulties due to their totally opposite character qualities. While Dymphie shows herself bossy, greedy, hypocritical, manipulative, impolite, egoistic, pedantic and old-fashioned, Paula is compliant, polite, sensitive, companionable, sympathetic, caring and modern. Dymphie does not like change. She does not want to speak about feelings and seems afraid of getting to know new people, especially men. Paula on the other hand needs a change in her life. She believes her life to be boring. She longs for action and for male companionship. She is obviously flirting with Gordon, while Dymphie pretends to disapprove of such a behaviour. Although throughout the play, Dymphie seems to be the predominant, stronger character, in the end it becomes clear that Dymphie depends on Paula and does not want to lose her to a man. However, this does not mean that Dymphie does not long for male companionship as well. Dymphie is a character who belongs to the third group mentioned. She does not seem lonely at first, but as the action of the play develops, her loneliness reveals itself.

Monika, who accompanies Dymphie and Paula to the pub for the first time, is a lonely woman because of entirely different reasons. Her husband recently died of a heart attack, leaving her alone. They did not have children and it seems as if she does not really have friends. She is insecure and anxious and longs for a talk and companionship comparable to Gordon. She is constantly caught between the quarrelling Dymphie and Paula. She does not want to take sides in their quarrels. She has her own problems to cope with. Since Monika's wish of a talk and compassion cannot be satisfied by Dymphie and Paula, she drowns her grief in alcohol and overrides her sorrow by pretending to have fun, picking up Stephen for a one-night-stand.

In the monologue *Jane*, we encounter another lonely woman. Jane suffers from insomnia, which makes her tired, upset and angry. She lives all by herself, just with her dog Tracey. She pretends to hate children, but when she has to look after Paula and Nik's children, she enjoys their company. She is a woman who makes assumptions, judgements and accusations easily. Subconsciously, she envies their neighbours' happiness and tries to destroy it by accusing Nik of having committed a crime. Her loneliness is best expressed in her wishful thinking about how she could help Paula while Nik is imprisoned:

And for a moment my imagination started to get away from me and I thought of Nik being in prison and Paula being alone with the children and I know her mother is dead and she doesn't seem to have much family so I could see myself there, helping her, looking after the children, picking them up from school, having them over for sleepovers. And I could see all of this and wanted to tell her, wanted to say, 'Paula, don't worry, I'll be there.' (Bovell, *Jane* 26)

Subconsciously, Jane longs for a friend and for a family. Jane tries to gain entry into Paula's happy home to overcome her own loneliness.

Coming to the third group of lonely characters, who at first do not seem lonely at all, the most obvious example is Stephen in *After Dinner*, since he explicitly admits his loneliness later on. Stephen outwardly shows himself as a macho single man, who likes to show off and pick up women. Inwardly, he is in need of a friend and longs for a serious relationship. In the course of the play it seems that Stephen undergoes a transformation from a man enjoying his single life and admiring his macho friend Brendon to a man admitting that he is lonely and admiring Gordon, who is able to talk about his feelings

freely. Stephen is able to talk about his feelings honestly for the first time, only with the help of alcohol and Gordon's insistence on talking about serious matters.

The second character in *After Dinner* who confesses her loneliness at a late point in the course of the play is Dymphie, as already mentioned above. At first, it seems as if Dymphie were not interested in a relationship at all. But later it turns out that she is just too scared to make a move towards a relationship due to low self-esteem. When Paula asks Gordon to dance with Dymphie, the latter does not decline to dance at all. Paula's open-minded, caring nature is much more likely to trigger a change towards a less lonely life. Dymphie's nature makes it hard for her to get to know people. She knows that, which makes her angry and anxious to lose Paula, who is the only person who cares for her. When Paula abandons her in the second act, she overcomes her nature and confesses her feelings to the whole bistro: "I'm the plainest and loneliest woman in the world" (Bovell, AD 66).

In *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* another lonely character appears: Linda, the Aboriginal traveller. At first, she seems to be an independent young woman looking for work and shelter, being satisfied with herself. When she tells Obedience about her past, she seems to be very strong and self-assured:

LINDA: [...] My mother said don't look at those white men, but I looked... Yeah, I looked. That one, he's hanging around, looking, smiling, saying sweet things, so I went with him one night. But the old man... my husband, he made big trouble. He said you been with that white man now, you clear off... Ah, my mother cried. But I didn't look back. I told all them blackfellas to bugger off... So I went with the cattle, all over, me and him, sometimes others, but just me and him most of the time. [...] He found some white woman in a town up there. He told me he's marrying her now. So I told him that's all right. He can have her in his house and I'll go with him and the cattle. But he said she wouldn't like that. [...] I gave him a smack across the face. Her too. I gave her such a fright she'll think twice before she looks at a black woman again. (Bovell, HD 23-24)

Linda is a problematic character. She not only defies the white part of society, but she also seems to defy her own culture. As Lyssa states, "Linda does not re-link either [Obedience or herself] with Aboriginal culture, people, land, law, language, spirit, or any practical knowledge that might help them survive" (*Performing Australia's History* 74). Lyssa is of the opinion that if Linda desires to reunite with her mother and culture, this desire stays hidden (*Performing Australia's History* 70). In my reading, though, it becomes obvious that Linda feels lonely. She wants to be with her people again. She

longs for her mother. She expresses her wish to reunite in the text: “I... want my people... I want my mother” (Bovell, *HD* 61). Since she knows that she will never gain back her former life, she commits suicide.

All other lonely characters belonging to this third group are to be found in *When the Rain Stops Falling*. They only admit their loneliness implicitly in the course of the play. The older Elizabeth Law, for example, seems to be a cold-hearted woman who does not want anybody to care about her (Bovell, *WRSF* 34). She seems to have no love for her own son and does not care about being alone, but when Gabriel tells her that he will go to Australia, she is close to breaking down (Bovell, *WRSF* 49) and when Gabrielle talks to her over the phone, she admits that she never told Gabriel that she loved him:

ELIZABETH. [...] I often meant to but these things, these moments, they slip away. It's terrible but you reach a time in your life when you realise that you have very little to say to your children. Of course having nothing to say is just another way of having so much to say that you dare not begin (Bovell, *WRSF* 71-71).

Elizabeth does not want to admit to her son that she is lonely. She has been incapable of being loved since she discovered Henry's secret. He meant everything to her, but then he stole her future (Bovell, *WRSF* 51 and 63). Her self-constituted loneliness is a means of self-protection. She does not want to be hurt again.

Joe Ryan is another character longing for love. Joe's caring behaviour towards Gabrielle shows how much he loves and cares for her. He only once complains about her lack of love, and this only because she urges him to speak about his feelings. He does not see the fault in Gabrielle though, only in himself: “I wish I'd never stopped the car... Yeah, there you go. I've said it. I wish I just put my foot down and let you bleed to death. With him. I would have made it back to the Coorong and met some half-decent girl who would have loved me” (Bovell, *WRSF* 66). Furthermore, he admits that he is “angry with [himself] for being unable to make [her] happy” (Bovell, *WRSF* 67). That he is not happy with their situation is clear. He feels lonely, since the only person Gabrielle cares for and loves is Gabriel Law.

Gabriel York never admits that he is lonely. It was his own choice to leave his family. His reasons for the separation are not mentioned. When his son Andrew calls him and asks if he might see him, Gabriel realizes that he is a lonely, poor man and he is

ashamed of himself and his life (Bovell, *WRSF* 11-12). When he finally meets Andrew, he admits that he would have liked to have the same courage as his son (Bovell, *WRSF* 79). In this way he admits to his loneliness.

5.2 Dissatisfied characters

Besides loneliness, dissatisfaction is a major phenomenon dominating Bovell's middle class. But not only his middle-class characters are dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction may grow because of different reasons. Dissatisfaction may be concerned with one's life in general (Lois, Nina, Mathew, Nick and Comfort), with one's partner (Mick, Sonja, Pete, John and Elizabeth Wilkes) or with oneself (Leon, Jane and Henry Law). These are the three major areas for dissatisfaction in Andrew Bovell's plays. These three areas may also be linked to one another. How differently dissatisfaction is expressed in the plays will be discussed in the following.

Lois Ryan's dissatisfaction is caused by her family situation. Lois is disappointed about how her life turned out. She is overstrained. She is a working mother of two children, while her husband Mick is preoccupied with himself and the trade union. Lois is dissatisfied with him because of his lack of time and lack of interest in their family. She is annoyed by her children as well. Lois starts demanding time for herself. She needs a change. She dreams of a life without a family, living all by herself. In the end she makes her dream come true. Thus, at first Lois expresses her dissatisfaction by demanding that Mick takes part in their family life more often and when he refuses, she ultimately leaves her family.

In *Scenes from a Separation*, Nina's dissatisfaction with her life and with Mathew is clearly expressed by her adultery. She feels underestimated and not appreciated as much as she deserves. Like Lois Ryan, she feels stuck in a house with two children. Unlike Mick, Mathew seems to support a change in his wife's life. He gives her the opportunity to write a biography about Lawrence Clifford. Ironically, Mathew seems not to appreciate her change in character triggered by her new job. He is terrified by Nina's changing and growing (Bovell, *AD* 31-32). Nina's self-esteem rises. She looks fabulous and radiant, according to Mathew's mother and she herself feels beautiful, erotic, clever and entertaining (Bovell, *AD* 51 and 82). But Mathew only sees her negative character

qualities: being self-righteous and naïve (Bovell, *AD* 58 and 73). He seems to have fallen out of love with her, but does not want to admit it. According to his mother, “[he] wanted this marriage to end but [he] lacked the moral courage to do it [himself]” (Bovell, *AD* 37). He subconsciously drove Nina away from him and she, being dissatisfied with Mathew’s lack of appreciation for her, commits adultery with Lawrence to feel appreciated again. Mathew is also dissatisfied with his present life. He is depressed and maybe suffers from a mid-life-crisis. While Nina changes her life significantly, his life has come to a standstill. In his work as a publisher, Mathew gives the impression of being an old man, out of touch and prejudiced against anything new (cf. Bovell, *AD* 3-11). Privately, he has to deal with two spoiled daughters and with Nina’s becoming a strong, independent working mother. The results of his dissatisfaction and depression are the separation from Nina and Mathew’s throwing himself into a new relationship with his employee Siobhan immediately. Nevertheless, these consequences do not make Mathew any happier. He tries to earn Nina back, without success. Nina thinks women are more likely to cope with separation than men, and the play seems to confirm this opinion.

In *Speaking in Tongues* we encounter another character who is dissatisfied with his present life. This time the dissatisfaction is caused by unemployment. Nick does not like being without work. He does not like being dependent on his wife Paula. His unemployment makes him quarrel with her and he wreaks his anger on her. On the night of Valerie’s disappearance, he wants Paula to worry about him, so he stays at the bar longer than usual (Bovell, *ST* 65). Besides quarrelling with Paula, Nick’s dissatisfaction with his unemployment is expressed by his drinking more than usual (Bovell, *ST* 54).

The reasons for dissatisfaction so far mentioned are either troubles within a family or economic factors like unemployment. In the case of Comfort in *Money*, both factors play a role in causing dissatisfaction. Comfort is married to a man she does not love anymore and is mother of an adolescent boy, Daniel. Her husband is unemployed and does not add any money to their living. Comfort owns a house, which by law belongs to her husband as well, although she pays off the loan for it alone. Payment difficulties make it difficult for them to separate (Cornelius, *Money* 15-20). Comfort finds a way out of her dissatisfaction by starting a relationship with a total stranger who accidentally runs into her in the street. He is seriously ill and Comfort starts attending to him caringly. He pays her for her company, which makes her able to keep her house. In this way, not only Comfort’s money troubles are solved, but also her dissatisfaction van-

ishes since she enjoys his company as much as he is enjoying hers (Cornelius, *Money* 81-84).

So far characters who are dissatisfied with their life in general have been dealt with. In a next step, characters who are explicitly dissatisfied with their partners will be discussed. Mick Ryan's dissatisfaction with Lois rises continuously in the course of the play. He is a hypocritical person. While he approves and advocates change at work, he does not approve or support Lois' decision to support the trade union like him. He does not want her to run as shop steward and is dissatisfied with Lois' development into an independent woman who demands her own needs to be satisfied. Although Mick felt stuck the same way when he was younger, he does not try to understand Lois' need for change.

In *Speaking in Tongues*, we encounter two couples who have to deal with similar problems, namely Sonja and Leon on the one hand, and Jane and Pete on the other hand. In each marriage one strong partner dominates the other weaker partner. While in Leon and Sonja's marriage the female character is the domineering one, in the second marriage Jane plays the weaker part in the relationship. In both cases, the domineering partner is annoyed with the weak one and his/her low self-esteem. Sonja is annoyed because Leon's ego has to be pushed continuously. Because of Sonja's strength, Leon forgets that Sonja may herself need some self-affirmation now and then (Bovell, *ST* 14 and 17). In the second marriage, Pete is annoyed by Jane's fragility, which drives him mad and attracts him at the same time (Bovell, *ST* 16). Furthermore, some of Jane's behaviour embarrasses him, namely her shoplifting and her spying on their neighbours (Bovell, *ST* 30 and 52). In each of the two marriages the weaker partner commits adultery. Although the couples seem to be very alike, only Leon and Sonja stay together. Sonja is far more forgiving than Pete and Leon makes a greater effort to maintain his relationship with Sonja than Jane does. The emotional relationship between Jane and Pete suffered too much from her adultery. Thus the adulteries, the result of each couples dissatisfaction, lead to different outcomes: a closer, more intimate, forgiving relationship between Sonja and Leon and a sense of estrangement leading to a separation in Jane and Pete's case (Bovell, *ST* 58).

Another character in *Speaking in Tongues* is dissatisfied with his marriage: John. His dissatisfaction is caused by Valerie's behaviour. John does not have the courage to separate from Valerie and sees adultery with Sarah as his only option to become happy:

JOHN. [...] I'm not saying there weren't deep feelings between Valerie and I. There were. Are. But they are so complex. I should have left her. I know that. But how do you leave a woman who has been so hurt and expects, is convinced, that she will be hurt again? And whose whole marriage is based on that expectation and is just waiting for it to happen again? You just end up wanting to defy that. To prove that much wrong, at least. You just want to right the wrong. Not only for your own sake. But for humanity's sake. (Bovell, *ST* 94)

Ironically, John chooses the wrong woman to be happy with. Sarah is not capable of being loved. She seems as traumatized as Valerie, but we do not get to know why she is incapable of committing herself to another person.

As can be seen by now, dissatisfaction in Andrew Bovell's plays is often a result of an unbalanced relationship. The changing or growing of one partner, while the other tries to maintain continuity may be a reason for such a relationship, as in the case of Lois and Mick Ryan or Mathew and Nina in *Scenes from a Separation*. John's dissatisfaction is caused by Valerie's exercising psychological pressure on him. Sonja and Pete's dissatisfaction is caused by the low self-esteem of their spouses. Leon and Jane forget to appreciate their spouses as much as they deserve by concentrating too much on their own self-affirmation. Another example of dissatisfaction can be found in *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. Elizabeth Wilkes's dissatisfaction is caused by her husband's lack of persistence, which makes her angry and even leads her into committing crime: supporting suicide and committing infanticide. At first she claims to be the only survivor of an Aboriginal assault, her husband being dead and child taken. In the course of the play though, Elizabeth makes herself suspicious because of her telling several different stories of the attack. Only in her last version, Elizabeth confesses that she hated her husband because he was defeated by the Aborigines' indifference. He did not want to complete the church, so Elizabeth burned it. She took his gun and laid it at her husband's feet, so that he might kill himself, which he eventually did (Bovell, *HD* 60-61). The text does not reveal what happened to their daughter, but it seems obvious that Elizabeth committed infanticide. She wants to tell Wakefield about her guilt, but he silences her in order not to be accused of having known about the crime (Bovell, *HD* 66). According to Lyssa, Elizabeth "inflicts invisible inner wounds on herself". She must be silent and in this way "prevents disruptive knowledge disseminating" (*Performing Australia's Past* 54). Thus, in the case of the Wilkes' marriage Elizabeth's dissatisfaction and hatred for her husband affects Elizabeth's life and the life of others profoundly. Her husband kills himself, she murders her baby daughter and accuses Linda of having stolen her baby,

which leads to Linda's capture and ultimately to her suicide. Such a tragic and extreme outcome of dissatisfaction can only be found in *Holy Day*. It is Bovell's by far most sensational play. It differs from all of his other plays.

As mentioned above, dissatisfaction is sometimes caused by low self-esteem. Two of the already mentioned characters are dissatisfied with themselves. Leon and Jane similarly suffer from low self-esteem. Leon's ego has to be pushed most of the time. He depends on Sonja. Her strength drives him mad, but nevertheless also attracts him (Bovell, *ST* 16). Leon is also a self-righteous and hypocritical character. In his conversation with John, he pretends to tell Sonja everything and lies about his never being able to cheat on her (Bovell, *ST* 92). This hypocrisy also emphasizes his weak character. He is not able to confess the truth.

Jane is as weak as Leon. She envies Sonja's courage and strength (Bovell, *ST* 35). Jane and Sonja are totally opposite characters. Sonja is a strong, independent feminist. She has two university degrees, a wonderful job, her own money and two children. She is at the height of her powers and accepts herself as she is (Bovell, *ST* 38). Jane on the other hand is not satisfied with herself. She is middle-aged like Sonja, but does not have children. She has no good job and no money of her own. She is scared of change (Bovell, *ST* 41). Jane, furthermore, is a person who makes judgments and accusations easily. She, for example, disapproves of Sonja's drinking and accuses Nick of committing a crime without having any real evidence (Bovell, *ST* 36 and 56).

If we return to *When the Rain Stops Falling*, it has to be mentioned again that most of its characters suffer from loneliness. Their loneliness is amongst others the result of one character's dissatisfaction, namely Henry Law's dissatisfaction with himself. Henry is a paedophile. He wants to suppress his feelings, without success. When he is beaten down in a park presumably because of a paedophile assault, he cowardly wants to flee to Australia: "I have such a yearning ... to be more than I am". Henry is frightened that he one time will touch his own son (Bovell, *WRSF* 51 and 62). Henry's apology to Gabriel shortly before he falls from Ayer's Rock implies that he is going to commit suicide. Does he punish himself for what he has done to the boy in the park and Gabrielle's brother Glen, and maybe even to his own son? The text seems to imply such a reading. Henry seems an extreme case of dissatisfaction with himself. The shame and humiliation created by his actions cause his wish to die.

5.3 Disillusioned characters

As mentioned before, loneliness and dissatisfaction are often characteristic of Bovell's middle-class characters, while disillusion mostly occurs in his depiction of lower and underprivileged classes. Some exceptions to this observation can be found of course. Bovell's disillusioned characters and the disillusioned characters created collaboratively with Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves and Christos Tsiolkas are on the one hand disillusioned because of a lack of future prospects (Kennett Boy, Daniel and the girl in a train), on the other hand they are disillusioned because of society's overt neglect of their problems (Claire, old woman, Leon and Rhonda) and because of society's cruelty in general (Nora Ryan and Thomas Wakefield). A discussion of the characters created by Cornelius, Reeves and Tsiolkas in an interpretation of Andrew Bovell's plays may seem irrelevant at first, but I once again want to stress the fact that all characters of the four authors are equally important for the interpretation of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*, since they were created collaboratively and try to achieve a common goal: giving a voice to a neglected part of society.

In *Suit* the Kennett Boy, son of Gina and Sammy De Stanzo, expresses his disillusion by refusing to work. He is a dissatisfied, aggressive fifteen-years-old boy, taking drugs. He does not want to work and he does not want to go back to school either. His father is a hard-working man who complains continuously about his son's laziness. He calls him a bludger and wants him to work at a building site like himself. Young De Stanzo, though, does not want to live a life like his father. He does not want to live in the Melbourne suburb Dandenong. He does not want his life to consist only of work, drinking beer and sleeping (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 14 and 78). The Kennett Boy is a character disillusioned because of a lack of future prospects. He wants to live a better life, but since he experiences that hard work will not change anything, he resists working at all. Disillusioned, he starts a life on the street, abandoning his family and giving up the hope of a better future.

Daniel's disillusion in *Money* seems to increase slowly in the course of the play. In the first scene in which eighteen-year-old Daniel appears, he behaves naively for his age. He demands money from his parents, although he knows that they do not have any. He is of age, but we do not get to know if he is still a student or an unemployed young adult (Cornelius, *Money* 18-20). In the second scene, he is trying to rob an old woman.

When he finds out that the woman has even less money than himself, his disillusion grows: “I am such a loser. [...] I’m going to be nothing” (Cornelius, *Money* 57-59). For his future, he does not see any positive prospects. He daily sees how his parents struggle with money problems. He sees stealing as his only option to come unto money. But there seems to be no money anywhere. The general economic situation in the play is depicted as desperate and unstable.

The girl who has a dispute with Daniel’s father on the train seems to take a comparable attitude towards work as the Kennett Boy. She is about twenty-three years old and has never worked at all. In her final statement, a sense of disillusion concerning society’s interest in herself leaks through: “It’s got to mean something that I’ve never worked an hour in my fucking life. What? What’s it got to mean. Nothing. To no one. Who gives a shit?” (Cornelius, *Money* 50). This implies that she is neglected by society and she is aware of this neglect, which leads to an indifference on her side as well. She refuses to work, since the chances of living a comfortable life are not given anyway, even if she tried hard.

What all these characters mentioned so far have in common is that they are already disillusioned at a very young age. They grow up in families which are mostly neglected by society. They have developed a feeling of indifference towards their future. They feel that they are unable to change their lives for the better and have capitulated.

The following group of disillusioned characters are older than the first group. They became disillusioned at a later point in their life, when they discovered that the majority of society does not have an interest in them. Claire in *Suit*, for example, has to earn a living by prostitution. She seems to have no other possibility of earning money and she has a fifteen-year-old daughter to support. Therefore, she has to bear the insults of her wooer. She is not able to refuse his money, even when his insults are getting worse (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 22-27). She seems to have given up hope in a different future.

Another example of disillusion can be seen in the case of the old woman into whose house Daniel breaks in. She is old, confused and very poor. Her adopted son has left her because she lied to him about his biological mother’s death. She is not able to pay her bills. There is no longer electricity in her house. When Daniel offers to call someone for help, she refuses (Cornelius, *Money* 54-59). She is totally disillusioned. She knows that nobody cares for her or is willing to help her.

Leon in *Dream-Town* is another disillusioned character. He is unemployed. His reaction towards his unemployment is different from, for example, Nick's drinking habit in *Speaking in Tongues*. Leon is a wood-turner by trade and hurts his hand in a work accident, which eventually leads to his unemployment, since Leon never really recovers from the accident. His unemployment has considerable effects. When his unemployment benefits are cut, Leon's wife leaves him. Because of his money troubles, he starts to save money in the supermarket by using a little legal trick. The manager of the supermarket does not accept Leon's behaviour for a long time. Leon feels treated unfairly and tells his story to the media. The radio and television studios are only interested in his "strange little story" for a short time. Since then he has shut himself up studying. He is an autodidact and reads a lot. He has closed himself up in a world of his own, since no one, neither his wife, nor society seems to be interested in his fate (Reeves, *Dream-Town* 52-54).

Rhonda is another character who mentally has finished with her life. She does not try to change it for the better. She lives with the fact that she cannot live as a single mother. She always needs a man by her side, although they are mostly cruel and do not stay for long. She has three children. The youngest has been taken by welfare. Rhonda does not believe that welfare is doing anything good for her. She is disillusioned and believes that the aim of the people from welfare is to make her feel inferior:

Woman from Welfare says, 'It must be hard. Must be hard for you, Rhonda, with all those kids. Looking after them, it must be hard.' And I say, 'No. It's not hard.' Though it is. I know it and she knows it. But I'm not going to give her the satisfaction. So I say, 'No. Those kids, those kids are my blessings. [...]' (Bovell, *Trash* 67)

She knows that her children suffer because of her boyfriends, but she is not strong enough to change their life. The only way she tries to help her children is by sending them away. Her disillusion is created by the lack of help on part of welfare and state and her little future prospects.

In *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* we are confronted with a mid-nineteenth century environment, which is even bleaker and more inhuman than the environment depicted in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* Two of the characters in *Holy Day* appear to be disillusioned because of society's cruelty: Nora Ryan and Thomas Wakefield. Nora's first

appearance shows her as a tough, man-like woman. In the course of the play it is implied, however, that her past and the Australian outback turned her into what she now represents: a woman egoistically acting only for her own sake. "Her course in life [...] is [...] self-preservation through control over self and other" (Lyssa, *Performing Australia's Past* 51). She is an Irish ex-convict and "loves to rail against the English, their church and their God, nonetheless [she] joins the Englishman Wakefield in relishing the power that being part of the white invasion gives her over the original inhabitants" (Lyssa, *Performing Australia's Past* 51). The little we learn about her past makes us able to infer why she has become what she is today. She carried her first child at the age of fifteen. It was taken away from her. In Australia she is confronted with the harsh life in the outback. Her behaviour and speeches imply that she aborted many more children who were presumably the fruits of rape or prostitution (Bovell, *HD* 3-4 and 44-45). At one moment in her life she must have decided to care from now on only for herself. She wants to be a mother and, therefore, steals a black baby whom she calls Obedience and holds her not as beloved daughter but rather as a servant. The bleak Australian outback and its cruel white male society disillusioned her. She does not long for male companionship. Most of the time, she converses with men only in mercantile matters. Men are necessary for her survival, though. Like Elizabeth, she "inflicts invisible inner wounds on herself". For Nora as well as for Elizabeth "no room is given [...] to acknowledge publicly to their white 'community' the damage they have done to the black women, or to themselves through their acts of great cruelty" (Lyssa, *Performing Australia's Past* 54). When Obedience is returned to Nora mutilated, Nora's only words are whispered: "What have I done?" (Bovell, *HD* 68). Nothing more is said or done, Nora continues living the same way as before. She must refuse to see. In this way, Nora prevents that knowledge about the atrocities against the Aborigines enters consciousness (cf. Lyssa, *Performing Australia's Past* 54).

At the first glance Thomas Wakefield, a landowner in the Australian outback and because of this fact given a leader's authority, seems to become disillusioned as the play progresses. But in the end it is not really clear if he is disillusioned or simply accepts the cruelties of the colonial society as a necessary means to establish a proud new nation. He likes to think of himself as an honest, fair, humanitarian ruler. He is a learned man. He is able to read and write. By writing a diary, he tries to preserve the first steps of colonisation for the future (Bovell, *HD* 6 and 11). In the play, he takes the position of a legal person. He tries to discover what has happened at the missionary's station.

Unlike ex-convict Goundry, he seems to believe in the innocence of the Aborigines. Goundry is the more active one of the two. He organises a raid against the Aborigines. When Wakefield recognizes that he is not able to prevent the massacre, he withdraws to his farm and destroys his diary (Bovell, *HD* 65). His withdrawal and the pledge for silence may be seen as a sign of disillusion and resignation. "His dream of co-existence between black and white has been destroyed" (cf. Lyssa, *Performing Australia's History* 46). He recognizes his powerlessness and resigns. But as Lyssa rightly states Wakefield also silently accepts the killing of the Aborigines as a necessity for building a proud nation. He does not prevent the killings and, therefore, makes himself guilty. He knows about his guilt because he profits from the atrocities. His withdrawal can be interpreted as a measure of precaution. When he does not take part in the cruelties against the Aborigines, neither in preventing nor in exercising them, he cannot be accused of having known about them and his honour will never be questioned (cf. Lyssa, *Performing Australia's History* 45-51).

As can be seen by now, there are several reactions towards disillusion in Andrew Bovell's own and collaborative plays. The most obvious reaction is resignation and indifference towards life. Some of the characters express their resignation by refusing to work, by living on the street, taking drugs or stealing. Other characters withdraw from any social life and live by themselves. Others start to behave egoistically, caring only for themselves. Most of the characters have one thing in common: they do no longer set themselves goals. They do not try to achieve anything or try to change their lives.

5.4 Traumatized characters

Another major group of characters has a serious trait in common: they are traumatized. Reasons for their traumata are either sexual and physical abuse or tragic losses. Traumatized characters can be found in Bovell's middle-class and working-class plays alike.

In *Speaking in Tongues*, two characters are be traumatized: Valerie and Sarah. Valerie's trauma is explicitly named by her husband John. In his interrogation with Leon, he tells the latter that Valerie was abused by her father when she was a child. Since then she fears strangers, especially men. Valerie seems to be paranoid. Her paranoia becomes

obvious when she starts screaming at Pete in the street, who is a total stranger to her. She accuses him of assaulting her. Her paranoia shows itself also when she hysterically jumps out of Nick's car into the bush. John sometimes thinks Valerie influences her clients. She seems to believe that "most people who manifest psychological problems in adulthood" have been sexually abused in their childhood. Therefore, she sees "all men as possibly dangerous and capable of betrayal" (Bovell, *ST* 88-91). Her trauma expresses itself in her paranoia. Ironically, Valerie who suffers from this psychosis works as a therapist and John may be right that she might influence her clients.

This maybe is the case with Sarah. Her trauma is not overtly expressed. Maybe she has not suffered the way Valerie has, but we might conclude from her inability to commit herself to other people that something bad might have happened to her. Sarah states that she needs to feel that she is in control, otherwise she gets hurt. (Bovell, *ST* 83). Sarah is not happy with her inability to commit: "I'm scared that I'm just going to do it all again. That I'm just going to keep moving on. That whenever somebody starts to love me too much I'm just going to keep moving on" (Bovell, *ST* 65). Her phobia of relationships is symbolically expressed in her dream. She is standing on a beach at the foot of a cliff and the tide is coming in. Her fear of being trapped and to drown in the sea represents her fear of drowning in a relationship (Bovell, *ST* 66). Sarah's refusal of a serious relationship is not a conscious choice. She wants to be able to commit. Therefore, it seems obvious that some kind of trauma must be the reason for her phobia of relationships.

In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* two very young characters are obviously traumatized: Orton and Stacey, the children of Rhonda in *Trash*. They have to cope with sexual and physical abuse. Orton is fifteen and his sister Stacey is thirteen years old. Both of them have been abused by their mother's boyfriends. While Orton has been beaten by them, Stacey has been sexually abused. Rhonda knows how much her children suffer but feels unable to help them. Their traumatic experiences lead to their leaving home and living on the street, where they eventually die together in a charity clothing bin. Andrew Bovell's depiction of the life of abused, neglected children is dark and bleak. No glimmer of hope is to be found in *Trash*.

In *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* also the two youngest characters have to suffer most: Obedience and Edward Cornelius. Obedience is viciously taken away from her mother and

her own culture. Nora refuses her any contact with her people. She is raised as an out-cast in both societies. “Although Nora knows how to read she has brought Obedience up in great ignorance. [...] Nora imparts only those aspects of European culture that facilitate Obedience’s servitude” (Lyssa, *Performing Australia’s History* 64). Obedience dreams of returning to her land and to her mother. She starts demanding to know who her mother is and ultimately she leaves Nora to search for her. This leads to Nora’s final cruel act. She asks Goundry to bring Obedience back to her. He finds her, rapes her and cuts out her tongue. Obedience’s will is broken and, deeply traumatized, she has to stay with Nora:

Her white rapist, Goundry, has taken her tongue and with it language, taste, pleasure, and self. [...] No future is imagined for the character beyond the harsh control of the white innkeeper Nora who named her Obedience, after rescuing her, so Nora insists, from a drunken black mother about to abandon the baby because the father was white. (Lyssa, *Performing Australia’s History* 55)

As Obedience is cruelly silenced, so is Edward Cornelius. His fate is very similar to Obedience’s. He has been taken away from his parents as well. They were killed by Goundry, who now sees in Edward his personal playmate. He has cut out his tongue as well. Although Edward’s mother wrote a letter that should help him escape from his imprisonment, it only achieved its goal when Nora first read it. At the end of the play, Nora refuses her help and sends him away with Goundry. Thus, Edward as well as Obedience remain deeply broken and traumatized without hope. There seems to be no end to their trauma.

In *When the Rain Stops Falling*, Gabrielle’s trauma is not caused by physical violence, but by the tragic loss of her family. She is severely traumatized by the murder of her brother Glen and the suicide of her parents. In consequence of her losses, she is not able to respond to being loved. Though she feels that she could love Gabriel, she never tells him. She shares several character qualities with Elizabeth. Both are incapable of accepting love and both refuse to talk about the past. Gabrielle never admits that she is a lonely orphan missing her family. She shows her loneliness by expressing anger towards her parents for committing suicide:

GABRIELLE. That [finding the bones of Gabrielle’s dead brother] [is] what sent my mother over the edge. What had been done to him. [...] At least Dad had the

decency to wait until I finished school and had a job. He was dead anyway, of course. He died the day Glen was taken and then he died again the day Mum went. But he saw me through, more or less. Kind of half there. But Mum couldn't wait. She didn't think the child that was left was worth it. (Bovell, *WRSF* 53)

Gabrielle never explicitly admits that she is lonely, but passages like the above underline her sorrow and loneliness. Another example, from which we can infer that she is lonely, is that she wants to leave the Coorong, which is a remote, lonely area in Australia and constantly reminds her of her dead family. Moreover, she repeatedly asks Joe if her son Gabriel has called, whom she has driven away from her, consequently being lonelier than before (Bovell, *WRSF* 31 and 26).

All characters mentioned deal with their traumata individually, but one reaction seems to be equally practised by nearly all of them: in the end they close themselves up and do not let any other person take part in their lives. Orton and Stacey are the exception to this observation. They at least care for each other, but avoid any other people.

5.5 Hopeful characters

Finally, Bovell's few optimistic characters shall be discussed. These characters are hopeful because they have trust in either their partner or themselves, in society or in God. Once again I want to mention that some of the hopeful characters are not created by Andrew Bovell alone but collaboratively with Christos Tsiolkas, Patricia Cornelius and Melissa Reeves. They will be discussed because they stress that although *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* is a bleak, pessimistic play about social injustices, the play nevertheless gives some glimmers of hope for a change to the better.

In *Paula's* monologue we encounter a woman whose life is not easy. Her husband is unemployed and she has to work night shifts in a hospital besides taking care of her three children. They do not have much. Nevertheless, they are a happy family and Paula and Nik love and trust each other. When Nik is arrested because of Jane's accusation, Paula has faith in his innocence (Bovell, *Paula* 32). He only has to say that he has not done anything wrong and she will believe him. Jane envies Paula's faith in Nik (Bovell,

Jane 27). Paula is one of the few characters who is able to cope with marital problems and who does not give in easily.

In *Suit* another character appears who is not likely to despair: Jamie Parker, a young Aboriginal man, who is dismissed in the course of the play, looks into the future hopefully: “I will get a job. I’m going to try really hard. [...] I’ve done a course, in computers. I’m qualified, I’m not stupid, eh? And I’m not lazy. And I don’t drink” (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 78). He trusts in himself and is not ashamed of talking about his unemployment. He can cope with everything, even with racial prejudice, as can be seen in scene two when O’Manney starts insulting him.

Unlike Jamie, Daniel’s father in *Money* does not want to speak about his unemployment. He sees unemployment as personal failure. He feels attacked by his wife for being out of work, although she does not complain about his unemployment:

MAN: I know what you’re thinking.
 WOMAN: You’re wrong, I’m not.
 MAN: You think about it all the time.
 WOMAN: I don’t.
 MAN: I’m trying.
 WOMAN: I know you are.
 MAN: I don’t like it any more than you do.
 WOMAN: I know that.
 MAN: Then get off my back for a while.
 WOMAN: Who’s blaming you? (Cornelius, *Money* 15-16)

He is so much ashamed of his unemployment that he does not even want his eighteen-year-old son Daniel to know (Cornelius, *Money* 18). He pretends to go to work every day. When a young woman in the train, whom he hypocritically judges for being unemployed, finds out that he is not working himself, he denies the fact vehemently (Cornelius, *Money* 46-49). Nevertheless, Daniel’s father does not want to capitulate. He has worked in the same job for fifteen years before he got unemployed. He believes that this fact means something and that it will get him another job (Cornelius, *Money* 49).

Trisha and Katina in *Dream-Town*, two fifteen-year-old schoolgirls, are neglected by society due to their migrant background. Nevertheless, they seem optimistic and happy. Katina and Trisha both like to play being rich by stealing evening dresses, putting on perfume and behaving snobbishly. In their conversations they reveal in which environment they grow up. Katina’s brother, for example, carries a gun. Katina and Trisha drink Jim Beam and are fond of gangster rappers. A gang called The Keepers

wanders about in their district (Reeves, *Dream-Town* 28-35). Crime and prejudices seem to be omnipresent in their lives. In such an environment disillusion is more than likely to commence sooner or later. Nevertheless, Trisha and Katina seem not to be disillusioned at all. After their being caught by the police, one of the officers tries hard to bring them down:

COP TWO: You haven't got much, have you?
 TRISHA: What do you mean, money, you mean?
 COP TWO: Don't you get envious?
 TRISHA: Nah.
 COP TWO: Don't you get angry?
 TRISHA: Nah.
 COP TWO: When you see the girls that have got everything?
 TRISHA: Nah.
 COP TWO: What are you going to do with your life?
 TRISHA: Haven't made my mind up yet.
 KATINA: Not going to be a cop, that's for sure.
 COP TWO: You've got nothing.
 TRISHA: We haven't got nothing.
 COP TWO: You've got nothing.
 TRISHA: We haven't got nothing. We haven't got nothing. We're fucking smart. We know how things operate. We see the inside of things, the messy bitching ugly inside of things, not just the nice things, not just the prettied-up fucking bits. We're fucking smart, so don't you tell us we've got nothing, you fucking prick! We haven't got nothing. Have we, Katina? We haven't got nothing! (Reeves, *Dream-Town* 76)

This last speech by Trisha shows her optimism quite well. Although, her family is poor, she does not think that she has got nothing. She is smart and, therefore, her future prospects are hopeful.

Another character in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* is hopeful, although she has lost her only son: Gina De Stanzo. She trust in God who helps her to cope with her loss. Although her son did not believe in God, she is sure that her prayers will rescue him. She will not leave the place where she believes her son died until God tells her. Her vision of God is that of a kind, compassionate God who protects and saves her. She knows that her prayers will not bring her son back, but they will lead him into heaven (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 79-80).

The only hopeful character in *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* seems to be Samuel Epstein. Epstein is a Jewish ex-convict who travels with the inveterate ex-convict Goundry. He does not enjoy his company. He tries hard to get work and live an honest life. He makes

himself guilty by keeping silent about Goundry's doings, but with the prospect of being able to work at Wakefield's farm his self-esteem rises and he gains courage to stand up against Goundry. When Wakefield refuses to help avoid the planned raid against the Aborigines, his new self-esteem manifests itself fully:

EPSTEIN: Mr Wakefield... don't do this. [...] This has nothing to do with the lost child. This is about land and the right to graze your sheep...

WAKEFIELD: We're building a nation here. It can't be done without cost.

EPSTEIN: And what kind of nation will it be?

WAKEFIELD: A proud nation one day.

EPSTEIN: You coward, Wakefield... you gutless coward. You can stuff your nation... and your job. I'll not let this happen. (Bovell, *HD* 65)

Epstein does not want men like Goundry to build his new nation. He is ashamed of Wakefield's resignation. He himself does not give in. He is hopeful and is willing to take part in creating a better home for himself. The audience never gets to know what Epstein could have achieved with his newly gained self-esteem, since he dies immediately afterwards when he tries to warn the Aborigines of the massacre. *Holy Day* leaves the audience without a glimmer of hope for fairness in building a new nation.

Summarizing, it can be noticed that the majority of Andrew Bovell's characters is either lonely, dissatisfied, disillusioned or traumatized. Bovell only created a few optimistic characters. Loneliness often stands in connection with a longing for friendship or love and with the wish to have a family of one's own. The characters either try to change their lonely life or they resign. The active characters try to find someone to share their life with by flirting and opening themselves up to other people. The passive characters withdraw from social life and turn to alcohol and daydreaming. Some of these characters see no glimmer of hope anymore and, therefore, commit suicide like, for example, Neil in *Speaking in Tongues* and Linda in *Holy Day*. Dissatisfaction arises in conjunction with an unbalanced marriage, an unhappy family life or a bad economic situation. The characters are either overstrained and feel that they are not appreciated enough or they feel stuck in a life that turned out to be not as they wished it to be. Some characters are depressed and suffer from a mid-life crisis, others are dissatisfied because of their low self-esteem. Others again have to deal with payment difficulties and unemployment. The effects of their dissatisfaction are manifold. They, for example, commit adultery, leave their families, turn to drinking or even commit a crime like Elizabeth Wilkes

in *Holy Day*. Disillusionment in Bovell's plays originates because of a lack of future prospects, a lack of money and economic security and the feeling of being neglected by society. What all disillusioned characters in the plays have in common is their resignation. They do not have the will to change and improve their lives. The cause of traumata in Bovell's plays is either sexual and physical abuse or tragic loss. The characters suffering from trauma are all unable to open up to others. They live a lonely life and are unable to change it for the better. The handful of optimistic characters in Andrew Bovell's plays draw hope from their trust in themselves, in others or in God. Because of this trust and faith, they are able to cope with problems and do not give in easily. Capitulation and resignation seem to be no options for them. Such a conglomeration of unhappy characters seems to imply that Bovell's worldview is rather negative and pessimistic. Nevertheless, his plays are not depressing but interesting. His characters and themes fascinate because of their universality.

6 Themes

LOVE, betrayal, guilt, abandonment, loss. The themes and motifs woven through the work of Australian playwright and screenwriter Andrew Bovell are dark threads, shot through occasionally with luminosity. (Sloley, *Australian*)

Right at the beginning of her article “Reverberations”, Emma Sloley highlights the most important themes of Andrew Bovell’s plays. Love, betrayal, guilt, abandonment and loss can be found in all of Bovell’s plays in some way or another. In the following discussion of Bovell’s themes I will constantly come back to these general themes, while discussing a set of more specific themes. The themes that will be discussed can be divided into political themes on the one hand, and non-political themes on the other hand. Concerning the former, two major topic areas determine Bovell’s politically most important plays, namely the reconsideration of Australia’s colonial past in *Holy Day* and the problem of unemployment and economic difficulties in general in *Who’s Afraid of the Working Class?* and to some extent in *Speaking in Tongues*. Concerning the latter, topics like unhappy marriages and relationships, disturbed parent-child-relationships, longing for closeness and tragic loss shall be discussed, which determine Bovell’s non-political plays.

6.1 Political themes

6.1.1 Reconsideration of Australia’s colonial past

Present-day Australia feels a significant need for a reconsideration of its colonial past. The so-called ‘History Wars’ are concerned with the question of how British colonisation of Australia is to be interpreted. There are two opposing viewpoints held at the moment. The ‘three cheers’ proponents see British colonisation as a form of settlement that led to the development of a proud new nation. The ‘black armband’ supporters, on the other hand, see British colonisation as a cruel invasion of an already inhabited land and contemporary Australian society as based on injustices and wrongs. There is a need to reconcile the Australians with one other. The past must be talked about and the Aborigines no longer silenced (cf. Pulford, *History Wars* 150-152). One well-known opponent of the black armband point of view was Australia’s Prime Minister John Howard.

He palliated the cruelties against the indigenous Australians, namely mass murder and forced removal of children, to mere injustices and refused to provide a parliamentary apology to them (cf. Lyssa, *Performing Australia's History* 48). Andrew Bovell sees himself as a proponent of the black armband view. His play *Holy Day* was celebrated as a successful attempt towards reconciliation by the majority of its critics. Donald Pulford is one of these supportive critics, as mentioned early. Alison Lyssa furthermore mentions Rachael Maza, the actress who played Linda in the original production of *Holy Day*, as another supporter of Bovell's play (*Performing Australia's History* 44). Lyssa herself is not too supportive of the play. Although, she acknowledges that "[she] agree[s] with Bovell's description of what colonisation has done, [she] question[s] the way he constructs that suffering on stage". In her eyes, the play unconsciously reproduces the historic silence that Bovell regrets and tries to end (*Performing Australia's History* 61). Furthermore, she does not agree with Bovell's construction [...] of "the white Australian psyche": "[...] the white colonial hierarchy with its raced and gendered stereotypes preserves its privilege by maintaining control over the narrative and binding the characters into a hierarchy beyond which there is only death" (*Performing Australia's History* 49). In the following the main arguments given by Lyssa to support her viewpoint will be described in detail since they are important with regard to the discussion of Bovell's attempt towards reconciliation.

First of all, Lyssa stresses that *Holy Day* reinscribes colonialism's hierarchy. Four of the white characters use their power over the two Aboriginal characters Linda and Obedience and the unseen local Aborigines. Elizabeth falsely accuses Linda of stealing her baby. Wakefield orders Goundry to capture Linda and chain her to a tree without having appropriate evidence against her. Nora holds Obedience as her servant after having taken her from her mother and when Obedience leaves in search of her people, Nora asks Goundry to re-capture her. Goundry brings her back after he has raped her and cut out her tongue. The European characters are responsible for the fate of the Aboriginal characters. Within the white hierarchy, the male white characters (Wakefield and Goundry) are at the top and all other characters are subordinate to them. Their being black (Linda and Obedience), female (Nora and Elizabeth), Jewish (Epstein) and young (Cornelius) is a "punishable offence" (*Performing Australia's History* 49). All challenges to the white hierarchy, like for example Epstein's attempt to rebel against Goundry, are crushed immediately. The hierarchy is maintained by "stereotyping, punishment of

boundry-crossing and concealment of reality” (*Performing Australia’s History* 44-54). In Lyssa’s point of view Bovell’s reinscription of colonial hierarchy in *Holy Day* is negative because the hierarchy is not challenged. But on the other hand this reinscription can also be seen as an honest representation of the cruel reality of the first colonies in Australia.

Secondly, Lyssa states that all indigenous characters in the play are silenced and, therefore, cannot bear testimony to the cruelties their people have to suffer. Obedience is silenced by Goundry’s slicing out her tongue and Linda by being driven into committing suicide. Furthermore, unlike the indigenous playwrights Lyssa discusses in her thesis (Tammy Anderson and Richard J. Frankland), Bovell does not use any “non-naturalistic dramaturgical strategies that might help give Obedience’s trauma tongue” (*Performing Australia’s History* 59). In her eyes Bovell’s traditional structuring is negative. The plays by the indigenous playwrights are more multi-layered and do not give account of only one single reality, as *Holy Day* does. By using traditional Aboriginal drama forms, Aboriginal culture is introduced onstage. Anderson and Frankland’s indigenous characters are able to voice their feelings and give authentic testimony to the atrocities against their people. In *Holy Day* there is only one “atypical break in the otherwise conventional closed narrative, where there is another ‘reality’” – namely when Obedience steps out of the frame and bears witness to the massacre. But according to Lyssa, this witness is ineffective since the audience is left “protected from any imperative to respond” (*Performing Australia’s History* 61-62).

Thirdly, Lyssa argues that “*Holy Day* perpetuates the white myths that construct the displaced Aborigine as ‘lost’ and traditional culture as dream or nightmare” (*Performing Australia’s History* 63). Obedience and Linda do not belong to their people anymore. While Obedience longs for a reunion with her land and family, Linda describes her culture as a nightmare. Since they both are not allowed to take part in the white culture either, they are lost in an in between zone. While Obedience does not have any remembrance of her traditional culture, Linda only conveys her rejection of her people and traditions. In this way, “traditional culture in *Holy Day* is frozen offstage” (*Performing Australia’s History* 69).

Finally, Lyssa claims that in the text white racism and sexism prevails over blackness and femaleness. The “destiny” of the white male is “to invade the figured emptiness of the other, interchangeably cast as black, woman, untongued man or landscape” (*Performing Australia’s History* 80). Furthermore, no single black man is pre-

sent on the stage. “Black men are represented as unable to compete with white males”. Their inability to compete with their white counterparts, for example, is shown by Linda’s leaving her people and her indigenous husband in preference of a white man. Black men are “as powerless as black women to disrupt the *Holy Day* paradigm of white supremacy” (*Performing Australia’s History* 81).

Lyssa’s evaluation of Bovell’s play is based on very specific views of what drama should be like. First of all, in her eyes modern drama should leave conventional structuring behind in favour of less traditional dramatic forms, as the two indigenous playwrights do. And secondly, plays dealing with Australia’s colonial past have to include Aboriginal viewpoints, Aboriginal culture and traditions to the same extent as white ones. I agree with Lyssa that less traditional dramatic forms are interesting and should by all means be included in modern plays. But I also think it is hard for non-indigenous writers to include dramatic forms and convey traditions of a culture with which they are not as familiar as with their own. Therefore, I think one cannot blame Bovell for his lack of conveying Aboriginal culture. *Holy Day* is, despite of Lyssa’s arguments, a text that is concerned with the reconsideration of Australia’s colonial past and it tries to “throw light into the shadows of [the] past to discover the truth of what is there” as Pulford puts it (*The History Wars* 153). But, of course, there is a grain of truth in both Pulford’s and Lyssa’s interpretation of the play. On the one hand *Holy Day* highlights the cruelties and atrocities of the past by staging them in a brutally honest way, but on the other hand the silencing of these cruelties is not stopped within the text. While the play itself does stop the silencing by staging the cruelties against the Aborigines honestly, the Aboriginal characters within the text are still silenced by the white characters. The Aboriginal characters are not able to bear testimony to the atrocities and they are not able to break out of the white colonial hierarchy and live an alternative life. But *Holy Day* is also critical of the white settlers. Especially characters like Nora Ryan, Thomas Wakefield and Goundry cannot be interpreted as positive in any way. Lyssa’s argument that the audience is again only confronted with Australian history from a white European point of view is only valid concerning the lack of representation of Aboriginal culture in the play. Aboriginal culture and tradition is not introduced to the audience at all. Aboriginality is either unknown to the Aboriginal characters or neglected by them. I agree with her in this respect, but once again want to stress that we cannot really blame Bovell for his lack of knowledge about Aboriginal culture. Clearly Anderson and Frankland have an advantage in this respect because it is their own cul-

ture they write about. Bovell's lack of knowledge about indigenous Australian culture naturally restricts *Holy Day* to one single reality, which is white, and refuses the audience any other reality that would give them insights into Aboriginal life and culture. In this way, Bovell subconsciously works against his original aim of stopping the silencing of the past. Aboriginal characters are not given a voice in the play and, therefore, a significant part of Australia's colonial past remains neglected.

The more general themes employed in *Holy Day* connect the play with Bovell's other plays. As in many of them, the themes of love, betrayal, guilt, abandonment and loss are present throughout the play. Thus, for example, Nora refuses Obedience the love of her real mother and makes herself guilty by keeping Obedience away from her people. Furthermore, she betrays Edward by sending him away with Goundry, although she promised to help him out of his imprisonment.

6.1.2 Unemployment and economic difficulties

While Bovell's attempt to give Aboriginal characters a voice may appear to have failed, his other political plays are far more successful in giving a voice to neglected people. This is especially true of the characters in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*, who are socially oppressed and marginalised because they seem to be failures in the eyes of a "political milieu that rewards [only] material success" (D'Cruz 209). In the following discussion again all characters appearing in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* will be included to provide a complete picture of the society Bovell, Tsiolkas, Cornelius and Reeves describe and the hardships they have to face. One major problem most of the characters in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* have to cope with is unemployment. The reasons for being out of work are manifold. On the one hand we encounter characters in their teens and twenties who seem to refuse work deliberately because they see no sense in working or because the jobs they would get are not satisfying enough (Kennett Boy, the young woman on the train and Daniel). On the other hand some of the characters are out of work because of a failed attempt to go into business for themselves, as is implied in the case of Daniel's father, or they do not work due to invalidity caused by industrial accidents, as in the case of Leon. Jamie Parker seems to lose his job because of a complaint of a racist customer. Most of the mothers in *Who's Afraid of the*

Working Class? seem to be not working as well, namely Gina de Stanzo, Comfort and Rhonda. Whether their staying at home is a deliberate choice or an unavoidable fact, since they are not able to obtain a job to support their families, remains unclear. In *Speaking in Tongues* another unemployed character appears, namely Nick, who seems to be out of work because the economic situation in the area in which he lives is generally bad:

NICK. It was Wednesday evening and I went into Taylor's Ridge to have a drink. [...] I used to work in there and I'd always have a drink on Wednesday night. It was my way of ending the week. [...] I'd catch up with my friends. We'd have a drink, maybe something to eat at the bar, and then we'd go home. I lost my job, like a lot of us who live around here, and it's just something we keep up. (Bovell, *ST* 65)

In the time in which *Speaking in Tongues* and *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* were performed, namely 1996 and 1998, the conservative politician Jeff Kennett was Premier of Victoria. Since he is explicitly referred to in the first scene of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* some background knowledge about his government policies should be given here to understand the need of such plays like *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* Jeff Kennett took over the government of Victoria from the Labour Premier Joan Kirner in 1992. In order to cut down the state's debts, he initiated a severe budget-cutting and privatisation program at the cost of Victoria's citizens. Thousands of workers lost their jobs, mainly public servants, teachers and public transport workers. Government funding for the public school system was cut tremendously, which led to the closure of hundreds of government schools. Victoria's unemployment rate was above the national average during the Kennett government.

In the 'Kennett Boy Monologue', the young man reports about a rally against Kennett's policies, which took place soon after his election and which his parents made him attend. As Glen D'Cruz states, the problem of the Kennett boy is that he belongs to the working class, but he "desire[s] to align himself with the ideological values signified by Jeff Kennett", namely power and success (210). But since the possibilities of leaving his working class background behind are slim, his aspirations towards power and success are hard to fulfil. He seems to be aware of this dilemma. Disillusioned, he chooses an entirely different life, the one on the street without work and responsibilities to occupy his mind.

Jamie Parker, the main character in *Suit*, has the same aspirations like the Kennett Boy. At the beginning of the play Jamie is working as an investment salesman. His suit signifies wealth, power and success. He is obsessed with money and tries to understand the economic laws of capitalism. In his briefcase he carries a copy of Karl Marx' 'Das Capital', a critical analysis of capitalism (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 38). In one scene Jamie lives out his fantasy of being powerful in an encounter with a prostitute, while in the next he is brought back down to earth when his real life is revealed, in which he is a constant victim of racial prejudice. When he resists the insults of the racist O'Manney, he is dismissed.

All other characters in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* have lower aspirations. They live on the margins of society and struggle for survival. Most of them seem to be powerless victims of capitalism. Their unemployment affects their life tremendously. They either turn to alcohol or they resign from any social life. They become aggressive and quarrel a lot with the people around them, which leads to divorces and loneliness. Nick in *Speaking in Tongues* admits that he wreaks his anger and dissatisfaction on his wife: "I stayed later than usual that night because I wanted her to worry about me" (Bovell, *ST* 65). Invalid Leon in *Dream-Town* tells in a very honest way how it feels to get unemployed:

I was given money for three months, but my hand didn't get better. I won't go into the details of my hand injury, but believe me, it got no better, and around this time I became a single man again and people aren't made to be single, they rot away inside, and I was rotting and my hand was rotting and they argued over whether I was a physical injury or psychologically damaged, every week a different version, every week another set of guidelines, then Winter followed Spring and they took away the money. That was the start of the troubles. [...] I rang no one but the WorkCover people and spoke a couple of times to my wife's mother who is a woman of some sympathy, unlike my wife. (Reeves, *Dream-Town* 52)

The despair expressed in this speech is that of all other socially isolated and alienated characters in the play. They feel the hard pressure of poverty. Comfort in *Money* tries by all means to rescue her home, which represents security to her (cf. Beechy, *Green Left*). The most desperate living condition in the play is that of the old woman into whose house Daniel breaks in. She lives alone in a house without electricity, since she is not able to pay the bills, totally neglected by society.

The creative team of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* has successfully “put stories on stage which would not otherwise be heard”. They have achieved their goal of describing “the costs of an economic and political system which doesn’t seem to care anymore how many families it wrecks, lives it smashes or careers it destroys as long as it can achieve its increasingly abstract goals” (Meyrick 4-5).

6.2 Non-political themes

What can be seen by now is that Bovell’s political plays are mostly occupied with questions of social guilt towards socially marginalised and neglected groups. The two most important plays in this respect are *Holy Day* and *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* Most of Bovell’s remaining plays, though, are less concerned with political questions. They are concerned with universal phenomena like the hardships of relationships, adultery, failed marriages, disturbed parent-child-relationships, loneliness and tragic losses of beloved ones. These recurring themes shall be discussed in the following.

6.2.1 Unhappy marriages and relationships

Unhappy marriages and relationships are omnipresent in all of Andrew Bovell’s plays and love and betrayal make up a serious part of his work. The reasons for the unhappiness in the relationships of Bovell’s characters are varied. One reason may be the choice of a wrong partner, which manifests itself in constant conflicts that expose the partners’ different attitudes towards life. One example of this wrong partner choice is Gordon’s failed marriage with Jane in *After Dinner*. At the beginning of Gordon and Jane’s marriage they seem to want the same things, but then, triggered by a change of work, Jane’s needs and wishes begin to differ from Gordon’s:

GORDON: Jane and I started at the Commonwealth together. We were happy at the Commonwealth. And then she was snapped up by CHALLENGE. Onward and upward with THE CHALLENGE. What she always called her job suddenly became her career. The fridge was suddenly full of Chardonnay. And she was always wanting to go out. Always wanting to meet new people. But she knew I didn’t drink. She knew that. In the end, she started going out without me. With her new friends from CHALLENGE. No, Jane wasn’t satisfied. I could never satisfy Jane. It was such a shame because when I married her she was so content with what satisfied me. (Bovell, *AD* 39-40)

While Jane is focused on her career now, Gordon wants to build up a family. He regrets that they do not have children. Their attitudes towards life differ, which ultimately leads to their divorce. An unsatisfied wish for children may also be the reason of another marital conflict, namely that of Jane and Pete in *Speaking in Tongues*. Here Jane longs for children, but Pete underwent a vasectomy some years ago. When he finds out about Jane's adultery, he thinks about reversing the vasectomy to rescue their relationship (Bovell, *ST* 49-50). But later on it becomes clear that they are not able to forgive each other and they separate.

What can be furthermore seen in the example of Gordon and Jane is that the woman in the relationship changes, while the man remains constant and tries to maintain continuity. He is not able to support his wife in her emancipation. It only makes him dissatisfied. This kind of dissatisfaction is to be found in two other relationships in Bovell's plays as well. Thus, Mick is truly annoyed by Lois' emancipation and Mathew also cannot cope with Nina's change of character. When we look at the female point of view of these two relationships, it can be seen that Lois as well as Nina are dissatisfied with their roles as mothers and housewives. While Nina is simply bored, Lois is furthermore overstrained because she additionally has to work in a factory as well. Moreover, both women feel underestimated and underappreciated. They long for a change, which ultimately leads to the separation from their husbands. Before Nina finally separates from Mathew, she seeks admiration and appreciation in her relationship with Lawrence. Adultery is ubiquitous in *Scenes from a Separation*. Not only Nina commits adultery, also Mathew's brother Darcy is unfaithful, as has been their father George before. Darcy's unfaithfulness may be caused by Gina's preoccupation with their first child and her weight problem. Mathew and Darcy's father George on the other hand seems to have been unfaithful out of a habit. His widow Margaret has no good word for him:

MARGARET: What secrets?

MATHEW: Women have them.

MARGARET: According to men, yes. But actually they don't. Men have them instead. Believe me. George had closets full of them.

MATHEW: R.I.P.

MARGARET: I wouldn't think so. Not your father. R.I.T. RIT. 'Rest in torment' is more deserved. (Bovell, *SS* 13-14)

He made no secrets out of his mistresses though. Margaret's marriage with him was a nightmare, but she did not divorce him because she nonetheless never stopped loving

him (Bovell, SS 38). In her case adultery was the cause of her unhappy marriage. In most other plays by Bovell adultery is the ultimate consequence of an unhappy marriage. The best examples are given in *Speaking in Tongues*, which starts with two simultaneous adultery scenes, as mentioned before. These are caused by the characters' desire for confirmation that they are still attractive and their desire for a little passion in their lives. The unhappiness in their lives can either be overcome, as in the case of Leon and Sonja, or it may finally lead to a separation, as in the case of Jane and Pete. In John and Valerie's case his adultery is a means of ending his marriage in the most convenient way, although he thereby confirms Valerie's attitude that all men are capable of betrayal.

The relationships in *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* are at risk because of the financial hardships the characters have to cope with. The marriage of Daniel's parents, for example, suffers tremendously from their payment difficulties:

WOMAN: I pay the payments on this house. Always have done.
 MAN: All I'm saying is that by law this house is half mine.
 WOMAN: You don't give a damn about this house. I wanted it, it was my deposit, I pay the mortgage, it's mine.
 MAN: If I left I'd get half this house. By law. I'd get half.
 WOMAN: Well, we're stuck with each other then.
 MAN: Is that what we are?
 WOMAN: What?
 MAN: Stuck? Stuck with one another?
 WOMAN: Yes, that's what we are.
 MAN: Is that all we are?
 WOMAN: Yes, yes that's about it.
 MAN: That's it?
 WOMAN: Yes, yes that's it... Oh, I don't know. I think so. (Cornelius, *Money* 17)

These payment difficulties are partly caused by the unemployment of Daniel's father. Unemployment can be a serious reason for a separation, as in the case of Leon mentioned before. Financial difficulties paired with the wrong choice of partner are the reasons for Rhonda's unhappy life, which leads to the sufferings and tragic end of her children, Orton and Stacey.

The unhappiness in the relationships depicted in *When the Rain Stops Falling* is grounded in the loss of a beloved one. Elizabeth has to discover that the husband who meant everything to her is in fact concealing his true nature from her. When she finds out that Henry is a paedophile, she loses the future with the man she loves. Gabrielle is

also deprived of the man she loves. This time the loss is caused by sudden death: Gabriel dies in a car accident. In her marriage with Joe she is not able to give love and Joe will never be able to make her happy. The reasons for the failed marriage between Gabriel York and Andrew Price's mother are not revealed but they are likely to be connected with his past and his lack of parental love. In this way the past affects his life as much as Gabrielle's past affected hers. Past traumata and other unhappy memories can have tremendous effects on the future, as can also be seen in the relationship of Valerie and John in *Speaking in Tongues*, where the fact that Valerie was sexually abused in her childhood lingers threateningly over her marriage with John.

Summing up, the main reasons for unhappy marriages and relationships in Bovell's plays are either diverging attitudes towards life or a feeling of not being appreciated as much as deserved. Furthermore, relationships may be affected by financial hardships or past occurrences may linger over the present relationships and prevent that the couple may live happily together. Consequently, the couple either separates or lives with their unhappiness and dissatisfaction. A step in between these two options often is adultery, which in most cases leads to a divorce. The only couple which starts a new life together after committing adultery is Leon and Sonja in *Speaking in Tongues*.

One last observation: while the great majority of the relationships Bovell describes is characterized by unhappiness and dissatisfaction, there is actually only one more or less happy couple to be found in his plays, namely Nick and Paula in *Speaking in Tongues*. And even their being happy with each other is overshadowed by Nick's unemployment and by his being accused of murder.

6.2.2 Disturbed parent-child-relationships

Apart from unhappy marriages, another theme connected with the familial life of Bovell's characters reoccurs in his plays, namely the disturbed relationships between children and their parents. The most obvious examples, of course, can be found in *When the Rain Stops Falling*, where all children sooner or later are abandoned by their parents, starting with Elizabeth, who bars Henry from seeing his son Gabriel, when she finds out about his true nature. She herself, however, also refuses Gabriel her love. She does not build up a relationship with him. She does not know anything about him. When

he comes to see her and dares to question her drinking habit, she deliberately tries to give him a bad conscience:

ELIZABETH. Don't. Don't come into my home and judge me.
 GABRIEL. I'm sorry.
 ELIZABETH. This is my home.
 GABRIEL. It's just that I worry about you.
 ELIZABETH. Do you?
 GABRIEL. Yes... I care about you, Mum.
 ELIZABETH. Well, don't.
 GABRIEL. Don't care about you?
 ELIZABETH. Don't make a fuss, Gabriel. I'm perfectly capable of caring for myself.
 GABRIEL. I was thinking about my father recently. (Beat.) And I know we've tried to have this conversation before.
 ELIZABETH. Right.
 GABRIEL. What?
 ELIZABETH. I had hoped that you had come simply to see me.
 GABRIEL. I have.
 ELIZABETH. No, Gabriel. You haven't. You have come because there is something you want. (Bovell, *WRSF* 34)

Elizabeth's reasons for keeping her son at a distance are clearly connected with her wish to conceal from him the truth about his father. The greater the distance between the two, the fewer possibilities Gabriel has to question her about his father. Moreover, another factor plays a role in their relationship: Gabriel was not a planned child. In a conversation with Henry Elizabeth admits her uncertainty and even considers an abortion:

HENRY. We'll manage, Beth.
 ELIZABETH. Yes but it wasn't meant to happen, was it? Perhaps ten years ago. When I was ready. But not now, Henry. Because I've got on. I've made a life without it and to be frank, to be perfectly honest, I'm just not sure I want it. (Bovell, *WRSF* 25)

When Elizabeth bans Henry from her life, she ultimately keeps her son at a distance since he was only born because Henry wanted him to live. Her maternal feelings for Gabriel are not strong enough to cope with the situation of raising a child alone, a child she did not wish to have.

The reasons of Gabrielle's parents for abandoning her are of a quite different origin. They do not abandon her deliberately, but out of grief for their murdered son Glen. Gabrielle's mother drowns herself in the ocean three years after Glen is killed.

She cannot bear the loss. Gabrielle's father follows her fourteen years later by putting a bullet through his head. "At least Dad had the decency to wait until I finished school and had a job", as Gabrielle puts it (Bovell, *WRSF* 32 and 53). Her parents were so broken by the loss of their son, that they did not recognize that they still had a daughter who needed them. Gabrielle has to live with their ghosts in a place which she detests. When Gabriel asks her to come with him, she naturally accepts.

The loss of her parents and the loss of Gabriel make it impossible for her to give love to her own son. In this way she passes on the patterns of abandonment from which she had to suffer to her son. She behaves exactly like her parents. Being broken by her loss of Gabriel, she does not think about her son and drives him away from her:

GABRIEL. You reach a moment in your life when you realise that you have nothing to say to your parents. I reached that moment with my own mother when I was seventeen years old. It wasn't until years later that I realised that having nothing to say is just another way of having so much to say that you dare not begin... And by then, it was too late. She was gone... I wish I had more courage, Andrew. I wish I had your courage. (Beat.) These are my father's postcards. His name was Gabriel Law and they were sent to him by his father, Henry Law. I never met my father. He died in a car accident before I was born. But I know that he met my mother in a roadhouse on the Coorong. And that she loved him deeply. So deeply that she could barely mention his name. Which was unfortunate. (Bovell, *WRSF* 79)

Every time Gabrielle sees Gabriel she is reminded of his father. When Gabriel is seventeen years old he cannot bear her coldness any longer. He leaves and never calls again (Bovell, *WRSF* 67). He does not even re-establish contact with her when he receives letters from Joe informing him that she is seriously ill.

Being heavily affected by his childhood experiences, Gabriel reproduces the same patterns of neglect and abandonment. He leaves his own family when his son Andrew is about eight years old. Andrew is the only character in the play who seems willing to break this line of abandonment. He re-establishes contact with his father and, thereby, shows the courage all other characters lack.

As can be seen, child abandonment is omnipresent in *When the Rain Stops Falling*. All four generations of characters are affected by it. *When the Rain Stops Falling* is not the only play in which this theme is taken on. In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* several disturbed parent-child-relationships can be found as well. The most important ex-

ample here is Rhonda, who neglects her children in favour of her boyfriends. While Rhonda's youngest son Mickey is taken away by the welfare, her two elder children are sent away by her:

But this time Nathan [her present boyfriend] was giving it to him hard, hitting him hard and so I told him, Orton, I told him, get out, get out before the bastard kills you. *It was for his own good. I did it for him.* [...] She [Stacey] loves Orton, thinks he's the greatest in the world. [...] Anyway, it gets to a point when I can't stand it any longer, 'When's Orton coming home, Mum? When's Orton coming back?' So I tell her, 'You go and find him, go on, you go and find him and tell him to come home.' [...] Anyway, Nathan had turned up the night before so *it was for the best. I did it for her really*, told her to go and find Orton. I knew Orton would take care of her while I sorted out the thing with Nathan. So it was for the best. (Bovell, *Trash* 68) [Emphasis added.]

Rhonda tries to apologise for her behaviour by arguing that the abandonment of her children is the best she can do for them. She does not want to see that it would be best for them if she threw out her boyfriend and lived with her children alone. In the end her needs seem to be more important to her than her children's happiness.

Other examples of disturbed relationships between parents and their children are found in *Suit* and in *Money*. Here the parents are not the ones who abandon their children, but the children leave their homes because of conflicts with their parents. In *Suit* the Kennett Boy thinks little of his parents:

My old man is one of those guys who's wasted his whole fucking life. He works a shit job, has for thirty fucking years, since he was a kid, pouring concrete. And, man, you should listen to him, listen to him go on about it. 'I'm so tough, we brickies are so special.' Yeah, right. Hasn't done a fucking thing with his life. Hasn't seen the world, hasn't had an original thought. Nothing tough about him except his mouth and his forearms and even they're going to fat. My mum's no different. She's brain-dead as well. (Tsiolkas, *Suit* 11)

He leaves his family because he can no longer stand the conflicts with his father about looking for work and contributing to the family's living.

In *Money* it is implied that the old woman into whose house Daniel breaks was abandoned by her adopted son Jimmy when he found out that his biological mother was not really dead. Jimmy seems to have been unable to forgive her, although she only lied for his sake. She offered him a world "based on a bigger picture where greater things

are at stake than family and blood ties and small miseries that are not worth their salt”, as the old lady puts it (Cornelius, *Money* 57).

One further play should be mentioned in connection with child abandonment, namely *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*. Lois seems to be a rather bad mother, at least in the eyes of Georgina, because her own happiness is more important to her than her children's. She is annoyed by them and by her familial life, which in the end leads to her leaving her family and moving to Melbourne.

Concluding, it can be said that the picture Bovell provides of the relationships between children and their parents is a bleak one. All relationships seem to be disturbed in some way or another. There are hardly any loving parent-child-relationships described in Bovell's plays. The plays clearly depict the guilt of the parents. They are responsible for their unhappy familial lives. Bovell, thereby, maybe implies that modern families often do not function as harmoniously as they did in the past.

6.2.3 Longing for closeness

So far it can be seen that the problems Bovell's characters have to cope with are connected with their families. They are unhappily married. They long for a change in their lives which is often connected with the wish of being free of their families. They neglect their children or give them reasons to leave. Bovell clearly shows the disfunctioning of modern families. But on the other hand, he also depicts characters who are unhappy because they lack a family. They long for closeness. They desire somebody with whom they can share their lives. The loneliness of some of Bovell's characters has already been discussed in detail in the preceding chapter. Here only some reasons why the characters long for closeness with somebody else shall be mentioned and how they try to reach this closeness. The main reason for their desire for closeness with another person, of course, is their loneliness. The closeness they desire varies from character to character. Some of them look for friendship, while others for a love relationship and a family. Above all, they need somebody to talk to, somebody who helps them to cope with problems and who supports them in the struggles of everyday life.

To find such a person is not as easy as it may seem. Nina's single sister Sarah Moss in *Scenes from a Separation* clearly knows how hard it is to find a decent man and discusses with Nina what problems middle-aged women have to cope with:

SARAH: I could name about eight blokes who've left their wives for younger women. I'm thinking of keeping a blacklist on the fridge. [...] The thing is, what these morons don't realise is that women our age are so much better at sex.

NINA: I don't think that matters, does it? I think they want to be good at it themselves.

SARAH: You can't tell me that a bloke would rather be in bed with a frigid nineteen year old when he could be having fabulous sex-

NINA: With someone like you?

SARAH: Exactly.

NINA: But younger women are more eager to please.

SARAH: Excuse me, I'm very eager to please.

NINA: Yes, but you wouldn't sit there with Darcy Molyneaux telling him you thought that everything he said was hilarious and fascinating and every time he so much as looked at you, your flesh rippled with uncontrollable desire. (Bovell, SS 47)

The point they are making is that for emancipated women like them it is hard to find a man who is able to cope with their self-confident nature. But not all of Bovell's characters who long for a partner are as self-reliant as Sarah Moss. Actually most of them have a rather low self-esteem, which makes it hard for them to change their situation. Nevertheless, they try to get to know people by going out and arranging dates.

The characters who are in need of a friend are in this situation because of a significant change in their lives. They either got divorced (Gordon) or they lost their partner through death (Monika). Or as in the case of Stephen, he lost his best friend because of a change of workplace. Gordon and Monika's situation is quite similar. Since they have been in a long relationship in which nobody counted more than their partner, they started neglecting other relationships:

MONIKA: You know you two [Paula and Dympie] are the closest friends I have now. You tend to lose your friends, once your married, especially your girlfriends. Your friends become his friends. Not that Martin had any. He liked to keep to himself mostly. Anyway, I just wanted you to know how special you are to me. (Bovell, AD 11)

Stephen's case is a bit different. He lost his only single friend Brendon. He misses a drink after work with him. He does not get along well with his new colleagues:

STEPHEN: They're all married at Templestowe ... or joggers. [...] They all go straight home after work, to their wives and kids. [...] Then at lunch time they're all getting into their togs and going off for a jog. (Bovell AD 38-39)

What all characters have in common is their lack of companionship. They do not see any positive aspects in their independent lives. Bovell describes the dilemma of modern life: his characters either want to be free and independent when they are in a relationship, because they are unhappy in it, or they want to share their lives with somebody else because they are unhappy living alone. His characters seem to be rarely satisfied with their lives, neither when they are in a relationship nor when they are alone. Georgina in *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* is totally aware of the dilemma:

GEORGE: That's normal. It's a normal part of marriage, to lie in bed and dream about not being married.

LOIS: Well it seems like a bloody great waste of time to me, to spend half your life dreaming about what you're not doing.

GEORGE: But if you weren't married you'd be dreaming about being married, believe me. (Bovell, BLR 99)

Most of Bovell's characters seem to be responsible for their own unhappiness. In a way they create it themselves. Nevertheless, there are also characters whose unhappiness is caused by greater powers, characters who are desperate because they lost somebody they loved.

6.2.4 Tragic losses

Such tragic losses occur in nearly all of Bovell's plays. In the following the ways his characters try to cope with their losses shall be discussed.

In *After Dinner* Monika has to cope with the loss of her husband Martin, who died of a heart attack. She tries to overcome her sorrow by attending a grieving workshop, where she is able to express her feelings in poems she is writing (Bovell, AD 13). Monika desperately needs to talk about her loss. At several points in the play she believes that Martin is still with her. Thus, for example, she unconsciously introduces him to Gordon (Bovell, AD 42). She blames herself for recognizing too late that Martin had a heart attack:

MONIKA: Poor Martin. If only I was a little quicker. To have held him in my arms before he went. But how was I to know? How was I to know he was about to die. Men don't have strokes when they're thirty eight years old. It wasn't my fault. It wasn't my fault, was it? (Bovell, AD 27)

In the course of the play Monika turns to another means to lessen her sorrow: alcohol. Totally drunk, she tries to focus on the negative moments in her marriage with Martin in order to overcome her grief. She is determined to have fun and forget about Martin. Monika desperately tries to cope with her loss in different ways, namely by going to a grieving workshop, talking to her friends, drinking alcohol and starting to flirt with total strangers. Nevertheless, none of these means seem to lessen her sorrow.

In *Scenes from a Separation* Lawrence Clifford has to deal with the loss of his son, for which he is indirectly responsible. Mathew's hard words to Lawrence about the latter's "massive transformation from this greedy self obsessed bastard" to "this maverick philanthropist who declares economic rationalism dead and starts throwing his money at good causes like getting young people jobs and funding drug rehab" (Bovell, SS 25), as Mathew harshly sums up Lawrence's life, leads to the following conversation between the two:

LAWRENCE: My son didn't kill himself.

MATHEW: No?

LAWRENCE: He died because he didn't know the strength of the heroin he was using.

MATHEW: That's the shitty thing about smack. You can never know that for sure.

LAWRENCE: He was seventeen, Mathew. He had a heroin habit that he could support because he had wealthy parents who had no idea how he spent the money they so thoughtlessly showered upon him in the name of love. Or in the place of love. So, yes, everything I do is because I feel responsible for that. Is that what you call self interest? (Bovell, SS 26)

Lawrence honestly talks about his being guilty of his son's death. He tries to cope with the loss by changing himself into a better, socially committed person. He starts supporting good causes that may prevent things like death due to drug abuse from happening. In this way he tries to atone for the unnecessary death of his son.

In *Speaking in Tongues* we encounter loss as well. This time the loss is not caused by death but by Sarah's refusal to renew her relationship with Neil. His desperation is best expressed in his last letter to Sarah:

[...] I can't get the story out of my head, how this woman he loved just never came home. They never found the woman, Sarah. She just disappeared. They've arrested some guy, though, because his neighbour saw him throwing a woman's shoe into the woods on the night she disappeared. I can't get that story out of my head. This is my last letter. Goodbye, Sarah. Eternally yours. Neil Toohey. (Bovell, *ST* 74)

Neil cannot get John's story out of his head because he identifies with him. He is not able to live without the woman he loves. Since Sarah never replies to his letters, his ultimate consequence is to commit suicide. Neil is not able to cope with his loss and, therefore, drowns himself in the sea, as the text implies but never really confirms. John, on the other hand, who has to deal with the 'real' loss of his wife, seems to lack compassion for Valerie. For him her disappearance in a way ends his unhappy marriage and solves his problems (Bovell, *ST* 91-93).

In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* two mothers have to cope with the loss of their children. They do so in quite different ways. While Gina de Stanzo turns to God for help, Rhonda does not have anybody to support her in her sorrow. She recognizes her guilt:

And he says, the man in the suit, he says, 'They didn't suffer, the smoke, it would have...' *She holds up her hand as if to motion him to stop talking.* And I say, 'They suffered. You don't know how much.' And then someone says we can separate them for burial and I say no... You won't touch 'em. That's how they died. You leave 'em that way. They're my blessings and you're not to touch 'em. (Bovell, *Trash* 69)

Rhonda is left alone. The play does not suggest any way of how Rhonda might overcome her sorrow.

The same impossibility of dealing with loss in a positive way can be found in *Holy Day*. Cornelius is denied a future with his parents, since they are killed by Goundry, and Obedience is deprived of her real mother, her land and her people. In both cases their tragic losses are impaired by the cruelties exercised by Goundry, who mutilates and rapes both of them. They are not even able to support each other, since they are separated by Nora, who sends Cornelius away with Goundry, although she has promised to take care of him earlier in the play.

In *When the Rain Stops Falling*, Gabrielle is exposed to the most tragic losses. She loses every single person she loves: her brother Glen, her mother, her father and Gabriel. These losses are too much for her, she is not able to cope. She drives the two

men away that love her (Joe and her son Gabriel) and slowly loses her mind. But before she dies of a natural death, she decides to commit suicide like her parents:

GABRIELLE. No, love. I want you to let me go. (Beat.) There are pills in my bedside drawer.

JOE. No.

GABRIELLE. Help me do this.

JOE. I can't

GABRIELLE. I'm going anyway. A month. Two. Six at the most. And I'm gone. I won't know who you are. I won't know who Gabriel is. I won't even know who I am.

JOE. You're asking too much.

GABRIELLE. I always have. (Beat.) It's only life. And I've had a miserable one and I've had enough of it. This goes way back, Joe, way before you. It was your bad luck that you stopped the car but you did and that's your lot, but mine goes way back... to a little kid playing on the beach... and the bastard that took him. That's all. Not your fault. Not my fault. But I've had enough now, Joe. I have seen death every way and I'm not afraid of it. (Bovell, *WRSF* 68)

In the end Gabrielle symbolically unites herself with her dead lover by eating a soup that contains Gabriel's ashes. In this way she ends her life and joins Gabriel in eternity.

Apart from Gabrielle, of course, other characters in *When the Rain Stops Falling* are affected by loss as well. Gabriel Law is deprived of his father Henry and his mother Elizabeth does not show her love for him. Gabriel's own son never gets to know him because he dies in a car accident before he is born and Gabrielle commits suicide after neglecting her son for years. Furthermore, Elizabeth loses her husband and is deprived of her future, as she puts it.

As can be seen, loss is an omnipresent theme in Andrew Bovell's work. It takes on different forms. On the one hand the losses are caused by death, either self-inflicted or not. On the other hand they are caused by deprivation of love. The ways the characters cope with their losses also differ widely. They either try to overcome their sorrow or they drown in it, unable to return to a normal life.

Summing up, Bovell's description of the lives of his characters is a rather pessimistic one, which leads us to the conclusion that Bovell's worldview must also be a negative one. But Bovell's choice of dark themes could also be explained by the interest that arises when dealing with the hardships of modern life. After all, the themes he employs are fascinating and appeal to a global audience because of their universality.

7 Concluding remarks

At last the questions raised at the beginning of this thesis shall be reconsidered and finally answered. The first of these is concerned with Andrew Bovell's dramatic technique. Taking all of the plays discussed in this thesis into account, it can be noticed that Bovell repeatedly makes use of a dramatic technique consisting of unchronological structures, memories and flashbacks, shifts in space, simultaneous dialogues, repetitions and coincidences. Some of his plays, like for example *After Dinner*, are more conventional than others. But most of them are highly artfully constructed. The most outstanding of his plays in this respect are *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, *Distant Lights from Dark Places*, *Scenes from a Separation* and especially *Speaking in Tongues* and *When the Rain Stops Falling*. These are unconventional, since they deviate from the usual unity of time, place and action rule. Concerning the factor 'time', the often highly unchronological structure of the plays and the use of memories and flashbacks affect the audience's perception of the story. The different time layers used create suspense and curiosity. Through this device, the audience often is left in dark about the events until the very end, but sometimes, as in the case of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, the audience's insights into the events is greater than that of the characters. The characters are not aware of the fact that their past or the past of their parents affects their own present and future. The parallels between the characters are only apparent to the audience, who, for example, understand the trauma of the characters better through the close association between scenes years apart. Concerning the factor 'place', also *When the Rain Stops Falling* deviates from the other plays. Here the places in which the action takes place constantly shift between two continents: Australia and Europe. In all other plays the places are rather fixed. Bovell's plays partly can be located in Australia, but some do not really need an explicit localisation and, therefore, can be associated with any place around the world, which makes them very interesting for a global audience. Concerning the factor 'action', *Speaking in Tongues* and *When the Rain Stops Falling* are the most interesting of Bovell's plays. Simultaneous speaking and the multiple telling of one story highlight the parallels and contrasts between the characters. Often the characters are able to identify with each other because they have similar problems to cope with. Thus, for example, Leon identifies with Neil in *Speaking in Tongues* because he is as desperately longing for his wife, whom he thinks he has lost, as Neil longs for Sarah.

Coincidences and chance meetings also try to highlight these interrelations between the characters. Bovell already started to use these specific devices, which are actually narrative devices rather than dramatic ones, in the late 1980s. Since then his specific dramatic technique developed with each play. *When the Rain Stops Falling* can in a way be seen as a climax in the development of Bovell's specific dramatic technique.

The second question raised in the introductory chapter is concerned with genre. What has been found out in the course of the interpretation of Bovell's plays is that most of his plays cannot be assigned to one specific genre. Comic, tragic, satirical and pathetic elements are mixed in his plays. What can be noticed is that Bovell's political plays can be located much nearer to the tragic genre, while his non-political plays often deal with rather bleak, tragic situations but are nonetheless presented in a humorous way. Some of his plays are furthermore mysterious thriller-suspense plays, like *Speaking in Tongues*, or melodramas, like *When the Rain Stops Falling*. Concluding, one can say that there is not really one genre predominant in Bovell's writing. What can be noticed moreover is that Bovell's writing for the stage often seems to be influenced by his experiences of writing for the screen. *Speaking in Tongues*, for example, is rather cinematically constructed. Bovell maybe already had in mind to make it into a screenplay one day. The result was his award-winning movie *Lantana*.

Thirdly, the question was raised whether Andrew Bovell creates stereotypical characters or rather characters that stand out because of their individuality. What can be noticed in the analysis of Bovell's characters is that most of them are damaged in some way or another. Lonely, dissatisfied, disillusioned and utterly traumatized characters can be found. Although the characters are often quite similar to each other, they nevertheless stand out because of their individuality. Most of them are looking into their future pessimistically. Only a few characters can be found who are hopeful. Some of the lonely characters speak about their loneliness honestly, others only imply their loneliness in their words and actions, and a third group conceals its loneliness until a late point in the play. Most of these lonely characters can be found in *After Dinner* on the one hand, and *When the Rain Stops Falling* on the other hand. While the characters in the first play are lonely because they lack a family, the characters in the later play are lonely because they have a family that is utterly damaged. The most dissatisfied characters are to be found in *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, *Scenes from a Separation* and *Speaking in Tongues*.

They are either dissatisfied with their life in general, with their partner or with themselves. Sometimes all of these three factors are linked with each other. While loneliness and dissatisfaction seem to be a middle-class problem in Bovell's plays, disillusion mostly can be found in lower-class environments. Bovell's characters are disillusioned because of a lack of future prospects on the one hand, or because of society's neglect and cruelty on the other hand. In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* the majority of disillusioned characters appear. It is a play that tries to give a voice to the most neglected and socially marginalised part of society. Most of the characters in it are not working. They have resigned from social life and live along without any plans for their future. In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* Bovell also describes a couple of traumatized characters. Orton and Stacey have been physically and sexually abused. They only have themselves. Other traumatized characters can be found in *Holy Day*, *Speaking in Tongues* and *When the Rain Stops Falling*. They are either traumatized because of sexual abuse or because of tragic losses they have to cope with. In some cases the characters suffer from both of these traumata, as in the case of Obedience and Cornelius in *Holy Day*. All traumatized characters refuse to confide in another person. They live with their trauma by themselves. The few hopeful characters in Bovell's plays are optimistic because of their trust in somebody else or in themselves. Optimistic characters in Bovell's plays are rare, as are happy couples: only one can be found, namely Nick and Paula in *Speaking in Tongues*. The world Bovell depicts in his plays is a bleak, dark one. His characters are damaged, unhappy and pessimistic. This furthermore can be seen when looking at the themes Bovell employs in his plays.

Which leads us to the last question of whether specific recurring themes can be found in Bovell's plays, which can only be affirmed. Bovell's most recurring themes are love, betrayal, guilt, abandonment and loss. Guilt, especially social guilt towards a marginalised part of society, can be found in *Holy Day* and *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* *Holy Day* is concerned with the reconsideration of Australia's colonial past. Bovell wants to stop the silencing of the atrocities exercised against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia. Unconsciously however, he continues to avoid giving a voice to the indigenous Australians. In *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* he is more successful. Here the socially most oppressed part of society is given a voice and the injustices exercised by the Kennett government are exposed. In Bovell's less political plays unhappy marriages and relationships, disturbed parent-child-relationships, longing for closeness

and tragic loss are the most recurring themes. All marriages and relationships Bovell describes have to cope with certain hardships. Most couples are dissatisfied within their relationships. Their dissatisfaction is often expressed in committing adultery, which mostly leads to a separation of the couple. Love and betrayal are omnipresent in all of Bovell's plays, but especially in *Scenes of a Separation* and *Speaking in Tongues*. Abandonment often stands in connection with a disturbed relationship between children and their parents. The parents mostly deny their children love and drive them away from them. In this way they make themselves guilty and deny their children a happy future. The most obvious examples of child abandonment are given in *When the Rain Stops Falling*. The plays that are not concerned with dissatisfactory relationships or disturbed parent-child-relationships mostly deal with loneliness and the longing for closeness. This theme is above all present in *After Dinner*. The loneliness is either self-inflicted or caused by greater powers. Thus tragic losses can cause loneliness, which leads us to the last important theme in Bovell's plays. The characters who have to cope with tragic losses either try to overcome their sorrow or they drown in it. Losses are omnipresent in nearly all of Bovell's plays. The most tragic ones are to be found in *Holy Day* and *When the Rain Stops Falling*.

Concluding, it is impossible to overlook the fact that all of the themes Bovell employs are bleak, sometimes even threatening. But maybe this fact is responsible for Bovell's success. His plays are fascinating. They create suspense and curiosity. They do not leave us alone. They make us think. The dramatic technique Bovell uses intensifies our feelings. The parallels between the characters, which make them identify with each other, in a way, make us identify, or at least empathise with them as well. The themes appeal to us because of their universality, although they are dark ones. Things like these may happen to all of us. They are not far-fetched. With his plays Andrew Bovell succeeds to reach a huge global audience, which will be haunted by his characters as Gabrielle York is haunted by the ghosts of her beloved ones.

8 Bibliography

8.1 Primary Sources

Bovell, Andrew. *After Dinner*. Rev. ed. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 1997. (quoted as Bovell, AD)

-----, "Distant Lights from Dark Places. A Short Play for Four Actors." *Meanjin Quarterly* 57.1 (1998): 184-197. (quoted as Bovell, DL)

-----, *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*. Rev. ed. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 2004. (quoted as Bovell, HD)

-----, "Jane." *Confidentially Yours*. Ed. Deidre Rubenstein. Current Theatre Series. Sydney: Currency and Playbox Theatre, 1998. 20-27. (quoted as Bovell, J)

-----, "Paula." *Confidentially Yours*. Ed. Deidre Rubenstein. Current Theatre Series. Sydney: Currency and Playbox Theatre, 1998. 28-35. (quoted as Bovell, P)

-----, and Hannie Rayson. *Scenes from a Separation*. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 1996. (quoted as Bovell, SS)

-----, *Speaking in Tongues*. British ed. London: Nick Hern, 2009. (quoted as Bovell, ST)

-----, "The Ballad of Louis Ryan." *Australasian Drama Studies* 17 (1990): 90-116. (quoted as Bovell BLR)

-----, *When the Rain Stops Falling*. British ed. London: Nick Hern, 2009. (quoted as Bovell, WRSF)

-----, Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas and Irine Vela. "Who's Afraid of the Working Class?" *Melbourne Stories: Three Plays*. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 2000. (quoted as Bovell, *Trash*; Cornelius, *Money*; Reeves, *Dream-Town*; Tsiolkas, *Suit*)

8.2 Secondary Sources

Akerholt, May-Brit. "New Stages: Contemporary Theatre." *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. Ed. Elizabeth Webby. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 209-231.

Bovell, Andrew. Author's Note. *After Dinner*. By Bovell. Rev. ed. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 1997. vii-ix.

- , Introduction. *Speaking in Tongues*. By Bovell. British ed. London: Nick Hern, 2009. 5.
- , Writer's Note. *Lantana*. By Bovell. Currency Screenplays. Sydney: Currency, 2001. 7-11.
- Brisbane, Katharine. "Australian Drama." *The Literature of Australia*. Ed. Geoffrey Dutton. Rev. ed. London: Penguin, 1976. 248- 289.
- , "Theatre from 1950." *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*. Ed. Peter Pierce. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 391-418.
- Carroll, Dennis. *Australian Contemporary Drama 1909-1982: A Critical Introduction*. Series IV English Language and Literature 25. New York: Peter Lang, 1985.
- Connor, Michael. "The Follies Bizarre: Australia's Political Theatre." *Quadrant* 52.3 (2008): 22-28.
- D'Cruz, Glenn. "'Class' and Political Theatre: the Case of Melbourne Workers Theatre." *NTQ* 21.3 (2005): 207-217.
- Fitzpatrick, Peter. *After 'The Doll': Australian Drama since 1955*. Studies in Australian Culture. London: Edward Arnold, 1979.
- , "Australian Drama: 1850-1950." *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*. Ed. Peter Pierce. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 180-198.
- Fotheringham, Richard. "Theatre from 1788 to the 1960s." *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. Ed. Elizabeth Webby. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 134-157.
- Gilbert, Helen. *Sightlines: Race, Gender, and Nation in Contemporary Australian Theatre*. Ann Arbor: Mich. UP, 1998.
- Goodwin, Ken. *A History of Australian Literature*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988. 193-208.
- Green, H. M. "The Drama Today." *A History of Australian Literature: Pure and Applied*. Ed. Green. North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1985. 1263-1278.
- Grehan, Helena. *Mapping Cultural Identity in Contemporary Australian Performance*. Dramaturgies 2. Bruxelles: PIE Lang, 2001.
- Lyssa, Alison. "Performing Australia's Black and White History: Acts of Danger in Four Australian Plays of the Early 21st Century." Master thesis, Macquarie University, 2006.
- , "Black and White: Australia's History Onstage in Four Plays of the New Millennium." *Australasian Drama Studies* 48 (Apr. 2006): 203-237.

- Makeham, Paul B. "Bovell, Andrew John." *Contemporary Dramatists*. 6th ed. Detroit: St. James, 1999.
- Matheson, Peter. *The Process. Scenes from a Separation*. By Andrew Bovell and Hannie Rayson. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 1996. vii-xvi.
- Maufort, Marc, and Franca Bellarsi (eds.). *Siting the Other: Re-visions of Marginality in Australian and English-Canadian Drama*. Dramaturgies 1. Bruxelles: PIE Lang, 2001.
- Meyrick, Julian. Introduction. *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* By Andrew Bovell, Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas and Irine Vela. Currency Plays series. Sydney: Currency, 2000. 3-6.
- Milne, Geoffrey. *Theatre Australia (Un)limited: Australian Theatre since the 1950s*. Australian Playwrights 10. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004.
- Pulford, Donald. "The History Wars and Holy Day (The Red Sea): Andrew Bovell's dramatic black armband." *Antipodes* 20:2 (Dec. 2006): 150-154.
- , "Staging Past and Present Simultaneously: Andrew Bovell's Holy Day (The Red Sea)." *Mapping Uncertain Territories: Space and Place in Contemporary Theatre and Drama: Papers Given on the Occasion of the 14th annual Conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English*. Ed. Thomas Rommel. Contemporary Drama in English 13. Trier: WVT, 2006. 143-148.
- Rees, Leslie. *A History of Australian Drama: Vol. 1 The Making of Australian Drama from the 1830s to the late 1960s*. Rev. Ed. London: Angus & Robertson, 1978.
- , *A History of Australian Drama: Vol. 2 Australian Drama in the 1970s: A Historical and Critical Survey*. London: Angus & Robertson, 1978.
- Ross, Robert L. "Drama." *Australian Literary Criticism 1945-1988: An Annotated Bibliography*. Ed. Ross. New York: Garland, 1989. 135-153.
- Schafer, Elizabeth, and Susan Bradley Smith (eds.). *Playing Australia: Australian Theatre and the International Stage*. Australian Playwrights 9. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003.
- Sturm, Terry. "Drama." *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*. Ed. Leonie Kramer. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1981. 173-267.
- Watt, David. "The Ballad of Lois Ryan by Andrew Bovell. Introduction". *Australasian Drama Studies* 17 (1990): 86-89.

Electronic publications

AusStage: Gateway to the Australian Performing Arts. 16 June 2011
<http://www.ausstage.edu.au/default.jsp?xcid=27>.

AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource 2002-. 16 February 2011
<http://www.austlit.edu.au/>.

Beechey, Bronwen. "When the class is no longer working." Rev. of Who's Afraid of the Working Class?, by Andrew Bovell. *Green Left* 13 May 1998. 29 April 2011
<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/17741>.

Billington, Michael. Rev. of Scenes from a Separation, by Andrew Bovell. *Guardian* 20 June 2005. 29 April 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2005/jun/20/theatre1>.

-----, Rev. of When the Rain Stops Falling, by Andrew Bovell. *Guardian* 22 May 2009. 29 April 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/may/22/theatre-review-when-the-rain-stops-falling>.

-----, Rev. of Speaking in Tongues, by Andrew Bovell. *Guardian* 29 Sep. 2009. 24 April 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/sep/29/speaking-in-tongues-theatre-review>.

Bramwell, Murray. Rev. of Speaking in Tongues, by Andrew Bovell. *Adelaide Review* Oct. 1998. 29 April 2011
<http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2328/158/1/CrimesAROct98.pdf>.

-----, Rev. of Holy Day (Red Sea), by Andrew Bovell. *Australian* 24 Aug. 2001. 29 April 2011
<http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2328/259/1/HolyDayAust21Aug01v2.pdf>

Coveney, Michael. Rev. of When the Rain Stops Falling, by Andrew Bovell. *Watson-stage.com* 22 May 2009. 24 April 2011
<http://www.whatsonstage.com/reviews/theatre/london/E8831242988856/When+the+Rain+Stops+Falling.html>.

Daly-Peoples, John. Rev. of When the Rain Stops Falling, by Andrew Bovell. *National Business Review* 10 June 2010. 29 April 2011 <http://www.nbr.co.nz/article/review-when-the-rain-stops-falling-124371>.

Edge, Simon. Rev. of When the Rain Stops Falling, by Andrew Bovell. *Express* 22 May 2009. 29 April 2011 <http://www.express.co.uk/features/view/102709When-The-Rain-Stops-Falling-Almeida-Theatre>.

Hemming, Sarah. Rev. of When the Rain Stops Falling, by Andrew Bovell. *Financial Times* 26 May 2009. 29 April 2011 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/24ea7050-4a56-11de-8e7e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1LqUs6Dq0>.

Howard, James. Rev. of *After Dinner*, by Andrew Bovell. *Broadwayworld.com* 26 Apr. 2006. 29 April 2011
http://baltimore.broadwayworld.com/article/REVIEW_AFTER_DINNER_Dessert_with_a_Side_of_Indigestion_20060426.

Isherwood, Charles. "Fish soup and bad weather, across the decades." Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *New York Times* 9 March 2010. 29 April 2011
<http://theater.nytimes.com/2010/03/09/theater/reviews/09when.html>.

Kellaway, Kate. Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *Observer* 31 May 2009. 8 April 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/may/31/theatre-review>.

Marmion, Patrick. "A fine ensemble production that leaves you lost in thought." Rev. of *Speaking in Tongues*, by Andrew Bovell. *Daily Mail* 2 Oct. 2009. 24 April 2011
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/reviews/article-1217517/Speaking-In-Tongues-review-A-fine-ensemble-production-leaves-lost-thought.html>.

McAllister, Janet. Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *New Zealand Herald* 7 June 2010. 29 April 2011
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10650175.

Nightingale, Benedict. Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *Times* 25 May 2009. 29 April 2011
http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/theatre/article6354543.ece.

Peter, John. Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *Sunday Times* 31 May 2009. 29 April 2011
http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/theatre/article6372866.ece.

Shuttleworth, Ian. Rev. of *Speaking in Tongues*, by Andrew Bovell. *Financial Times* 8 June 2000. 29 April 2011 <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~shutters/reviews/00047.htm>.

Sloley, Emma. "Reverberations". *Australian* 22 January 2011. 9 May 2011
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/arts/reverberations/story-e6frg8n6-1225991122397>.

Spencer, Charles. Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *Telegraph* 26 May 2009. 29 April 2011
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/charlesspencer/5386565/When-the-Rain-Stops-Falling-at-the-Almeida-Theatre-review.html>.

-----, Rev. of *Speaking in Tongues*, by Andrew Bovell. *Telegraph* 29 Sep. 2009. 29 April 2011 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/6243346/Speaking-in-Tongues-at-Duke-of-Yorks-Theatre-review.html>.

St Clair, Jeanti. "Stage left! – Workers theatre hits the mark." Rev. of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*, by Andrew Bovell. *Workers Online* 20 Aug. 1999. 29 April 2011 http://workers.labor.net.au/27/d_review_play.html.

Szalwinska, Maxie. Rev. of *Speaking in Tongues*, by Andrew Bovell. *Independent* 1 Oct. 2009. 29 April 2011 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/speaking-in-tongues-duke-of-yorks-theatre-london-1795617.html>.

Thaxter, John. Rev. of *Scenes from a Separation*, by Andrew Bovell. *British Theatre Guide* June 2005. 29 April 2011 <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/scenessep-rev.htm>.

Tucker, Kaye. Rev. of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*, by Andrew Bovell. *World Socialist Web Site* 1 Oct. 1999. 29 April 2011 <http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/oct1999/mwt-o01.shtml>.

Weber, Bruce. "With smoke and mirrors, love of sorts." Rev. of *Speaking in Tongues*, by Andrew Bovell. *New York Times* 16 Nov. 2001. 29 April 2011 <http://theater.nytimes.com/mem/theater/treview.html?res=980ce1da173bf935a25752c1a9679c8b63>.

Zoglin, Richard. "The best new play of the year." Rev. of *When the Rain Stops Falling*, by Andrew Bovell. *Time* 18 Mar. 2010. 29 April 2011 <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1973108,00.html>.

Index

A

After Dinner, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 21, 33, 37, 47, 48, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 84, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98, 100
 characters, 3, 5, 8, 18, 33, 37, 44, 45, 48, 49, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 72, 84, 85, 87, 92, 93, 94, 99
 Akerholt, May-Brit, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
 Australian drama, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21
 Australian Council for the Arts, 16
 Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, 15
 Australian Performing Group, 16, 17, 18
 Balodis, Janis, 8, 19, 20
 Beynon, Richard, 16
 Buzo, Alexander, 16, 17
 Cornelius, Patricia, 8, 20, 65, 72
 Enright, Nick, 3, 8, 18, 19
 Gilbert, Kevin, 19
 Groen, Alma de, 18
 Hewett, Dorothy, 17
 Hibberd, Jack, 16
 Jane Street Theatre, 16
 Keene, Daniel, 3, 8, 18, 19
 Kenna, Peter, 16, 18
 La Mama Theatre, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18
 Lawler, Ray, 15
 Melbourne Workers Theatre, 2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 19, 20, 35, 37, 41, 50
 Murray-Smith, Joanna, 3, 8, 20
 Nimrod Street Theatre, 18
 Nowra, Louis, 1, 18
 Oswald, Debra, 8, 20
 Rayson, Hannie, 3, 6, 20
 Reeves, Melissa, 8, 65, 72
 Romeril, John, 16, 17, 20
 Rubenstein, Deidre, 3, 8, 19, 20
 Sewell, Stephen, 18
 Seymour, Alan, 16
 Tsiolkas, Christos, 13, 36, 65, 72
 White, Patrick, 16
 Williamson, David, 1, 16, 17

B

Brisbane, Katharine, 5, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

C

characters
 dissatisfied characters, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 72, 75, 77, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 97, 98
 dissillusioned characters, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 18, 19, 25, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 45, 49, 51, 52, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 90, 95, 97, 99
 hopeful characters, 3, 5, 8, 33, 36, 37, 44, 45, 48, 49, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 61, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78, 81, 83, 87, 92, 95, 99
 lonely characters, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 16, 18, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 72, 75, 78, 79, 80, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98
 traumatized characters, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 78, 79, 81, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100
 Connor, Michael, 13

D

Distant Lights from Dark Places, 2, 6, 7, 22, 24, 31, 33, 37, 39, 45, 49, 97
 characters, 3, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 31, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 49, 54, 55, 60, 61, 62, 63,

64, 67, 69, 70, 75, 82, 83, 86, 87, 92, 94, 95,
97, 99

dramatic technique

coincidences and chance meetings, 7, 13, 22, 24,
38, 45, 46, 97
defined and undefined space, 34
memories and flashbacks, 8, 10, 13, 20, 22, 29,
30, 31, 32, 33, 46, 87, 97
repetition, 22, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 56,
97
shifts in space, 97
shifts in time, 8, 10, 13, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31,
46, 97
simultaneity, 6, 22, 25, 38, 39, 40, 41, 46, 86, 97

F

Fitzpatrick, Peter, 15
Fotheringham, Richard, 15

G

genre, 1, 47, 49, 51, 52, 98

H

Holy Day (The Red Sea), 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 33,
35, 47, 50, 52, 58, 59, 63, 67, 68, 70, 74, 75, 77,
78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 95, 99
characters, 9, 10, 12, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34,
35, 37, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 51, 52, 54, 55, 58,
59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74,
75, 78, 79, 80, 81, 86, 87, 88, 91, 95, 96, 99

J

Jane, 3, 7, 8, 16, 31, 33, 37, 39, 41, 44, 45, 49, 54,
57, 60, 62, 63, 64, 72, 84, 85, 86

L

Lyssa, Alison, 11, 51, 52, 58, 63, 68, 69, 71, 78, 79,
80

M

Makeham, Paul, 1, 2, 13, 21, 49

Matheson, Peter, 6
Meyrick, Julian, 8, 9, 84

P

parallels and contrasts, 2, 26, 40, 46, 56, 97, 100
Paula, 3, 5, 8, 33, 37, 44, 45, 48, 49, 54, 56, 57, 58,
61, 72, 87, 92, 99
Pulford, Donald, 12, 77, 80

S

Scenes from a Separation, 3, 6, 22, 23, 30, 33, 37, 44,
48, 49, 53, 60, 63, 85, 86, 92, 94, 97, 98
characters, 6, 23, 30, 37, 44, 48, 49, 53, 60, 63,
85, 92, 94

screenplays

Blessed, 3, 4
Dogwoman, 4
Edge of Darkness, 4
Head On, 3
Lantana, 2, 4, 6, 8, 49, 98
Lust, 3
Piccolo Mondo, 3
Strictly Ballroom, 3
The Book of Revelation, 4
The Riders, 4

Sloley, Emma, 4, 77

Speaking in Tongues, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 21, 22, 24,
25, 31, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 49, 54,
55, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 69, 70, 75, 77, 82, 83, 85,
86, 87, 94, 95, 97, 98, 100
characters, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23,
24, 25, 31, 33, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 49,
54, 55, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70,
72, 75, 77, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 92, 94, 95,
97, 99

Sturm, Terry, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

T

The Ballad of Lois Ryan, 2, 3, 5, 17, 20, 22, 23, 29,
33, 35, 41, 47, 50, 55, 91, 93, 97, 98
characters, 5, 20, 23, 29, 35, 41, 50, 54, 55, 60,
62, 63, 85, 91, 93

themes, 1, 16, 17, 45, 52, 54, 76, 77, 81, 84, 96, 99, 100

disturbed parent-child-relationships, 27, 77, 81, 84, 89, 90, 91, 99

longing for closeness, 5, 20, 21, 47, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 64, 65, 71, 72, 77, 83, 84, 91, 98, 99

reconsideration of Australia's colonial past, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 34, 35, 47, 51, 58, 63, 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 99

tragic loss, 20, 21, 47, 69, 71, 74, 76, 77, 81, 84, 86, 89, 93, 94, 95, 96, 99

unemployment and economic difficulties, 38, 61, 67, 73, 75, 77, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87

unhappy relationships, 77, 87, 99

U

unpublished plays

Shades of Blue, 3

Ship of Fools, 2

State of Defence, 2

W

Watt, Thomas, 5, 20, 50

When the Rain Stops Falling, 1, 3, 10, 21, 22, 26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49, 55, 56, 59, 60, 64, 71, 72, 86, 87, 88, 89, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100

characters, 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 63, 64, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 77, 78, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100

Who is Afraid of the Working Class?

Dream-Town, 7, 8, 25, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 45, 49, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 73, 74, 81, 83, 86, 87, 97

Money, 3, 8, 18, 19, 37, 60, 61, 65, 66, 73, 81, 83, 86, 90

Suit, 8, 13, 36, 37, 65, 66, 73, 74, 81, 82, 83, 90, 95

Trash, 3, 8, 9, 36, 37, 53, 65, 67, 70, 72, 82, 86, 90, 95, 99

Appendix

Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit den bis dato publizierten Werken des australischen Gegenwartsdramatikers Andrew Bovell. Sein Oeuvre umfasst insgesamt sechzehn Theaterstücke und zwölf Drehbücher für diverse Film- und Fernsehproduktionen. Der Fokus der vorliegenden Arbeit liegt auf den zehn zwischen 1988 und 2008 uraufgeführten Theaterstücken Bovells: *After Dinner* (1988), *The Ballad of Lois Ryan* (1988), *Distant Lights from Dark Places* (1994), *Scenes from a Separation* (1995), *Speaking in Tongues* (1996), *Jane* (1998), *Paula* (1998), *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* (1998), *Holy Day* (2001) und *When the Rain Stops Falling* (2008). Diese zehn Werke werden in Hinsicht auf formale und inhaltliche Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede analysiert und verglichen. Das erste Kapitel dient zunächst als allgemeine Einführung zu Bovells literarischem Schaffen. Hier werden allgemeine Informationen zu Bovells Leben und seiner Karriere als Dramatiker gegeben und der Forschungsstand zu seinen Werken erläutert. Im folgenden Kapitel wird kurz auf die Theatersituation in Australien seit 1950 eingegangen, um Bovells Oeuvre im literarischen Kontext seines Heimatlandes herauszuarbeiten. Die folgenden vier Kapitel versuchen Bovells Texte hinsichtlich der verwendeten formalen Techniken, des verwendeten Genres, der dargestellten Charaktere und der verwendeten Themen zu vergleichen und in Bezug zu setzen. Die Analyse der zehn Theaterstücke hat ergeben, dass Bovells Texte mehrheitlich ähnliche Strukturen und Themenkomplexe aufweisen. Bezüglich der verwendeten formalen Techniken fällt auf, dass Bovells Theaterstücke äußerst kunstvoll gestaltet sind. Oft weichen sie von der aristotelischen Einheit von Ort, Zeit und Handlung ab. Sie weisen oft komplizierte zeitliche Strukturen auf, so sind sie zum Beispiel oft unchronologisch strukturiert und bedienen sich narrativer Techniken wie beispielsweise der Analepse (flashbacks). Außerdem werden unterschiedliche Handlungen oft simultan an unterschiedlichen Orten präsentiert. Dieses simultane, sich oft auch wiederholende Sprechen hebt die Parallelen und Gegensätze der Charaktere gut hervor, wobei die Parallelen eindeutig überwiegen. Zufällige Begegnungen der Charaktere verstärken den Effekt der gefühlsmäßigen Verflechtung noch zusätzlich.

Bezüglich des verwendeten Genres hat die Analyse der Theaterstücke ergeben, dass Bovell meistens mehrere Genreelemente vermischt und kein bestimmtes Genre in seinen Texten vorherrschend ist. Meistens können sowohl komische als auch tragische Elemente in ein und demselben Text gefunden werden. Außerdem lassen sie oft Bovells Arbeit als Drehbuchautor erahnen, da sie oft von filmischen Effekten beeinflusst scheinen. Bezüglich der dargestellten Charaktere in Bovells Stücken fällt das Fehlen von Hauptfiguren ins Auge. Seine Charaktere sind für die Handlung durchwegs gleich bedeutend. Sie sind mehrheitlich pessimistische Charaktere: einsam, unzufrieden, desillusioniert oder traumatisiert. Diese Gleichstellung aller Charaktere hebt abermals ihre Parallelen hervor. Die Welt, in der sie handeln, ist eine düstere Welt. Bovells dargestellte Welt lässt wenig Hoffnung und Optimismus zu. Hoffnungsvolle Charaktere stellen lediglich die Ausnahme dar. Die wiederkehrenden Themen und Motive in Bovells Texten bestätigen diese düstere, pessimistische Weltsicht. Liebe, Verrat, Schuld, Verlassenwerden und Verlust sind allgegenwärtig in Bovells Stücken. Bovell beschäftigt sich einerseits mit politischen Themen wie beispielsweise der Aufarbeitung von Australiens kolonialer Vergangenheit und dem Versuch der Wiedergutmachung der begangenen Verbrechen an den australischen Ureinwohnern, sowie der Aufzeigung von sozialen Ungerechtigkeiten wie dem Vergessen von sozial benachteiligten Randgruppen. Andererseits beschäftigen sich viele von Bovells Theaterstücken mit sehr privaten Themen, wie zum Beispiel mit unglücklichen Beziehungen und Ehen, gestörten Verhältnissen zwischen Eltern und ihren Kindern, Einsamkeit, Verlangen nach Nähe und tragischen Verlusten geliebter Menschen. Alles in allem fällt auf, dass Bovells Theaterstücke zwar düster und zum Teil bedrohlich wirken. Doch gerade diese Trostlosigkeit scheint das Publikum anzuziehen. Bovells Charaktere sind eindringlich und seine Themen durchaus universal und in dieser Weise sprechen sie ein breites Publikum an.

Curriculum Vitae

Angaben zur Person

Name	Elisabeth Bergauer
Adresse	Stockerauer Straße 31 3464 Hausleiten
Email	E.Bergauer@gmx.at
Staatsangehörigkeit	Österreich
Geburtsdatum	18. Jänner 1985

Ausbildung

seit 03/2006	Studium Anglistik und Amerikanistik an der Universität Wien
10/2004-03/2011	Studium Deutsche Philologie an der Universität Wien (Mag.phil.)
09/2008-01/2009	University of Aberdeen Auslandssemester im Rahmen des Erasmus-Programms
1999-2004	Handelsakademie Tulln
1995-1999	Hauptschule Stockerau und Hausleiten
1991-1995	Volksschule Leitzersdorf und Niederfellabrunn

Berufserfahrung

seit 05/2010	Mitarbeiterin in der Entlehnung der Universitätsbibliothek Wien, 1010 Wien
05/2009-05/2010	Administrative Mitarbeiterin in der Waris Dirie Foundation, 1030 Wien