

**Towards the Family's Salvation:
Examining the Displacement of the (F)ather in Selected Religious
Family Dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg Resulting in the Creation
of a New Text**

By

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

During the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, inciting debate surrounding the validity of the Christian creation narrative. Prior to this, the Adam and Eve creation narrative was the central narrative around which Christian families modelled their own family structures – with the father as the head of the household. In this thesis I discuss the effect that Darwin’s publication had on the restructuring of families in the nineteenth century. I do this through analysis of Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts* and August Strindberg’s *Easter*, two domestic dramas that chronicle the effect of a society redesigning their religious philosophies owing to the toppling of the patriarchal structures of authority. I argue that Ibsen and Strindberg stand in polar relation to one another in terms of the debate surrounding the religiosity of the family and the position of the (F)ather within this framework (borrowing from Ross Shideler’s term conflating the notion of the divine Father and the earthly father). Relating the debate to the contemporary Afrikaner culture, the research aims to create a family drama (...*van ons vaders*) that addresses the decline of Afrikaner Calvinistic religious constructs in a similar manner to that of Ibsen and Strindberg, but in through a contemporary aesthetic approach.

Opsomming

Gedurende die negentiende eeu is debat ontlok rondom die geldigheid van die Christelike skeppingsverhaal wanweë die publikasie van Charles Darwin se *The Origin of Species*. Voor dit, is die Adam-en-Eva verhaal die sentrale narratief waarvolgens Christelike families hulself gestruktureer het – met die vader as die hoof van die huishouding. In hierdie tesis bespreek ek die effek wat Darwin se publikasie gehad het op die herstrukturering van families gedurende die negentiende eeu. Ek doen dit aan die hand van Henrik Ibsen se *Ghosts* en August Strindberg se *Easter* – twee familiedramas wat sentraal in die debat staan rondom die herontwerp van geloofsfilosofieë en omvorming van patriargale gesagstrukture. Ek argumenteer dat Ibsen en Strindberg in polêre verhouding met mekaar staan in terme van die debat rondom die godsdienstigheid van die familie en die posisie van die (V)ader binne hierdie raamwerk. Hier leen ek Ross Shideler se term wat die idee van die goddelike Vader en die aardse vader saamsmelt. Dit word later in verband gebring met die kontemporêre Afrikaner kultuur om ten einde ‘n nuwe familiedrama (...*van ons vaders*) te skep, wat fokus op die hedendaagse hervorming van Afrikaner Calvinistiese geloofstrukture, in ‘n wyse soortgelyk aan dié van Ibsen en Strindberg, maar deur om gebruik te maak van ‘n kontemporêre estetiese benadering.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of Study

1.1.1. A Brief Personal Introduction

Born in 1990, I grew up in a post-Apartheid South Africa wherein I was probably too young to fully comprehend the meaning and the tangible effects of a government that forced political power not only upon the non-white majority, but also on women, homosexuals and various other minority groups that were not classified as heterosexual white males. I was not raised by my biological parents and was sent, rather, to be raised by my grandparents whom, by then aged in their sixties, were still clinging to an era that had, since then, already passed. They were strict, moralistic, and, moreover, piously religious.

We attended the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church – however, usually abbreviated to *NG Kerk*, or in English – NG Church) every Sunday – the church that Oliver (2010:1) describes as representing the “conservative Reformed Christian faith of the Afrikaner.”

From my own perspective, then, living in Durbanville, attending the church where grim-looking, white males were presiding sanctimoniously over their flock, I was to some extent unaware of life outside the white walls of the church. Within this structure, the pastor led a weekly prayer on Sundays to protect the church and the Afrikaner people from the dangerous external influences (usually described as Satan) that were plaguing the rest of the country, however I was only later to discover that the Satan he was referring to was not the personified devil of the Bible, but, rather, represented a symbolic threat to the church and the patriarchal, Calvinistic structures that they desperately attempted to keep locked in place. Speaking of the influence of the NG Kerk in pre-1994 South Africa, Oliver (2010:1) asserts that

the church had great power and a huge influence on people. Religious institutions were vital and represented a powerful media of communication, having access to an impressive audience and exercising a certain traditional authority.

After 1994, however, Oliver (2010:1) believes that the “Reformed, Calvinistic faith [of the Afrikaner] lost their influence on society.” On a social level, they seemed to be experiencing what Ross Shideler (1997:277) refers to as a “crisis of authority.” The white male Afrikaner was losing his stronghold on the empire and on the people, and, more specifically, on the family itself. Of course, Shideler was referring to the crisis of authority that the collective

patriarchy was experiencing in the nineteenth-century amidst the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of the Species*, however the similarities appear to be plain – both structures were threatened by new theories that questioned the doctrine of the faith.

During my studies in 2012, I encountered two nineteenth-century writers, Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, who were constantly problematizing the structures of the Calvinistic patriarchy in two European countries – Sweden and Norway, which, in turn, form part of the larger structure of Scandinavia. Even though the concept of the patriarch (as metaphor) has gained political and sociological significance within a wider framework, one cannot forget that it originates within the construct of the nuclear family unit.

These two writers, Ibsen and Strindberg - by using the medium of family drama to re-examine the family unit's relationship to the patriarch, seemed to me to be addressing “religious concerns that are still prevalent in contemporary Afrikaner culture” (Oliver 2010:1). What makes the Afrikaner unique is that the “Afrikaners are the only people that were *born* a Calvinistic nation” (Oliver 2010:3), so the construct of the nuclear family and the notion of religious belief is even more intricately interwoven. The two specific plays that explicitly address the religious patriarchal system in the nineteenth century are *Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen and *Easter* by August Strindberg as they were concerned with addressing “a culture in crisis” owing to a sudden decline in religious beliefs – Shideler (1997 and 1999) extensively examines the role of Darwinism and the publication of *The Origin of Species* in this decline of supernatural faith.

Similarly, in South Africa today, the percentage of Afrikaners that consider themselves religious “dropped from 83% in 2005 to 64% in 2012” (News24 2012). This, coupled with my own non-belief prompted me to query the relationship between the contemporary Afrikaner to the patriarchal notions of the family and its intimately tied connection to religious doctrine. If the Afrikaners were losing their faith, does it also, as per the publication of Darwin, signify a ‘culture in crisis?’ If Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg were attempting to address a socio-religious concern, how would a contemporary practitioner today accomplish a similar goal of problematizing a religious crisis amidst social structures that appear similar to those of nineteenth-century Scandinavia?

1.2. Review of Current Literature

The research question that I wish to answer can be stated in the following way:

With reference to Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* and August Strindberg's *Easter* – two plays that were addressing the decline of religious doctrine and its associated patriarchal notions in nineteenth-century Scandinavia amidst the publication of *The Origin of Species* – how can a contemporary Afrikaans practitioner address similar concerns within the contemporary Afrikaans culture?

There are, therefore, four parts to this question. The first addresses the Sociological field of family theory. An analysis of the nuclear family, therefore, is needed in order to later fully explicate the structures that Ibsen and Strindberg were utilizing in order to convey their respective agendas. Specifically in this study, as I am linking the structure of family theory to that of religion, an analysis of the patriarchal structures of the traditional Judeo-Christian family must be done. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, in *Religion, Feminism and the Family*, provides an excellent groundwork for this analysis as she discusses the Hebrew family as it serves as a metaphorical device in the Bible. Further investigation, however, is needed between the Christian family as model and the deconstruction of the model Christian family in the nineteenth century, therefore forming the second phase of my research question.

The family, according to Christian literature, stands central to the embodiment of the faith and, in fact, according to Anderson and Guernsey (1985:13) the “bourgeois family or the middle-class family with its structure of clearly defined roles for mother, father, and child, is not a dispensable structure, but, rather, continues to be the best alternative, all things considered.”

Mitterauer and Sieder (1982:131) add that

[i]n the nineteenth century public interest in the family increased, as is clear from contemporary political discussion. The population at large, the state and even industrial enterprises were often characterized metaphorically by the expression ‘family.’ The family, it was always claimed, was the foundation of society – of bourgeois society.

Anderson and Guernsey (1985:3) believe that there is “very little competent literature in the field of the theology of the family,” meaning that further study into the link between the family and the religious impact on the family, must be done – a task that, to a limited extent, this thesis will attempt to undertake.

The publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, according to Shideler (1999:4), began the process of “undermining the notion of the divine father.” This event, therefore, seems to be a solid point of departure for such a study. There are two authors that, I will

argue, during this period almost exclusively focussed their attention on the “weakening, the wobbling, and sometimes even the fall of institutionalized patriarchal authority” (Shideler 1999:2): Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg.

There has already been extensive analyses of both Ibsen and Strindberg’s plays, for example Richard Hornby’s seminal text, *Patterns in Ibsen’s Middle Plays* that argues for the value of assessing the works of Ibsen’s middle period (*Ghosts* being among them) in terms of a Structuralist reading, separating the various levels on which the drama functions – isolating, for example, its religious agenda. He argues that Ibsen’s plays have already been interpreted extensively and through a vast array of critical lenses, including “historical, rhetorical, imaginistic, psychoanalytic, Marxist, anthropological, and mythical” (Hornby 1981:14). What, however, is less present in the literature surrounding Strindberg and Ibsen is how they enter into a dialogue that questions the traditional patriarchal structure of the family. Shideler, on the other hand, *does* attempt to analyse on some level the notion of the family on certain of Ibsen and Strindberg’s plays, linking the questioning of the family unit to the wide-spread publication of Darwin’s theory of evolution. He is confident that in a post-Darwinian society, Ibsen’s social plays need to be re-examined. Crucially, he argues that

[d]uring Darwin’s lifetime, members of the human family began to experience themselves as products of society and history, as a species shaped by biology and gender, rather than as God’s children living on a platform, well above the animal kingdom, which was built on a religious hierarchy that privileged men over women (Shideler 1999:4).

This, he argues, is a central point that would enrich an understanding of Ibsen’s work. He applies the Darwinian concept of biocentrism; the notion of “valuation of the body and the body’s effusion of power, its instinctual epistemology, its celebration of unmediated experience” (Shideler 1999:4). Significantly, he argues that Ibsen’s plays “dramatize [...] a family structure in which the patriarchy is breaking down and the resultant conflict reflects a search for a new, more flexible structure that arises from the conditions of human life and the laws of nature” (Shideler 1999:4). Throughout his work, he goes on to apply this reading to *Pillars of Society*, *A Doll House*, *Hedda Gabler* and, importantly to my own study, *Ghosts*.

Shideler also applies this reading to Strindberg’s plays; however, he limits his focus to Strindberg’s more influential dramas, *The Father*, *Miss Julie*, *Creditors* and *The Dance of Death*, in particular. John Ward, in *The Social and Religious Plays of August Strindberg*, however, examines the religious influences on Strindberg’s plays and does give some further

insight into Strindberg's more explicit religious work, *Easter*. Ward goes on to examine the link between Strindberg's own turbulent religious ideologies and that of his plays, highlighting the transformation from

the secular playwright of the eighties who constantly projected his guilt feelings on to such external forces as the female sex, the class structure, the legal system and the Church, he became a primarily religious author (Ward 1980:107).

Here, the link between Strindberg's religious notions and the fall of religious ideologies in nineteenth-century Scandinavia become increasingly apparent. What, however, is less apparent, is the link between religion and the questioning of the abovementioned crisis of the family. This carries tremendous importance, as it establishes a link between Scandinavia's religious crises of the nineteenth century (brought about by the translation of *The Origin of Species*) and its impact on the traditional religiously-based family structure.

Shideler, however, shies away from discussing the personal lives of the authors and how it relates to their work. Lucas (1962:23), however, emphasises the link between the personal and professional, citing Ibsen's claim that a writer "must look, not only in his heart, but in his own experience." Ward (1980:1) does the same for Strindberg, claiming that

[o]f all the writers whose work is an imaginative recreation of their lives, Johan August Strindberg is among the most obsessive. Literature was for him both a safety valve and a means of therapy.

This opens a dialogue between both Strindberg and Ibsen's own religious ideology and the religious agendas of their respective plays. This, perhaps, is important as a discussion of their personal religious ideologies as it relates to their own family structures might provide insight to the traditional Scandinavian family structure that they attempt to represent in their plays. I argue, then, that both authors dramatize the effect of an increasingly secularized Scandinavia in relation to the traditional Judeo-Christian nuclear family model, both authors positing both the positive and negative effects of the religious decline.

The third phase of my research question is to open a dialogue between the abovementioned concerns and that of a contemporary Afrikaner family. Traditionally in the Afrikaner culture, the dogma of religion and of the father as the figurehead of religious structures is still widely held. Jordaan argues that "[s]pesifiek in Suid-Afrika word 'kerk' en 'godsdienst' in verband gebring met patriargale en politieke bagasie" (Jordaan 2012), suggesting that the notions of the family and of religion are still intricately connected.

Noting, however, the decline of Afrikaner religiosity in South Africa, it would seem as if, similarly to Scandinavia in the nineteenth-century, the structures of religion and the role of religion in the family have come into question. Jordaan (2012), with specific reference to the Dutch Reformed religious denomination, notes that

die gereformeerde kerkfamilie (wat die NG Kerk, die Hervormde Kerk, Gereformeerde Kerke en die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk insluit, [tel] nou slegs 46% van Afrikaanssprekendes onder hul lidmate. Tot 28% van Afrikaanssprekendes behoort aan Pinkster- en charismatiese kerke, terwyl meer as 6% van Afrikaanssprekendes aan geen kerk of geloof behoort nie.

Since both the Scandinavians and the Afrikaners gain their religion from Protestant notions of authority, the similarities are plain. Here, Hans Pieterse's book *Die Vrese van Ons Vaders: Geloof, Onderrig en die Afrikanerkind* discusses primarily the dangers of the patriarchal hierarchy of religion (similarly to what I believe Ibsen is concerned with). He expresses concern over "die Afrikaner se Calvinisme en Bloedriviermentaliteit" (Pieterse 2011:6).

It is here that I believe an important gap in the current research resides – can the link between the decline of the patriarchal religious structures within the family of nineteenth century Scandinavia and that of South Africa be consolidated? In my attempt to answer this question – both practically and theoretically – I will link it systematically to Ross Shideler's book *Questioning the Father* and make specific reference to *Easter* and *Ghosts* to draw the similarities between the two cultures on this front.

The fourth phase of my research will therefore attempt to create solidarity between the Scandinavian family drama and the Afrikaans culture by creating a new family drama that, by entering into a dialogue with *Ghosts* and *Easter* and examining the Afrikaner family through a Darwinian lens, can address the current concerns of the contemporary Afrikaner family. I will be utilising Van Niekerk Viljoen's work, *Ideaal en Werklikheid: Rekenskap deur 'n Afrikaner* (1981:58 – 69) in order to create a working model of the notion 'Afrikaner' which will then be used as a mechanism to problematize the Afrikaner family as presented in the practical presentation, ...*van ons vaders* (Gerber 2013).

This phase will, therefore, attempt to answer the research question posed at the outset: How can an Afrikaans practitioner today address similar religious concerns that plagued Ibsen and Strindberg during the nineteenth century in the ideological storm subsequent the publication

of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*? A discussion of the practical presentation, ...*van ons vaders*, will form the foundation for this phase.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis will isolate the four abovementioned phases into the subsequent chapters that follow – each phase comprising a chapter within the thesis.

1.3.1. Chapter Two

In this chapter, I will analyse the structure of the Christian family, the history of the Christian family and I will attempt to outline the socio-historical function of the family and the path that the family took throughout history in order to obtain its contemporary form, basing my argument on the notion that the creation of the Christian family is also found in the biblical story of the creation of Adam and Eve.

I analyse biblical texts (*Genesis* and the *Book of Proverbs*) and bring them in relation to feminist religious discourse so as to outline to occurrence of the patriarchal structure within the Christian nuclear family unit. I do this so as to introduce the theoretical components that will gain greater importance in my second chapter.

1.3.2. Chapter Three

I will, here, discuss the nuclear family of the nineteenth century and, what is more, how it began a process of deconstruction owing to the publication of *The Origin of the Species*. This will be done by analysing, first, the structure of the family in the early part of the nineteenth century. I discuss the notion of the (F)ather and the occurrence thereof in these families.

I examine the biographies of Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg in relation to their own experiences with their families. Thereafter, I discuss the effect that Darwin's *The Origin of Species* had on the families of the nineteenth century and subsequently discuss how these two playwrights grapple with the decline of religiosity and the patriarchy in the wake thereof. I do this through a textual analysis of *Ghosts* and *Easter* and examining the family units presented in these two plays.

1.3.3. Chapter Four

Chapter four attempts to analyse the Afrikaner's relationship to religiosity and the patriarchy as represented by the notion of the (F)ather. I make the point that, owing to the limited scope

of this thesis, it becomes difficult to define ‘Afrikaner’ satisfactorily, and therefore, I attempt to construct a working model of the Afrikaans (F)ather for use in a creative structure. This is done by examining Van Niekerk Viljoen’s (1981) five facets of the Afrikaans (F)ather.

I also discuss the effect that Darwin’s publication had on the Afrikaner and motivate why a contemporary Afrikaans family drama is needed to address similar concerns that Ibsen and Strindberg were grappling with.

1.3.4. Chapter Five

I will, in chapter five, attempt to bring together all three previously discussed components in order to discuss the practical component of my thesis (a theatrical production entitled *...van ons vaders*) in relation to the previously discussed theoretical framework. This chapter outlines the creative process and includes a reading of the text through the lens that I create through the initial four chapters.

2. The Family

Anderson and Guernsey (1985:vii), scholars on the social theology of the family, note that

[e]very human being is in some way connected to another person or persons. This is a necessary social reality [...] for being connected means being human, and being human means being part of a family.

It is perhaps owing to this reason that the family forms the central paradigm around which we structure our intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships and, on a larger scale, even our lives. A phrase such as ‘a family that prays together stays together’ highlights the family’s significance in shaping an individual’s sense of belonging within a wider cultural framework. Stephen Mintz, however, a (feminist) historian in the field of family theory, writes that

[t]he family has become an important object of historical inquiry because it permits us to see relationships between changes in individual personality and larger social and cultural changes. In various ways, recent writings on the history of the family have served to illuminate the broad process of social and cultural change (Mintz 1985:2).

The family, therefore, has recently come under immense scrutiny, especially from, but not limited to, feminist critics, owing to the important role that the family plays in designing the structure of society itself. This happened partially because, as Shideler (1999:3) notes, “patriarchy and authority in Western Culture have been synonymous.” The family, then, if these critics are correct, is undergoing a structural rearrangement with regards to the dynamics of authority within the unit that dramatically affects the societal structures that surround it. It is then not surprising that the feminist critic focussed expressly on deconstructing the central masculine authority – the father, the principal figurehead of the family.

Tikva Frymer-Kensky (1996:59) believes that “men – first father, then husband – own women’s sexuality. The daughter owes her father chastity; the wife [...] owes her husband sexual fidelity.” The role of the father, then, has in the past, as well as to a certain extent, today, played an enormous role in shaping the other roles within the household – those of the son, the daughter, and the wife. Frymer-Kensky, however, is referring to Hebrew families in the Christian Bible and, as I will attempt to demonstrate, this “patriarchal humpty dumpty” (Shideler 1999:3) is slowly being toppled over with the help of Charles Darwin, and certain theatre artists that followed. I will, therefore, briefly analyse the roots of the contemporary Judeo-Christian family and attempt to illuminate the biblical reasoning behind this particular familial arrangement of authority.

This discussion will only be done so as to sketch the roots of the Judeo-Christian family and will not serve as an in-depth analysis of Judeo-Christian mythology in any factual sense. It will function, therefore, only to very briefly underline the context of the mythology so as to enable a detailed discussion on the destabilisation of the family of the nineteenth century and the symbolism created in ...*van ons vaders*. The laws, proverbs and stories presented below, therefore only function as limited examples and are not intended as a detailed theological argument.

2.1. The Family of the Hebrew Bible

The contemporary Western conception of the family – with the father as the central figure, and the rest of the family surrounding him in a descending hierarchy – is one based firmly upon the biblical proposal of the structure of the family. The Judeo-Christian Bible offers a specific suggestion as to the hierarchical arrangement of the family – one based exclusively on “male headship and female subordination” (Ruether 2000:3).

There are three types of texts in the Bible, according to Frymer-Kensky (1996:56) that will provide clues as to the structure of the biblical (and, therefore, the roots of the contemporary Christian) family: “biblical collections of laws, proverbs and stories.” It is, therefore, from these three sources that I will attempt to formulate my argument. The biblical story that I will examine, is that of Genesis 2 – the creation of Adam and Eve – as I believe that it is the cornerstone of the Christian manifestation of the family unit and, moreover, the first story (chronologically) that lends authority to the patriarchal family structure. The proverbs that I will discuss are those from the Book of Proverbs, as I believe that these proverbs, taking from the story of Adam and Eve, further emphasise the androcentric notion of the command-giving father that is first introduced in the Genesis story. Lastly, I will examine the laws that pertain to these two previous masculine constructions of authority.

From the outset one must make it clear that none of these stories will be examined through a factual reading of the text. It is important to note that “we tend to think of [biblical] stories as ‘slices of life’” (Frymer-Kensky 1996:56) and although this is perhaps a tempting way in which to interpret the text, it is also a misleading interpretation. It is more helpful to consider these stories as “ideologically driven narratives, chosen and custom-fitted to support particular historical, political, and theological ideas” (Frymer-Kensky 1996:56). The truth-value of the stories, therefore, are not synonymous or, in fact, relevant, to their utilisation to support a patriarchal family structure.

In regards to this structure, Frymer-Kensky explains that the

biblical family was a closely ordered hierarchical system in which the ultimate authority resided with the father, and the children were subordinate to the parents (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55).

This definition has relevance throughout the biblical families, but finds its roots specifically in the first book of the Bible, clearly suggesting its significance within the structure of the religious doctrine. The second chapter of Genesis recounts the story of the creation of Adam and Eve.

2.1.1. Adam and Eve: The First Family and the Patriarchal Punishment

The story of Adam and Eve describes the creation of the first human family in Judeo-Christian mythology. After the creation of Earth, Genesis 2 recounts the story of the creation Adam and his process naming of the animals, culminating in his desire for a wife, Eve. Finally, both Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden following the temptation of Eve by the Serpent. Central to the story, stands ‘Adam’, not only as a name, but also as a concept with particular symbolic meaning.

Adam, in Christian theology, “symbolises the first man” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996:5). It is important to distinguish the concept of ‘first’ from the biblical sense of creation and, on the other hand, the Darwinian theory of creation. In Darwinian Theory, ‘first’ suggests the beginning of a series of steps towards the evolution of mankind – in other words, it represents a continuing growth and (implied) improvement in the adaptation of a species to its specific environment.

The concept of Adam, in contrast to Darwinian thought, reverses this assumption. ‘First’ in the Christian theology, as it applies to Adam, implies more than priority in time: “Adam is first in the natural order, he is the acme of earthly creation, the highest example of humankind” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996:5). ‘First’, therefore, does not conjure as in the Darwinian evolutionist sense, any trace of the primitive; “the word bears no hint of the ape-man, planting a milestone in the upward evolutionary march of the species” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996:5). Instead, Adam represents the perfection of God’s initial creation. The implication of this is that in contrast to Darwin’s evolutionary theory, mankind suffered a decrease in the evolutionary march to modernity in terms of adaptation – moving further away from the ultimate perfection of God’s first creation in his own image.

This introduces the cornerstone of Christian theology as the religion dictates that one must strive to become more like God, the Father of humanity. The implication is that, for this statement to function, one must first be on a lesser level than God himself. Taking into account the sequential decrease in humanity's godliness from the first Adam, the task of becoming 'like God' becomes problematic because, as time passes, and following the logic of the Adam-pathway, it becomes ever more improbable to become 'like God.'

It is important, therefore, for the reader of the biblical account of the creation of the first family, to keep this in mind as it illuminates many of the later discourses surrounding the family (which will be discussed in chapter three). Moreover, it highlights the struggle of the son to overcome or supersede his Father (both his divine and earthly incarnation); creating, then, a paradox that problematizes the Christian theology of the family (a paradox that concerned both Ibsen and Strindberg). There are, therefore, two main interpretations of the Christian creation narrative that pertain to the creation of the family: On the one hand, theologians such as Ruther (1996:99) argue that it legitimizes patriarchy, and on the other, theologians such as Tribble (1979:74) argue that many critics "read to reject." She suggests that "we reread to understand and appropriate."

Summarised, her point is that the creation of the story is "culturally conditioned" (Tribble 1979:80). She argues that

[h]usband and work (childbearing) define the woman [and] wife and work (farming) defines the man. A literal reading of the story limits both creatures and limits the story. [...] [W]e must recognize that women as well as men move beyond these culturally defined roles, even as the intentionality and function of the myth move beyond its original setting (Tribble 1979:80).

Without discounting her point, it is necessary to indicate that regardless of her positivist reading of the text, the biblical creation narrative has been used throughout history to subjugate women in their roles within the family as defined within a patriarchal structure. This is problematic as she admits that

[w]e misread if we assume that these judgements are mandates. [...] Of special concern are the words telling the woman that her husband shall rule over her [Genesis 3:16]. [...] Through disobedience, the woman has become slave. Her initiative and her freedom vanish. The man is corrupted also, for he has become master. [...] This sin vitiates all relationships: [...] between mothers and children [Genesis 3:16] [and between] husbands and wives [Genesis 3:16] (Tribble 1979:80).

She concludes that “[t]he suffering and oppression we women and men know now are marks of our fall, not of our creation” (Trible 1979:81). Therefore, while some critics such as Trible (1979:81) and Purvis (1996:111) do indeed argue that the story has been misinterpreted to promote the patriarchy and a new reading is required, it is still of great importance to analyse the story so as to illuminate in what sense it is used to *legitimise* the creation of the patriarchal family structure.

2.1.1.1. Adam and Eve: The Creation of Eve

Trible (1979:74) believes that many feminist critics “interpret this story [of Adam and Eve] as legitimating male supremacy and female subordination.” Keeping the abovementioned paradox of Adam and his sequential distancing from God in mind, it becomes clear when examining the story of Adam and Eve, why traditionalist readers of the biblical story place the blame of original sin on Eve – or, the first woman and wife, thus forming the seed of a patriarchal family structure.

The problem, though, is that a substantial amount of apologist criticism of the biblical tale of the first family, is biased towards the first two sections of the story (such as Trible 1979) and, in effect, they fail to recognize that the story has *three* integral acts. In the first act, God creates Adam and, subsequently, in the second act, God creates Eve to be Adam’s companion. The third act, however, encompasses the conclusion wherein Eve is tempted by the snake and the family is subsequently ejected from Eden.

After God has created Adam, He decides that “it is not good that man should be alone; I will make a help meet for him”¹ (Genesis 2:18). It is important to note that from the outset, the author, almost immediately after the creation of man, introduces the politics of gender into the creation of the first family, indicating its significance in the sequence of events that are to follow. Trible (1978:75) proposes to the reader that the term ‘help’ does not indicate, at this point, the woman’s inferiority:

In the Old Testament the word *helper* (*‘ezer*) has many usages. It can be a proper name for a male. In our story, it describes the animals and the woman. In some passages, it characterizes Deity. God is the helper of Israel. As helper Yahweh creates and saves. Thus *‘ezer* is a relational term; it designates a beneficial relationship; and it pertains to God, people, and animals.

After Eve is created, however, the story continues when Adam poetically exclaims

¹ All references from the Bible, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version.

This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called 'woman'
For she was taken out of man (Genesis 2:23).

It is at this point that the narrator, "wanting to make sure that the readers reach the correct conclusion" (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55), interjects and comments on the action: "[t]herefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The stage, therefore, has been set: "The family, in particular the nuclear heterosexual pair-bond, has been established as the basic unit of society" (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55).

The first two acts of the story, despite Tribble's interpretation, does indeed seem to have a particular disconcerting quality, according to feminist critic, Carol P. Christ:

Religious symbol systems focused around exclusively male images of divinity create the impression that female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent. This message need never be explicitly stated. [...] A woman completely ignorant of the myths of female evil in biblical religion nonetheless acknowledges the anomaly. [...] She may see herself as like God (created in the image of God) only by denying her own sexual identity and affirming God's transcendence of sexual identity. But she can never have the experience [...] available to every man and boy in her culture, of having her full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God (Christ *in* Carr and Schuurman 1996:11).

This seems to suggest that while Adam may have been created in the image of God, it would appear as though Eve was only created in the image of God by proxy of Adam. The narrative, therefore, appears to indicate that not only is Eve under the power/influence of one man, but of two.

There are, however, some scholars that argue that Eve is not under the control of two men as God is devoid of a sexual identity: "God is neither male nor female" (Carr and Schuurman 1996:20). Although this seems to provide a moral comfort, the linguistic integrity of the text is severely undermined. Even though God is initially referred to as a "formless spirit," he is almost immediately thereafter referred to as a Heavenly *Father*, thus casting him very distinctly in a masculine role. King (1990:24) suggests that

patriarchy is inexorably tied up with deep religious roots [...] because of the widely perceived (rightly or wrongly) absolutist rule of a divine father. [W]hile God as all-encompassing Ultimate Reality transcends the differences of sex, this Reality has in many religions been predominantly, and one might say to the point of idolatry, presented as 'father.'

This may account for her actions leading to the climactic third act in the drama wherein, I believe, the seeds of Christian patriarchy as it pertains to the family, are cemented firmly in place.

2.1.1.2. Adam and Eve: The Fall from Grace

Eve is put a very compromising position when the serpent convinces her to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Without placing undue emphasis on the phallic imagery of the serpent, it is perhaps relevant at this point to register its significance. This seems to be the first clue to the patriarchal family structure: Eve is seduced into sin by a figure that alludes to immorally motivated (masculine) temptations and, most problematically, she fails to react in a virtuous manner to his enticements. It seems to suggest that the woman, owing perhaps to her weak and distant connection to God – the lawgiver – is fallible to the point of being easily seduced by worldly pleasures and evil:

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 2:12-13).

Here Adam provides the second clue of the patriarchal structure by declaring Eve to be morally inferior to him. He accomplishes this by distancing himself from Eve: she is no longer “the flesh of my flesh,” but rather “the woman you put here with me,” underlining her sinful nature as being separate to that of Adam. It is for this reason that God punishes Eve:

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over you (Genesis 2:17).

It is worth noting, however, that God does not exclusively punish Eve, as Adam, in desperation, not only blames Eve for his downfall, but also places liability on God in the same sentence: “the woman *you* put here with me,” implicating God in the process of their downfall. This serves as an important warning to Adam and Eve: In Adam’s attempted displacement of the eternal Father (the masculine lawgiver), God reminds them that his role as the über-Patriarch may not be challenged. God punishes Adam:

Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of

your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return (Genesis 2:17-19).

These two commandments gave legitimacy to the patriarchal model of the family that would later develop in Western culture. This model includes, in a bottom-up order, the children (the daughters then the sons), the mother and then, finally, the father (and above him, the Divine Father). The mother is placed, at least in this story, on an perceivably inferior level because man's worldly suffering is exclusively brought about by the qualifying notion "[b]ecause you listened to your wife" (Genesis 2:17). Frymer-Kensky agrees, and adds that "the power that men have over [their wives and children] can lead to abuse and chaos" (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55), thus, perhaps, in this story, man "had the obligation to create a layer above the power of the patriarch to which men will be subordinate" (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55).

This arrangement, therefore, is clearly one which is modelled on this ancient biblical account of the creation of the first family and, by extension, the creation of the ethereal lawgiver that, by the very nature of its masculine conception, cannot escape the patriarchal structures which have created it.

2.1.2. The Ideal biblical Family: Proverbs of the Patriarch and the Spiritual Salvation of the Family

When a contemporary reader is referring to the family of the Bible, he/she is clearly not referring to an ancient Israelite family, but of a fictional representation of family life. As Frymer-Kensky (1996:56) argues that

[n]one of these [laws and proverbs] could be accepted by readers if the families portrayed were too far from people's experience to have verisimilitude.

It is essential to make the distinction because regardless of the truth value of the biblical claims on family life, it still remains a roadmap that current families (as well as families in the nineteenth century) follow(ed) or, as in the case of Ibsen and Strindberg's plays, query.

There were, at this point in biblical history, two types of families. On the one hand, there was the polygamous family: "an extended, patrilineal family where the patriarch might have more than one wife and where brothers stay in close contact with each other and with their father" (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55 – 56). This type of family is somewhat ignored in later interpretations of the text, so my focus will shift more towards what was later considered to be the 'ideal' nuclear family of a singular biological father, a singular biological mother and

their children. Both these types of families “existed side by side” (Frymer-Kensky 1996:56) during biblical times, but it is important to register that only the latter family type becomes popular later during the course of history owing perhaps, in part, to its close resemblance to the Adam and Eve model.

The second family unit, therefore, will be the focus of this section. I will attempt to examine the ideal biblical family that, evolving from the story of the creation of the first human family, provided examples of how to avoid the fate of Adam and his wife, Eve: that of being rejected by God from paradise. This family arrangement that I will discuss, is therefore concerned with the spiritual salvation of the family.

The narratives of the Bible, where families are concerned, are completely obsessed with three characters in the family: The sons, the wives and the daughters. This is to be expected as the much of the narratives were written by men and would therefore be an extension of their perspective. It is, in a sense, “written by men (for men),” meaning that the non-father characters reveal “the wishful thinking, fears, aspirations, and prejudices of their male creators” (Fuchs 1989:152).

2.1.2.1. The Salvation of the Children

The Bible is quite clear on the hierarchy that is expected from the family unit. There is a significant difference between a husband’s control of his wife and the authority of parents over children. The commandment to “honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12) seems to establish the primacy of generation over gender: “the biblical family is a multi-tiered hierarchy in which the parental level (husband, then wife) is ranked above the children’s level (older son, then younger sons, then sisters). Children may not treat their parents as their parents treat them” (Frymer-Kensky 1996:58). The Bible, in fact, makes provision for this occurrence: “[a]nd he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death” (Exodus 21:15). In fact, a child’s treatment of his/her parents was a very severe matter for not only could a child be put to death for physically harming his/her parents, but even “he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death” (Exodus 21:17).

Deuteronomy, perhaps to underline the severity of a disobedient child, provides the legal procedure for the abovementioned crime:

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not harken

unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear (Deuteronomy 21:18 – 21).

Wisdom, standing in for God in the book of Proverbs (1:8), provides a guide for children so as to avoid the abovementioned fate:

My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother
For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head.

Wisdom (Proverbs 4:1) continues:

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father,
And attend to know understanding,

and finally, Wisdom asserts:

My son, keep thy father's commandment,
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
Bind them continually upon thine heart,
And tie them about thy neck (Proverbs 6:20 – 21).

Wisdom, however, predicts disaster to those who do not heed the abovementioned warnings:

Whoso curseth his father or his mother,
His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness (Proverbs 20:20),

and gravely concludes that

[t]he eye that mocketh at his father,
And despiseth to obey his mother,
The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,
And the young eagles shall eat it (Proverbs 20:17).

The children, therefore, are answerable to the mother and the father, and the mother, simultaneously, is answerable to the father. What this creates is a family unit wherein the father stands central to the arrangement of authority. If the children, however, do not concede to this arrangement, Proverbs, yet again, provides the answer:

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child;
But the rod of correction shall drive it from him (Proverbs 22:15).

This type of discipline is not only suggested, but is in actual fact regarded as a necessary requirement in the raising of a child and, moreover, will result in his/her salvation:

Withhold not correction from the child:
For if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.
Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
And shalt deliver his soul from hell (Proverbs 23:13 – 14).²

The sheer volume of these types of instructions reveals the text's obsession with authority and obedience. It borders, in fact, on what Fuchs (1989:152) calls the "Bible's subtle and effective patriarchal didacticism," suggesting not only a patriarchal model of authority, but, moreover, a patriarchal model of authority based on the *exclusion* of all other possible models.

There are two important points to be taken from these regulations. The first point is that the authority of parents over their children is not only recommended, but is a *requirement* for a household to claim any sense of virtuousness. This underpins the second point; that the laws have a divine authority owing to their celestial source, thereby raising the stakes if the parents do not follow them.

This implies that the salvation of the individual child amounts to the salvation of the entire family. Furthermore, it provides proof of the father's power over his children: If he can manage to regulate the behaviour of his household, he can claim a greater sense of divinely ordained authority. It is the responsibility of parents, therefore, to moderate and guarantee their children's virtuous behaviour.

2.1.2.2. The Salvation of the Wife/Mother

This, however, does not suggest that the parents themselves are equal in any sense. To repeat Frymer-Kensky (1996:59): "men – first father, then husband – own women's sexuality." As I have already discussed the role of children (daughters), I will focus on the woman-as-wife. A woman, therefore, will continually be indebted to either her father or her husband. Frymer-Kensky (1996:57) illuminates the reasoning behind the indebted woman by saying that

[t]he Bible 'explains' this dominance of the male partner by means of a story: When the first couple, Adam and Eve, ate of the Tree of Knowledge, they had to leave their natural habitat (the Garden of Eden) and enter the domain of real life, characterized

² Similar suggestions of such discipline are found on Proverbs 13:1, 19:18, 22:15, and 29:17.

by labour and civilisation. Part of the package, God predicts, is that women will love men who will rule over them. Patriarchy is the ‘mark of a fallen universe.’

It is not entirely possible to ascertain the overall truth-value of this statement, however it is necessary to point out that the story, regardless of contemporary apologist interpretations³, was still used to espouse “views of woman as innately inferior by reason of her bodily and psychic ‘female-ness’ and her location in an ‘order’ of creation under a headship that the patriarchal male exercises as corporate representative of God’s dominion” (Ruether 1996:99). Crucially, Ruether (1996:99) clarifies by stating that

all classical traditions agree in stressing woman’s priority in sin, and its consequence being female subjugation. [...] The tradition that sees woman as always having been subordinate, her subordination in the Fall is redoubled both as punishment and as a means of expiating her primary fault.

In other words, women are punished through painful childbearing and subjugation to their husbands; however *voluntary submission* to this punishment is also women’s means of salvation.

Phyllis Tribble (1979:79) does not agree that a woman’s involvement in the Fall has anything to do with the wife’s subjugation. She asks, “Why does the serpent speak to the woman and not to the man?” She goes on to speculate that “throughout the myth, she is the more intelligent one, the more aggressive one, and the one with greater sensibilities” (Tribble 1979:79). She believes that Eve viewed the tree as “a source of wisdom” (Tribble 1979:79) and, therefore, “the woman is fully aware when she acts, her vision encompassing the gamut of life. She takes the fruit and she eats. The initiative and decision is hers alone. There is no consultation with her husband. She seeks neither his advice nor his permission. She acts independently” (Tribble 1979:79). Tribble is correct; however the fact that Eve acted independently and attempted to gain autonomy outside the domain of her husband, provides further evidence as to why subsequent husbands increased the intensity of their authority over their wives, perhaps so as to prevent a similar fate befalling them.

The role of the wife in the family, therefore, is coloured by her participation in the fall of mankind. She is likened to Eve and, in effect, must not only carry the burden of her

³ Phyllis Tribble (1979:75), for instance, argues that “[c]ontent and context” should be considered when interpreting the story. She believes that “[b]oth have the same Creator, who explicitly uses the word *good* to introduce the creation of woman” (Tribble 1979:78). This is similar to Carr and Shuuman’s (1996) argument which I discussed earlier because regardless of Tribble’s particular interpretation, “[t]he Judaic-Christian tradition has still served to legitimate sexually imbalanced patriarchal society” (Daly 1979:54).

punishment (subjugation), but must also be grateful for her servitude as it is her path to salvation. As Ruether (1996:99) argues, “[the wife’s] repressed and servile status – these are both her nature and her punishment for rebellion. [Their husbands] are thus justified in redoubling this repression in order to punish any signs of further rebellion in women.” Crucially, she concludes that “[w]oman’s unprotecting acceptance even of unjust repression is her way to salvation through suffering, a suffering that she deserves and yet can use to expiate her sin” (Ruether 1996:99).

2.1.2.3. The Salvation of the Husband/Father

At this point, it becomes clear that the Christian father has one very important task: to lead both his children and his wife (his family) towards spiritual salvation. He does this by leading his family on what can be defined as a Christian pathway of morality. In effect, he becomes an earthly representative of God to the family which he leads. If the father can successfully complete this task, he has also accomplished his own salvation. This would account for the numerous biblical passages that are concerned with ways in which the father can exert control over his family.

From the perspective of his family, he becomes akin to God himself as he is, at least within the confines of the family, the source of all knowledge and authority and, most importantly, the source of his family’s spiritual salvation and he, in turn, is only answerable to God (to account for either his success or failure in his task). The rest of the family is answerable to the father because the father is created directly in the image of God, and therefore has a direct connection to God, giving him a god-like status in the family.

The mother (the wife – Eve) only has a connection to God by proxy of her husband – Adam. The daughters, similarly, suffer the same subordination. The sons, on the other hand, are privileged in that, while they are unmarried they might not be directly connected to God as they are still under the authority of the father, they can look forward to being, one day, in the authoritative position that their father is in. They can one day have the direct connection to God – a luxury that is not afforded to either they daughters or sons who do not marry and propagate the family line. The authority of the father, therefore, is directly proportionate to the authority of God himself.

As Mary Daly (1979:54) argues,

[t]he image of the Father God, spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanism for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in 'his' heaven is a father ruling 'his' people, then it is in the 'nature' of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male dominated.

Crucially, she concludes that “[w]ithin this context, a mystification of roles takes place: the husband dominating his wife represents God himself” (Daly 1979:54). This is a point that Shideler (1999) picks up and which becomes a central interpretative mechanism through which an analysis of the family as represented in nineteenth century Scandinavian literature as well as in contemporary Afrikaans family can be done.

3. The Displacement of the (F)ather

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will attempt to discuss the effect that the publication of the *Origin of the Species* had on the patriarchal (Christian) family of the nineteenth century Scandinavia. This will be done with reference to *Ghosts* and *Easter*, plays that were presenting ways in which the family would either assimilate or reject the implications of the changing familial world.

The family structure as described in chapter two went on to be the primarily unchanged dominant structural arrangement throughout the Judeo-Christian cultural landscape. An important event in the nineteenth century, however, uprooted the patriarchal family tree. Charles Darwin's seminal work *The Origin of Species* dramatically altered the traditional view of the family's divinely inspired structure. It has been described by critics as "[t]he most important book of its century" (Bibby 1959:76). Even though *The Origin of Species* never mentions the family explicitly, the implications of its thesis dramatically undermined the dominant Christian patriarchal heritage. One should take note that "the teetering nineteenth-century male [...] was losing his dominance well before Charles Darwin, but Darwin played a significant role in pushing him closer to the edge" (Shideler 1999:3).

The book itself, first published in 1859⁴, "contained very little about human evolution; Darwin had stepped cautiously around the issue" (Kitcher 1982:viv); however, if the proposition was true, it suggested that the story of Adam and Eve (the basis of the patriarchal model), never occurred.

This severely undermined the religious doctrine of the church for which the status quo of masculine authority and female subordination was "divinely ordained" (Fuchs 1989:165). This would eventually result in a slippery slope wherein the church's divine power and the father's divine authority would be taken from them by the cold facts of the scientific theory, (even though they would subsequently attempt to use this same science as a means to maintain their authority, under the name of eugenics).

⁴ Although this is the published date of the original text, I will be referring to the sixth revised edition that was published in 1872. The first edition was "rushed to completion in 1858-59" and "was not very long or very logical by nineteenth-century standards in natural history" (Vorzimmer 1972:xiii). It does not represent the full implications of Darwin's thinking because, during the period between 1859 and 1872, owing to "continuing attacks" from the theocracy, Darwin was forced to continually "re-study and revise" his theory (Vorzimmer 1972:xviii). Moreover, his theory did not reach widespread attention (and, subsequently, become translated) until his later editions. There is, therefore, very little evidence that Ibsen or Strindberg had read the first editions of the manuscript.

The amount of people who considered themselves religious during this time, however, was steadily declining; “the impregnable rock of Scripture was suffering slow erosion” (Bibby 1959:80). This comes as no surprise because, as Bibby (1959:78) notes, “[t]o the average believer, Darwin appeared to be not simply promulgating a new scientific theory, but destroying the foundations of belief.” The right wing – the father and the church – immediately kicked their heels into the ground and began protesting the decline of the God-concept, creating effectively what Moore (1979:14) describes as “Christian anti-Darwinism.” According to Shideler (1999:4), after the publication of *The Origin of Species*,

members of the human family began to experience themselves as products of society and history, as species shaped by biology and gender, rather than as God’s children living on a platform, well above the animal kingdom, which was built on a religious hierarchy that privileged men over women.

The structure of the family, therefore, where the father was at the apex of the pyramid, was under pressure to assimilate the new information that would alter the basis of power. “[I]f, as Darwin argued, God had not made Adam in his own image, nor Eve from Adam’s rib, then the narrative, the biblical story which valorised a traditional male-dominated family structure, had to be replaced or read differently” (Shideler 1999:8).

It is for this reason, I believe, why dramatists such as Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg chose specifically to address social concerns by dramatizing matters of the family because they sensed that the nature of the debate would result in a severe clash in the structure of the family itself. Shideler (1999:3) believes that “many male authors of the nineteenth century depict in their works the weakening, the wobbling, and sometimes even the fall of institutionalized patriarchal authority.”

I believe this to be true; however one should reconsider if all authors were attempting to deconstruct the patriarchal family model at all times. Henrik Ibsen, for example, in his religious family drama, *Ghosts*, firmly contested that the family needed to be reordered to assimilate a changing world, while August Strindberg sentimentally attempted to reclaim the traditionalist family values in his subsequent religious family drama, *Easter*. It is for this reason that these two dramatists, owing to the connected subject matter of their respective plays, are prime examples for a discussion of the literary displacement of the (F)ather.

3.2. The Family of the Nineteenth Century

Mintz (1985:xi) notes that the ideal nineteenth century family portrait was “dominated by a bewhiskered father, surrounded by his submissive wife, his respectful children, and perhaps a spinster aunt and an aging grandparent.” Keeping in mind the centrality of the figure of the father in the above statement, Mintz (1985:13) later goes on to argue that, for the leaders of the nineteenth century households, “the family represented the most important symbol of stability and continuity, the only embodiment of a tangible past.” This past, symbolized by the family creation story of Adam and Eve was beginning to be undermined “with the discovery that the woman must produce an egg that unites the man’s sperm in order to create life” (Shideler 1999:12).

Shideler (1999:10) believes that the family and family life were not accidentally the focus of many playwrights in the nineteenth century. Specifically in the nineteenth century, plays were severely grappling with the “privileging of the father’s role” (Shideler 1999:11). Mintz proposes that

in contrast to our time, when the peer group has come to play a decisive role in socializing children and adolescents, in shaping tastes, and in defining social mores, in respectable middle-class Victorian homes the authority of the parents, and of the father in particular, was not in direct competition with other loyalties and attachments (Mintz 1985:50 – 51).

As already discussed in chapter two, the father represented an earthly connection to God himself. He served as both the connection and the conduit that, within the family, provided the moral compass that would guide the family to salvation. The notion of the father, therefore, was amalgamated with God – the divine Father – thus giving rise to the concept of the (F)ather.

Mintz (1985:28) argues that the father of the nineteenth century was “acutely conscious of the growing weakness of religious establishment” and it is partly for this reason one could argue why, particularly in the nineteenth century, there was a sudden resurgence in attempts to reclaim ownership of the family to its paternal figurehead. Mintz (1985:xii) illuminates this by examining the personal family lives of five British and American authors: Robert Louis Stevenson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Samuel Butler, George Elliot and Catharine Sedgewick. I believe that a similar approach can be effective when examining the personal family lives of Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg as it can illuminate the Christian nineteenth century family ideal and highlight how – and why – these authors attempted to re-examine (and appropriate) the biblical structure of the family.

I believe that these two dramatists were particularly interested in the debate surrounding the values of the family owing to the immense influence that their own familial experiences, in relation to religious dogma and crises, had on their respective careers and work. I will, therefore, discuss these authors' personal family experiences in relation to religious doctrine and their respective fathers and discuss how they can be seen as variables that influence their two mainly religious plays, Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Strindberg's *Easter*.

3.2.1. The Family of Henrik Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen's middle period is characterized by extensive critique of the patriarchal model of the family. *Ghosts*, published soon after *A Doll's House* in 1881, specifically focussed its critique on the influence of Christian religious doctrine on the family. Lavrin (1969:1) notes that the only way in which one can critically analyse any of Ibsen's plays, is to look into his personal experiences as a model for his critique. He believes that thorough criticism can "only be done [...] by following the development of Ibsen the dramatist parallel with that of Ibsen the man. For it would be difficult to find another author whose work is so closely interwoven with his own inner quest, with his personal crises and aspirations, as is the case with Ibsen." Knight (1966:1) reiterates this point by arguing that "Ibsen's life seems to be dissolved into [his] work." An understanding of his personal family life, therefore, is crucial in understanding the outlook of his plays and the effect of religious doctrine on his life and work.

Henrik Ibsen was born in 1828 in Skien, "a small Norwegian town of some 3000 inhabitants" (Lavrin 1969:2). Ibsen himself regarded the town as "dismal" and described the view from his early childhood home: "church, pillory, and town-hall with cells beneath it, one for madmen, the others for prisoners, whose pale, sinister faces [Ibsen] would watch through their bars" (Lucas 1962:4). Ibsen lived in that house until he was eight years old, but already (at least retrospectively), Ibsen seemed to have had negative connotations with doctrine and imprisonment, linking the church and the prison together in similar rhetoric.

Up until Ibsen was eight years old, in 1836, his family was prosperous and financially stable. He lived in an "atmosphere of fairly prosperous parochial respectability, with its 'mighty' men whose prestige rested above all on money and ownership" (Lavrin 1962:3). Ibsen's experiences as a young boy, therefore, were invariably influenced by a patriarchal structure with its locus being Ibsen's well-off father, Knud Ibsen.

Knud Ibsen (1797 – 1877) was “a shipper and merchant at Skien. [He was] temporarily prosperous in a tradeboom [and] he launched out into social gaities” (Lucas 1962:5). A combination of financial mismanagement and misfortune in the shipping trade, threw Knud Ibsen and his family into financial ruin. Thereafter, Knud Ibsen had to “exchange his former affluence for an obscure existence in a farmhouse outside the town” (Lavrin 1969:3).

For the eight-year-old Henrik Ibsen, this must certainly have had a profound effect on the way in which he regarded the paternal authority of his father. He describes himself as “being painfully aware of the sudden reversal of fortune” (Lavrin 1969:3). His father, whom he had considered to be the locus of familial leadership, fell into a depression, becoming “a sardonic failure, litigious and bibulous” (Lucas 1962:5).⁵ Henrik Ibsen, then, “conceived a strange aversion to his father” according to Lavrin (1969:3). Keeping in mind the metaphorical and biblical importance of the father at this point in history, it comes as no surprise that Ibsen withdrew himself from his father and his family and, subsequently, the household split in two ideologies: “[Knud Ibsen’s] daughter Hedvig, his son Ole, and later his wife also, found consolation in joining the religious revival of Lammers,” a puritan religious sect that offered spiritual salvation to those who suffered emotional and physical auto-chastisement. The young Henrik, however, found consolation in removing himself from the family and their religious extremism and already the seed of mistrust of such a structure has been planted. Lucas (1962:4) adds that “a house thus divided was not very likely to rear balanced children” and the young Ibsen, retaliating against his family, “believed himself to be illegitimate.”

This belief may not have been as far-fetched as one might believe. Lavrin (1969:2 – 3) notes that

Ibsen can hardly be called a ‘racially’ pure Norwegian. One of his ancestors, the sea-captain Peter Ibsen, was a Dane who at the beginning of the eighteenth century settled in Bergen and married a woman of German extraction. More German admixture was added during the subsequent generation. There was also some Scottish blood in the family – all of which may or may not have contributed to the broad cosmopolitan tendencies in Ibsen’s mind.

⁵ Lavrin (1969:3) believes that the theme of the socially ostracized bankrupt “crops up in several [of Ibsen’s] plays,” providing further evidence to the notion that Ibsen drew from his own experiences for his literary work. Notable examples of this are Mosen in *The League of Youth*, Krogstad in *A Doll’s House*, Hjalmar’s father in *The Wild Duck*, and old Borkman in *John Gabriel Borkman*. For my own study, this seems to be a similar characteristic of Oswald’s father, Mr. Alving, in *Ghosts*, who squanders his financial assets and is subsequently emasculated by his wife’s takeover of their business affairs.

The suspicion that he was illegitimate, therefore, would haunt Ibsen for the rest of his young life and “it would account for his early becoming of what the German’s call a ‘Grübler’ – a brooder and doubter, sombre, aloof, [and] estranged from family and home” (Lucas 1962:6). He conceived “a strange aversion to his father and to his family in general, whom he neither cared to correspond with nor to revisit (except once), after he had left” (Lavrin 1969:3) at the age of sixteen, for Grimstad in order to earn his living as a pharmacy apprentice.

It is interesting to note that both Hjalmar Ekdal in *The Wild Duck* and Mrs. Borkman in *John Gabriel Borkman* dream of restoring to honour the family name which has been ruined by a bankrupt father in the first case and by a bankrupt husband in the second. Ibsen may have had something similar in mind during his years of drudgery at Grimstad, according to Lavrin (1969:3). He states that,

[a]s if determined to work his passage back to the same or even greater prestige than that lost by his father, he developed early enough a prodigious will-power and determination: this in a small provincial hole, where life was even more tedious than in his native Skien. His poverty and social insignificance were bound to foster in him almost at once an aggressive and warlike attitude towards his entire *milieu*.

Soon after moving away from his family, he fathered an illegitimate son at age eighteen – Hans Jakob – in 1846 with a maidservant. Lavrin notes that this had an even greater effect of distancing him from his “pietistic family” (1969:4). Ibsen, now himself in the role of the father, “shunned the responsibilities a decent father would have shouldered” (Lavrin 1969:4). This is telling of Ibsen’s view of the family which, up until this point, was coloured by religious extremism coupled with bitter resentment unto his own father owing to their social decline. His inner make-up, however, was thoroughly “Protestant and imbued with a Puritan sense of guilt” (Lavrin 1969:5). This, in addition to his eschewed relationship with the notion of paternity, introduces, according to Lavrin (1969:5), some of Ibsen’s major themes:

In no modern author does the ‘guilt-complex,’ as well as the fear of retribution, play so big a part as in Ibsen’s works. The number of illegitimate children, too, is surprisingly high in his dramas.

Taking the abovementioned into account, it comes as no surprise that Ibsen, through his plays, seemed to express “reiterated critique, rising to repulsion, of domesticity” (Knight 1966:3).

It was during this point in history that “Darwin’s theory of evolution and Zola’s Naturalism [...] penetrated into the literary mainstream” (Shideler 1999:5), therefore one cannot ignore

the fact that Ibsen was influenced by the publication of *Origin of Species*. Knight (1966:1) argues that Ibsen “grew up at a time of revolutionary impetus throughout Europe and was by nature attuned to revolution.” In this vein, the publication of Darwin’s work certainly cannot be seen as non-revolutionary. Indeed, Lavrin (1969:2) reiterates that in the nineteenth century,

[t]he triumphs, and the ravages, of science also added [to Ibsen’s quota]. The advent of the Darwinian theory in particular undermined, or threatened to undermine, a number of old inherited beliefs, including those religious and oral values of mankind which until then had been regarded as unshakable.

3.2.2. The Family of August Strindberg

August Strindberg had a similarly troubled relationship with his own family. This can unmistakably be seen when examining the course of his career leading up to the first performance of *Easter* in 1901. Personal tensions within Strindberg led to complex, almost rhythmic changes in his religious faith, yet beneath his spiritual vacillation Strindberg’s belief in the patriarchal family remained consistent.

Whereas Henrik Ibsen responded positively to the changes in public and private roles of men and women, Strindberg first questioned and then resisted revisions in what was to him nature’s family (Shideler 1999:99).

Carlson (1996:32) notes that

[t]ime and again, throughout his career, he found himself pulled painfully between a stern, salvation oriented Christian faith, which had been imbued through his Pietistic upbringing, and a dark, innate pessimistic scepticism reinforced by his readings in Schopenhauer and von Hartman.

Strindberg’s plays fall into six well-defined categories that correspond to the periods of his life:

(1) Early Work; (2) Children’s Plays – to which he was inclined to return in his few happier moments; (3) Realistic Plays – a revolt against the stuffy theatrical conventions of his day, and largely occasioned by his turbulent relations with his first wife; (4) the Historical Cycle, written at various times throughout his life, usually after a period of particular turmoil, when he may have found it a relief to escape into the past; (5) the Mystical Plays, which came late in his life when he began to find comfort in religion; and finally (6) what he called his ‘Chamber Plays’, written for the intimate Strindberg Theatre in Stockholm (Watts 1958:7).

Eric Bentley suggests that “*Easter* derives its fascination from the fact that it eludes classicisation” (Sprigge 1955:121), in contrast to any of Strindberg’s other work. *Easter*, being one of his final plays, seems to be a culmination of what Strindberg attempted to achieve during his difficult lifetime.

Shideler (1999:101) notes that “Strindberg’s childhood offers fertile ground for conjectures about his lifelong obsession with fathers and families.” As child, “his interests were varied and his abilities average, at best” (Watts 1958:8). His mother, a waitress and maid who had married the wealthy merchant Carl Oscar Strindberg, died in 1862 when August was thirteen. He was constantly trying to impress his mother who, overwhelmed with twelve children, hardly gave him the attention he craved: “One of his bothers drew well, so August set himself to draw better; another, Axel, played the piano, and since August could never bring himself to submit to the discipline [...] of practicing enough to play well, he made himself something of an authority on musical theory and technique” (Watts 1958:8).

His father, however, having gone bankrupt shortly after his birth, was never particularly fond of him. After the death of Carl Strindberg’s wife, Carl married the family governess. “The young Strindberg resented and competed with his pious stepmother [and] for years he fought with his authoritarian father, and in 1876 he broke with his father permanently” (Shideler 1999:101 – 102).

Strindberg’s subsequent attitude towards God – “strange alternations of rebellion and submission, humility and hatred” (Lucas 1962:315) – seems fundamentally influenced by these early relations with his earthly father; whereas the other children of the family, more ordinary and less difficult, do not seem to have suffered so much.

Here the parallel is striking with both Kierkegaard and Kafka, whose religious morbidity seems likewise rooted, to a great extent, in a disastrous paternal influence (Lucas 1962:315).

The fear and insecurity reflected in Strindberg’s battles with his father form part of “the pattern in his life and work of unsupportive or disappearing fathers” (Shideler 1999:103). Two Strindberg scholars comment on his father’s role in his life. Torsten Eklund (*in* Shideler 1999:103) connects Strindberg’s “lifelong sense of nature’s personal hostility” to the moment when, as a young boy, his father accused him of stealing. “This early sense of persecution and his fear of being weak or effeminate resulted in Strindberg’s preoccupation with being manly” (Shideler 1999:103). Gunnar Brandell comments on the intensely religious society in

which Strindberg grew up and the importance of the father within that society. Shideler (1999:103) summarises: “In brief, an unloving personal father, a missing divine father, a sense of his own masculine inadequacy apparently inscribed an inescapable pattern in Strindberg’s writings about the family.”

After graduating at Uppsala University, he became a “*habitué* of the Red Room” (Watts 1958:9), a meeting place in Stockholm - a restaurant of “advanced artist and writers” (Watts 1958:9). There he led a consciously Bohemian lifestyle, and Strindberg famously followed the Bohemian pattern by indulging in alcohol and women. Throughout his life, however, he was tormented with “guilt about sex” (Watts 1958:9), but despite his savage fits of remorse during which he profusely prayed to God for forgiveness and salvation, he was always “at the mercy of his desires” (Watts 1958:9). This is probably why, whatever mistresses and casual affairs he might have had, he “always tended to fall in love with apparently unattainable innocent child-like girls” (Watts 1958:9). Always at the back of his mind, it seems, was the “Madonna-figure into which he idealized the dead mother” (Watts 1958:9) who had never given him the love that he longed for. This, perhaps, is also why there was a constant fluctuation in his treatment of women in his plays – sometimes famously malevolent, such as in *The Father*, and sometimes endlessly pious, such as in *Easter*.

His religious beliefs were no less “picturesquely various” (Lucas 1962:306):

by turns pietist, deist, atheist, semi-Roman-Catholic, theosophist, Buddhist, Swedenborgian, nihilist, anarchist, socialist, democrat, Nietzschean aristocrat. [...] Intellectually, in short, he was a Flying Dutchman; a Wandering Jew” (Lucas 1962:306 – 307).

It comes as little surprise, then, that he submitted himself to treatment for insanity in Sweden in 1896. He was convinced “that invisible powers (as well as the Feminists) were at work to frustrate him” (Watts 1958:14). It was during this time that he submitted himself to Satanism in order to command his second divorced wife, Frida, back to him. There is no doubt that he imagined himself “pledged in some way to Lucifer” (Watts 1958:14) by a kind of Mephistophelian pact. Many argue, though, that his “revolt against Christian authority is really the reverse of his desire for authority” (Brustein 1962:135) – his Satanism, then, simply representing a blasphemous way of paying tribute to Christianity. This period formed such an important part of his development as artist that critics have made a clear distinction between work done before, and the work done after his commitment to the asylum, referred to as, respectively, his Pre-Inferno and his Post-Inferno periods, referencing the work, *Inferno*,

written during his commitment. Telling of his religious journey, he angrily wrote to God in *Inferno*:

You have guided my destiny ill [...] and then you withdraw your protection from me and disown me in an absurd way, telling me to creep to the cross and repent! [...] When I was young I was sincerely pious, and you have made me a free-thinker. Out of the free-thinker you have made me an atheist. [...] And supposing I again become religious, I am sure that in another ten years, you will reduce religion to an absurdity.

Ah, what a game the gods play with us poor mortals (Strindberg 2009b).

After leaving the asylum, he went to live with Frida's mother in Austria. She, a disciple of Swedenborg's theology, found a way of curing him by, as he described it, "frightening [him] back to God" (Watts 1958:15). She encouraged him to read Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* and *Arcana Coelestia* – books which "had an immediate therapeutic effect on him and, in the long term, formalised his essentially religious nature" (Ward 1980:107). This cemented his later obsession with the doctrines of "Original Sin and Divine Retribution" (Watts 1980:107) which would find secure footing in his post-*Inferno* religious work. He finally returned to Sweden, to the small town of Lund, where he set his play *Easter*. He would later refer to *Easter* as forming the final part of his "confessional trilogy" (Watts 1958:122) – following *To Damascus* parts one and two.⁶

Strindberg's personal schism may be clarified by looking back at Darwin and Zola. Strindberg was drawn toward the freedom implicit in Darwin's new laws of nature, yet in those Naturalist writings inspired by Zola, Strindberg sometimes found himself at odds with a 'survival-of-the-fittest' world that seemed to lack both order and meaning. "Such internal oppositions remained with him during much of his life. He adopted scientific premises, then fought with them until the contradictions melded into a creative force" (Shideler 1999:102). His responses to Darwin typify this battle: at times he accepted Darwin's theory of evolution, yet he also opposed Spencerian aspects of social Darwinism.

Both Ibsen and Strindberg's personal and professional lives, therefore, were coloured by their intense discourse with Christian religious structures. Their particular discourse with religiosity, however, becomes interesting only after the publication of the *The Origin of Species*, the event and effect of which will be discussed next.

⁶ Perhaps he needed to write this 'confessional trilogy' because, dying of cancer in 1912, he pressed a Bible to his chest, "murmuring, 'All is atoned'" and died (Lucas 1962:323).

3.3. The Patriarch under Pressure: Evolution's Effect on the (Re)structuring of the Family

One must recall the reason that the family (and the father) of the nineteenth century found the story of Adam and Eve to be a viable model – and, in fact, the preferred model – for the structure of the family. Readers of the Bible usually attempt to “define the Bible as anything but literature” (Fuchs 1989:151). The result of this is that they assign the Bible a heightened sense of authority than they would to any other book because they regard the text as “the alleged locus of divine revelation” (Fuchs 1989:151) – a fact picked up by Ibsen in *Ghosts* with the character of Pastor Manders whose sole authority relies on the truthfulness of the biblical text.

Before the publication of *The Origin of Species*, therefore, the Bible's proposal as to the creation and structure of the human family was the only feasible option in a Christo-centric Victorian society. The fact that the story underscored the father's authority and, more importantly, created a divine bias towards such an arrangement, provides further evidence as to why the text was cited as the only possible reference for the family's organisation.

In 1859, however, when Darwin published his findings for the first time (and, subsequently revised it in 1860, 1861, 1866, 1869 and, finally, in 1872), the traditional (male authored) biblical story of creation was brought into question. It forced the theocracy, in a sense, for the first time, to redefine a previously-unquestioned factual occurrence as a possibly-inferior model to a theory based on scientific deduction – in other words, theologians had to now defend a belief-system that had previously gone largely unchallenged. It is owing to this reason, then, that “the Hebrew-Christian tradition was, for better or worse, committed to an anti-evolutionary view” (Reiser 1958:39). It is not possible to go into much detail about the mechanisms of Darwin's theory as Darwin takes four chapters to build the three tiers of his argument, but Vorzimmer (1972:6) summarises the mechanism thus:

- I. Inherent in the reproductive faculties of organic nature is a tendency to multiplication at a geometric rate of increase.
- II. So fixed and finite are the interrelationships of organic nature that those elements which constitute the sustenance for yet other forms will not match this rate of increase.
 - A. (Conclusion from I and II) There is, among all living organisms, a struggle for existence.

- III. In all organic forms there appear a number of inheritable variations. Among these there occasionally appear some which prove advantageous to the individuals possessing them in the struggle for existence.
- B. (Conclusion from A and III) Those organisms which possess advantageous variations will survive the struggle for existence.
- C. (Conclusion from B and I) A permanent and adaptive change in the forms of organic nature will be effected (as, over time, the new forms replace the old).⁷

The main thesis of the theory, therefore, is that “species are not fixed and immutable. One kind of organism can have descendants that belong to a different kind. From one original species, a number of different kinds may be generated” (Kitcher 1982:7). The implication of the theory on the traditional Christian theology is manifold.

The first and most apparent problem that it created was that the theory demonstrated that “the observable phenomena of biology made it impossible to believe in the stability of species in time, in a single original creation or in serial creation in relation with a succession of cataclysms” (Huxley 1958:2). Owing, however, to the Bible’s alleged divine authority; theologians could not concede the validity of the evolutionary argument as it would displace traditional Christianity’s celestial male authorship. Moreover, it would undermine the (F)ather’s (didactic) stronghold on his family’s path to spiritual salvation – if, in fact, his previous theory was proved to be questionable. As Reiser (1958:39) notes, “[t]his is obviously a case of historical determinism.” He elaborates by suggesting that theologians,

having embraced the ‘special creation’ theory of Genesis, and recognizing the *Old Testament* as the spiritual precursor of the Christian ideology with its inherent notions of ‘original sin,’ the Messianic role of the *Savior*, and the like, the early Christian Fathers had no escape from the theory that the human family began with our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. The effect of this was certainly to forestall the application of evolutionary ideas to the problem of the ‘descent of man’ (Reiser 1958:39).

Shideler (1999:8) notes that if God had not made “Adam in his own image, nor Eve from Adam’s rib, then the narrative, the biblical story that valorised a traditional male-dominated family structure, had to be replaced.”

⁷ Vorzimmer, in his summary, avoids terms with contemporary scientific connotations. Instead, “the terms and phrases used are nearly identical to those appearing in the pages of the *Origin*” (Vorzimmer 1972:7).

Besides disproving the literal occurrence of the story of Adam and Eve, it undermined humanity's specialness in the scheme of existence on earth. The Christian belief is that God created Adam separately from the other animals and that, subsequent to his creation, injected a soul into his body by the breath of God:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

The effect of this statement is that man mirrors the divine being that created him (as man was created in the image of God, unlike any of the other animals) – the father becomes, in a sense, God-like himself – the (F)ather. In the context of the story, the creation of man and woman is the culmination of the previous events. In a structural sense, therefore, the creation of Adam and Eve is the climax of the story. This meant that the patriarch could command not only women, but also, in a geo-political sense, govern over the entirety of creation with the authority of the divine. Furthermore, “by distancing themselves from animals, and from women, as lesser beings, traditional Victorian men hoped to keep Darwin’s chaotic nature at bay” (Shideler 1999:6).

The Darwinist viewpoint, however, refutes the claim that man is the apex of existence and displaced the patriarch’s divinely-granted importance. In contrast to God’s ordered and three-act design, Darwin suggested, instead, that a random set of occurrences lead to man’s sexual dominance in the family. This suggests that if the father was not independently created, it removes the authority that he claimed as God-given. In other words, he had to somehow come to terms with fact that he was neither special nor planned in a divine sequence of events. This had a double-sided effect.

On the one hand, the father retaliated against the system by either refuting its claims, declaring that it is “incompatible with the word of God” (White 1993), creating a strain of debate called ‘Christian Anti-Darwinism’. To a certain extent, *Easter* typifies, in theatre, this strain of thought. On the other hand, the father could face the available scientific evidence, concede its accuracy, and re-read the theory as, in fact, supporting a male-dominated family structure. This created a new strain of Darwinist thinking called ‘Christian Darwinism,’ which bred a new form of patriarchy that declared that, if Darwin’s theory is true, it was still compatible with God’s command that women be inferior to men as the theory underlined “women’s inherent and necessarily subordinate status in their search for mates [and] women’s intellectual inferiority based on brain size” (Shideler 1999:6). Moreover, they

attempted to utilize Darwin's work in order to "justify a Caucasian male chain of being" (Shideler 1999:7); a fact that did not go amiss for Christian feminist critics who similarly viewed Darwin's theory with suspicion.

Henrik Ibsen, however, goes into a different direction – rejecting the notion of a Christian God, he wrote *Ghosts* as an attack on the largely Christian society that he was living in. Ibsen, therefore, "had broken away from his early religious training, and was unwilling to believe in a God except in generalised and agnostic terms" (Shideler 1999: 59).

3.3.1. Christian Anti-Darwinism and Darwinist thought – A Reading of *Easter* and *Ghosts*

The reaction to the Darwinian concept of natural selection during the initial stages was, not unexpectedly, severe. Andrew Dickson White, one of Darwin's contemporaries, summarized the reaction that the fathers of the church (representing both God and the masculine figurehead of the family) displayed towards the theory.

They declared that Darwin was guilty of "a tendency to limit God's glory in creation"; that "the principle of natural selection is absolutely incompatible with the word of God"; that it "contradicts the revealed relations of creation to its Creator"; that it is "inconsistent with the fulness [sic] of his glory"; that it is "a dishonouring view of Nature"; and that there is "a simpler explanation of the presence of these strange forms among the works of God": that explanation being – "the fall of Adam" (White 1993). The fact that theologians instinctively draw the inconsistencies of reality to the fall of Adam (which, one must mention, was brought about by Eve), provides a telling insight into the way in which they perceived the proposition of an alternative creation story as a threat to the status quo of power. Before analysing this, it will be helpful to quote the summary of the reactions as recorded by White (1993) in full:

These attacks from such eminent sources set the clerical fashion for several years. One distinguished clerical reviewer, in spite of Darwin's thirty years of quiet labour, and in spite of the powerful summing up of his book, prefaced a diatribe by saying that Darwin 'might have been more modest had he given some slight reason for dissenting from the views generally entertained.' Another distinguished clergyman, vice-president of a Protestant institute to combat 'dangerous' science, declared Darwinism 'an attempt to dethrone God.' Another critic spoke of persons accepting the Darwinian views as 'under the frenzied inspiration of the inhaler of mephitic gas,' and of Darwin's argument as 'a jungle of fanciful assumption.' Another spoke of Darwin's views as suggesting that 'God is dead', and declared that Darwin's work

‘does open violence to everything which the Creator himself has told us in the Scriptures of the methods and results of his work.’ Still another theological authority asserted: ‘If the Darwinian theory is true, Genesis is a lie, the whole framework of the book of life falls to pieces, and the revelation of God to man, as we Christians know it, is a delusion and a snare.’

This reaction the publication of the book is telling of the danger that it posed to the Christian fathers. Darwin foresaw this reaction, and wrote at the end of *The Origin of Species* that “any one whose disposition leads him to attach more weight to unexplained difficulties than to the explanation of a certain number of facts, will certainly reject my theory” (Darwin 2013). Darwin’s prediction was fairly accurate and he was immediately criticized for his allegedly inconsistent scientific reasoning (most notably only by scientists who were also theologians).

Scientist such as J. W. Dawson, one of Darwin’s contemporaries, believed that Darwin had reasoned “as to possibilities, not by facts” and that his theory was “not a result of scientific induction but a mere hypothesis, to account for facts not otherwise explicable except by the doctrine of creation” (Moore 1979:205).

The theologians, such as those of the evangelical “Trinity Church” (Moore 1979:201) and “Cambridge University”, however, felt that their trump card against the theory of evolution was the fact that Darwin made a falsifiable claim directly in the face of “direct evidence: the Bible, its claim to be the Word of God, and its revelation of prehistory” (Moore 1979:201). What is more, they regarded the mere proposition of the argument as blasphemous, casting Darwin as an “infidel” (White 1993) and, simultaneously, labelled evolution as merely an offensive incarnation of “atheism” (Moore 1979:204).

Darwin’s theory created a social paradigm for change that artists tried to address within a wider context. Ibsen and Strindberg, among others, attempted to create plays with “plots that portray the undermining or displacement of the father or husband, contain aspects of a Darwinian biocentrism” (Shideler 1999:4). They dramatize, in other words, a “family structure in which the patriarchy is breaking down and the resultant conflict reflects a search for a new, more flexible structure that arises from the conditions of human life and the laws of nature” (Shideler 1999:4), in contrast to a biblically-based family structure, built upon a “religious hierarchy that privileged men over women” (Shideler 1999:4).

The problem that one might encounter with such an argument, however, is that there might not appear to be a completely consistent connection between Darwin’s undermining of the

notion of the divine father and the diminished role of the father in the patriarchal family; however Shideler notes that “there seems to be a constant yet varying interplay between unstable paternal authority in the family and what J. Hillis Miller calls ‘the disappearance of God’” (Shideler 1999:4).

Ibsen himself was an exponent of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution which, after being published in Swedish in 1871 (precisely ten years before the publication of *Ghosts*), immediately drew strong criticism from the traditionalist Scandinavian patriarchy, as discussed earlier. A reading of *Ghosts*, then, emphasizing the presence and the affect that the (F)athers have on the development of the drama, will highlight Ibsen’s critique of the patriarchal family tree.

3.3.1.1. The Displacement of the (F)ather in *Ghosts*

In *Ghosts*, it finds its outlet when Pastor Manders criticizes Mrs. Alving for reading “this sort of literature” (Ibsen 2009) and for expounding her modern ideas. It is widely accepted that the books that Pastor Manders is referring to are ones that bring religion into question and *The Origin of the Species* certainly seems a likely candidate, if only because Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection could not be put into place *without* challenging the notion of creationism and the “traditional Christian belief in a Divine Father” (Shideler 1997:277).

When Pastor Manders addresses Mrs. Alving for reading these books, he asks her, “Do you feel any the better or the happier for readings books of this kind?” (Ibsen 2009). She answers that the books make her “more self-reliant” (Ibsen 2009). This is telling as it ties into the idea that the toppling of patriarchal religious ideology is closely interconnected to the rise of Darwinian thought. She explains that the books

give me an explanation or a confirmation of lots of different ideas that have come into my own mind. But what surprises me, Mr. Manders, is that, properly speaking, there is nothing at all new in these books. There is nothing more in them than what most people think and believe. The only thing is, that most people either take no account of it or won't admit it to themselves.

She highlights here that the problematizing of religious doctrine is not something that is new or, in fact, uncommon. She stresses that not many people are willing to admit their doubts in the face of public scrutiny. This is particularly something that plagued Darwin himself as Hitchens (2007:93) states that

[Darwin] did not abandon his religious views with a light heart. [...] His *Origin of Species* [...] was very reluctant to accept its own implications and referred throughout to 'creation' without ever mentioning 'evolution'. The author himself feared that these very implications, if followed, would be like 'confessing a murder.' [It was only later] that he admitted that his work and his life had slowly abolished his faith.

In the play, the idea undermining the (F)ather, or the fear of public scrutiny, is carried through to its tragic end that, ironically, topples the patriarchal family unit in the play. In order to do this, the play queries the authority of the (F)ather (both deserved and undeserved) within the family unit. Shideler (1999:61) notes that, during the nineteenth century,

[r]easonable subordination to authority is the very essence of [Christianity], which looks upon the physical superiority of man as the expression of a superior relationship willed by God, and a stable order as the chief end of all social organizations. The house-father represents the law, and possesses unlimited power over others; he is the breadwinner, the pastor, and the priest of his household.

Ghosts, by following the biblical narrative of the return of the prodigal son, is clearly questioning the notion of authority tied to the divinely granted virtuousness of the father. When the orphanage burns down, for example, the idea of protecting their virtuous integrity ironically causes Pastor Manders to enter into the illicit transaction with Engstrand, the other father figure present on stage.

Within a Darwinian context, the plot hinges on the notion of an ideal father whose image, although it haunts the characters, can in fact never be determined. Each father figure in the play represents a variation of a dead, sickly or dying illusion of an ideal father. Not one of the father figures in the household to which Oswald returns is strong:

the ex-seaman, Engstrand, drinks; pastor Manders, as God's representative, uses his hypocritical piety as a crutch; and Captain Alving, the absent father whose deadly legacy shapes the plot, has long since died (Shideler 1999:83).

From the first page, in fact, the play undermines the construct of the divine (F)ather. The first stage directions of the play illuminates that the action takes place in

[a] large room looking upon a garden door in the left-hand wall, and two in the right. [...] At the back the room opens into a conservatory rather smaller than the room. From the right-hand side of this, a door leads to the garden. Through the large panes of glass that form the outer wall of the conservatory, a gloomy fjord landscape can be discerned, half-obsured by steady rain.

ENGSTRAND is standing close to the garden door. His left leg is slightly deformed, and he wears a boot with a clump of wood under the sole. REGINA, with an empty garden-syringe in her hand, is trying to prevent his coming in (Ibsen 2009).

The very first visual impression that the play makes is one of confinement and obscuring rain. Engstrand, the first father that the audience encounters, “is associated with the murk outside both by his physical participation in it – he is dripping – and by his comment on it” (Northam 1952:60). He enters through the garden⁸ and Regina attempts to keep him away:

REGINA. [...] Stop where you are. You're positively dripping.

ENGSTRAND. It's the Lord's own rain, my girl.

REGINA. It's the devil's rain, I say (Ibsen 2009).

Thus, according to Northam (1952:60), there is a connection made between the external gloom and the “deformed creature whose element it is.” The religious connotation, therefore, and the play's critique thereof, is brought to the forefront from the opening lines, underlining its unmistakable significance. Engstrand's visible deformity soon comes to symbolize this moral obliquity: he is both a drinker and a hypocrite. “He lends a touch of drunkenness to the Orphanage which Mrs. Alving is raising in honour of her dead husband” (Northam 1952:60).

ENGSTRAND. Tomorrow is the opening of the Orphanage, and I expect there will be a fine kick-up here and plenty of good strong drink, don't you know.

During the conversation with Regina, from which we learn that she is the bastard daughter of Mrs. Engstrand, now dead, the carpenter's moral deformity is increased:

REGINA. Poor mother – you worried her into her grave pretty soon.

ENGSTRAND (shrugging his shoulders). Of course, of course; I have got to take the blame for everything.

REGINA (beneath her breath, as she turns away). Ugh – that leg, too!

One becomes aware, then, that Engstrand's character is taking on a darker hue, and “his limp is beginning to denote deep depravity” (Northam 1952:61). Northam continues by suggesting that

[a]ll the time this revelation confers upon Captain Alving, whose memorial it is, something of Engstrand's deformity; the connection between carpenter and captain is made plainer by Engstrand's intention of becoming himself a founder of a home – for sailors; when we learn that it will be in fact a disorderly house, this knowledge seems

⁸ One cannot help but notice the connection between this garden and that Eden. In certain respects, both gardens serve as a walled structure to prevent external influences of depravity to enter – both quite unsuccessfully.

to extend to the Orphanage and enlarge the smear already left by the earlier hints of drunkenness (Northam 1952:61).

The play's first encounter with an actual father clearly underlines the play's agenda to undermine the notion of the (F)ather. In the opening scene, therefore, the play raises one of its primary questions: "the relationship between child and parent and the obligation of one to the other" (Shideler 1999:83). The effect of which is that both Engstrand's misrepresentation of himself as Regina's father and Captain Alving's drunken lechery undermine parental status and traditional attitudes towards fatherhood and authority (which, for context, one must recall Wisdom's advice in the Book of Proverbs as discussed in chapter two).

After Regina hustles Engstrand off, Pastor Manders arrives – the second father that the play deals with – he is a father not only in his metaphorical connection to idea of fatherhood, but also to his title of being a father in the church; therefore representing an ideal father (in contrast to Engstrand who obviously represents a deprived father). Ibsen, however, is quick to undermine this idea.

The Pastor, upon his entrance, immediately complains of the weather – "[i]t is most tiresome, this rain every day" (Ibsen 2009) – but his costume "makes him at home in the outer gloom – more so than any other character" (Northam 1952:61): "He wears an overcoat, carries an umbrella" (Ibsen 2009). In a vague way, therefore, he is linked with the depravity and hypocrisy of Engstrand, however "a veil of conventional judgements obscures his view of evil" (Northam 1952:61).

The play, then, goes on to dramatize the potentially poisonous ideal of the nuclear family, while reminding the audience through the pompous Pastor Manders "of the religious premises upon which that family is based" (Shideler 1999:83).

Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving go on to discuss the details surrounding the orphanage. From one point of view, the orphanage is Mrs. Alving's attempt to kill the heritage of the dead father, an attempt quite literally to get him out of her house and into his own, "a church built to celebrate an illusion" (Shideler 1999:84). But the orphanage also represents a fatherless humanity, and "Manders's question of insurance raises the problem of what happens to the human family when a God no longer creates, plans or controls. Who will guarantee the future (Shideler 1999:84)? Concerned with earthly things, the freethinking woman, Mrs. Alving, would insure the buildings. Manders, the insecure male preoccupied

with maintaining the appearance of the Christian patriarchal tradition, would not – not so much because he trusts in God as because he fears criticism by fellow citizens:

MANDERS. But what about the opinion of the people hereabouts (Ibsen 2009)?

When Oswald, the prodigal son, enters the room, Manders notes the likeness between the son and the dead father. His comment leads into a dialogue about, first, the idealized Captain and, second, normal family life. Oswald argues for the legitimacy of the married families he knows, and he contrasts the family lives of these artist-lovers with the escapades of traditional husbands and fathers when away from home:

OSVALD. There are a considerable number of [artists] who have not the means to marry, Mr. Manders. [...] But they can have a home of their own, all the same; a good many of them have. And they are very well-regulated and very comfortable homes, too. [...]

MANDERS. Oh, but I am not talking of bachelor establishments. By a home I mean family life—the life a man lives with his wife and children.

OSVALD. Exactly, or with his children and his children's mother. [...]

MANDERS. Then what you are speaking of are those unprincipled conditions known as irregular unions! [...]

OSVALD. Let me tell you this, Mr. Manders. I have been a constant Sunday guest at one or two of these "irregular" households. [...] But never have I heard one objectionable word there, still less have I ever seen anything that could be called immoral. No; but do you know when and where I have met with immorality in artists' circles? [...] I have met with it when someone or other of your model husbands and fathers have come out there to have a bit of a look round on their own account, and have done the artists the honour of looking them up in their humble quarters. Then we had a chance of learning something, I can tell you. These gentlemen were able to instruct us about places and things that we had never so much as dreamt of (Ibsen 2009).

Ibsen, here, is highlighting the importance of considering models other than the traditional Adam-and-Eve model that Pastor Manders promulgates. The description of Mrs. Alving's flight and return to her home highlights this point:

MANDERS. Have you forgotten that after barely a year of married life you were standing at the very edge of a precipice? That you forsook your house and home? That you ran away from your husband – yes, Mrs. Alving, ran away, ran away – and refused to return to him in spite of his requests and entreaties?

MRS. ALVING. Have you forgotten how unspeakably unhappy I was during that first year?

MANDERS. To crave for happiness in this world is simply to be possessed by a spirit of revolt. What right have we to happiness? No! We must do our duty, Mrs. Alving. And your duty was to cleave to the man you had chosen and to whom you were bound by a sacred bond.

Pastor Manders convinced Mrs. Alving that she had a Christian obligation to submit to her husband, regardless of the Captain's obvious misconduct. In order to further underline his agenda, Ibsen directly quotes the creation narrative of Adam and Eve wherein God commands that "[t]herefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Mrs. Alving did not 'cleave' to her husband, instead eloping to Pastor Manders, seeking that idyllic husband and father figure that her religious faith taught her to believe in. "Rejecting her fallen husband, she had turned to the nearest representative of the Holy Father, thinking that he would fulfil her dreams" (Shideler 1999:82).

She reveals, however, that upon her return to her household, she took control of all the financial affairs, thus usurping her husband's role. Aware now of Captain Alving's debauchery, Pastor Manders consents, for the sake of public opinion, to go on with the ceremony honouring the dead Captain; in essence, Manders agrees to preserve the false image of the patriarchy that he himself personifies in its religious manifestation.

The final corruption of the family unfolds when Helene Alving reveals to Manders that Regina is Captain Alving's bastard daughter and that she herself feels she was sold by her aunts and mother into marriage. Owing to her own cowardice, she admits that she would allow Oswald to marry his half-sister, Regina. Shideler (1999:85) comments that "[t]hese scenes reek with the decay of the patriarchal family structure."

In the second act, however, the most important thematic moment in the play occurs. Mrs. Alving, in her Ghosts speech, confronts the discourse of the Creationist Patriarchy that imprisoned her:

MRS. ALVING. Ghosts. When I heard Regina and Oswald in there, it was as if I was seeing ghosts. But I almost believe we *are* ghosts, all of us, Pastor. It's not only what we inherit from our fathers and mothers that keeps on returning in us. It's all kinds of old dead doctrines and opinions and beliefs, that sort of thing. They aren't alive in us; but they hang on all the same, and we can't get rid of them. I just have to pick up a newspaper, and it's as if I could see the ghosts slipping between the lines. They must be haunting our whole country, ghosts everywhere – so many and think, they're like grains of sand. And there we are, the lot of us, so miserably afraid of the light (Ibsen 2009).

Mrs. Alving refers here not only to environment and heredity but to much more subtle psychological problem of escaping old ideas, old emotional and intellectual habits. Ibsen, in the persona of Helene Alving, touches here upon the central debate surrounding the structure

of the family unit. The traditionalist Adam-and-Eve model, Ibsen suggests is clearly ineffective in a post-Darwinian world wherein the father as conduit to the divine, has been toppled. Mrs. Alving's emphasis on the notion of inheritance clearly underlines the play's preoccupation with habitual and unquestioned systems of authority.

As the final nail in the coffin of the (F)ather in *Ghosts*, Ibsen uses the symbolic tool of impotence to dethrone the father and his divine authority by disallowing him his key biological function within the structure of the family. Chevalier & Gheerbrant (1996:372) note that one can define the figure of the (F)ather as symbolizing "procreation, ownership [and] domination" What is more, he stands for all figures of authority including, and most importantly, "God himself" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996:372).

All of the male characters in the play are impotent on some level. Captain Alving, being deceased, has been made impotent by the fact that he is no longer living. He has failed as a father because he could not raise his son⁹ and, what is more, his son dies before being able to complete his own fatherly duties of fathering yet another son. Engstrand never fathered children in the first place as Regina is later revealed to be the daughter of Captain Alving and not his own. Osvald is impotent owing to his venereal disease: he cannot have a child without also infecting the child in the same way that he is infected – if he were to have a son, that son would also be destined to die ill and impotent. Pastor Manders – by the mere fact that he is a clergyman – cannot have children owing to his religious duties and, in fact, rejects all the advances made by Mrs. Alving.

This castration of the father symbolically represents the castration of the Divine Father, thus undermining the (F)ather's symbolic function of procreation. In fact, more than merely not providing life, the main (missing) father in *Ghosts*, Captain Alving, actually takes life away: Osvald's disease, which he inherited from Captain Alving, threatens his very existence and, in fact, kills him by the end of the play. Moreover, Captain Alving's castration is further emphasized by the fact that he is the main embodiment of the 'ghosts' that are haunting the household – not only impotent, then, but also desperately clinging to his lost potency.

⁹ One could argue that he has succeeded in raising Osvald if the measurement of "success" in fatherhood is linked to the notion of the child *becoming* the father. In this sense, Osvald's inheritance of his father's disease as well as his early death (much like his fathers'), casts him squarely in the shadow of his father's image. If this is the case, he still has not raised what anyone would call a healthy son, even though he mimics the father in every other sense.

Ibsen therefore, was clearly concerned with the family structure of the nineteenth century. His desire to query and, indeed, to overthrow the conventional structural arrangement of the family are unequivocally underscored in his jottings along the margins of the first draft of *Ghosts*. Ibsen writes that

Marriage for external reasons, even when these are religious and moral, brings a Nemesis upon the offspring. [...] These women of the present day, ill-used as daughters, as sisters, as wives, not educated according to their gifts, prevented from following their inclination, deprived of their inheritance, embittered in temper – it is these who furnish the mothers of the new generation. What is the result? The keynote is to be: The prolific growth of our intellectual life, in literature, art, etc. – and in contrast to this: the whole of mankind gone astray (Lavrin 1969:24).

3.3.1.2. Reinstating the (F)ather in *Easter*

August Strindberg, in *Easter*, on the other hand, falls unmistakably in the Christian anti-Darwinist category of thought. It has an almost overbearing Christian message declaring that the spiritual salvation of the family is invariably linked to a repudiation of Darwinian thought; in essence, Strindberg was trying to “redeem mankind from spiritual emptiness” (Brustein 1962:134). Strindberg’s desperate desire to reclaim the traditional family model with the publication of the play, emphasising the positive role of the (F)ather, creates a slightly awkward plea in a world invariably affected by Darwinian thought. Carlson (1982:124) notes that “[r]eferences to Christ are so numerous, analogies to the Passion so obviously drawn, that the effect produced is embarrassingly close to religiosity.”

Elis Heyst, the son of the infamous Mr. Heyst, finds himself in crisis as he attempts to overcome the embarrassment of his father’s financial embezzlement by subduing rumours spread about the family and performing community service by teaching the children of those who lost their investments. Elis’s mother, driven to a life of a recluse, only dares to appear in town under the auspices of piously attending church ceremonies. Elis’s sister, Eleonora, having escaped from the asylum, slowly manipulates the family to accept salvation, which can only come after atoning for their sins through a confrontation with Lindkvist (the play’s God-figure), their debtor. The story’s temporal arrangement, therefore, is one which moves towards salvation by moving towards God. Elis’s prophesying that “[t]he days are lengthening and the shadows are growing shorter” (Strindberg 1958:126) suggests that the Heysts are “emerging into light from the darkness of winter” (Ward 1980:203).

Easter very explicitly links the notion of religiosity and familial conformation to religiosity to a sense of divine salvation. The play's obvious links to biblical narratives and symbols are emphasised by, for example, its stage directions. The play's three acts are labelled with days from the Christian Holy Week of Easter; Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Eve. The progression through the holiday is further emphasized by the successive uses of Hayden's *Sieben Worte des Erlösers* ('The Seven Words of the Redeemer') as overtures to each act. Likewise, Strindberg's use of lighting as described in the stage directions further emphasise its religious agenda. In the first act, a sole shaft of light illuminates the stage, but disappears by the last scene of the act. The second act begins with the drapes of the living room drawn and all natural light thus cut off. Act three opens with grey weather, but concludes with the clouds parting and revealing the sun during Lindkvist's salvation of the family.

Strindberg, in contrast to Ibsen, casts the figure of the (F)ather almost always in a sympathetic light. Mr. Heyst, now imprisoned, is virtuously atoning for his sins. His dutiful wife, Mrs. Heyst, subdues herself by wearing black and mourning in seclusion until the family finds their pathway to salvation. As a father, then, Mr. Heyst, in his atonement, is suffering for his sins and successfully leads the family to salvation with the aid of Eleonora – the figure of Christ. His son, Elis, eventually also atones for his participation in the family's moral misconduct during his climactic confrontation with Lindkvist – the figure of God.

There are therefore four religious figures in *Easter* that represent the (F)ather in its various incarnations – Mr. Heyst and his son, Elis, and Lindkvist (and Eleonora as representative of Christ). Chevalier & Gheerbrant (1996:372) suggest that

[t]he role of the father is regarded as one which discourages attempts at independence and exercises influence which impoverishes, constrains, undermines, renders impotent and makes submissive.

Pastor Manders, in *Ghosts*, certainly seems to reflect these notions. He is constantly chastising Mrs. Alving for symbolically castrating her husband by not standing *behind* him and supporting him during his time of need.

MANDERS. [...] But a wife is not appointed to be her husband's judge. It was your duty to bear with humility the cross which a Higher Power had, in its wisdom, laid upon you. But instead of that you rebelliously throw away the cross, desert the backslider whom you should have supported, go and risk your good name and

reputation, and—nearly succeed in ruining other people's reputation into the bargain (Ibsen 2009).

Mrs. Alving's rejection of the "Higher Power's" symbolic cross stands as a clear repudiation of Calvinistic notions of authority. Strindberg, however, reverses these notions through Lindkvist's chastisement of Elis:

LINDKVIST. Why, he is engaged to Miss Alice, and it was made known at a certain recital, where your fiancée helped spread the glad news.

ELIS. Why should it have been such a secret?

LINDKVIST. Haven't two young people the right to keep their hearts' secrets from you?

ELIS. And on account of their happiness I had to suffer this agony!

LINDKVIST. Yes, just as others have suffered for your happiness—your mother, your fiancée, your sister, your friends (Strindberg 1958:172).

Where Pastor Manders chastises Mrs. Alving for not supporting her husband, Lindkvist chastises Elis for not supporting, in return, his fiancée, Kristina. Lindkvist's moral guidance, in contrast to that of the Pastor, does indeed lead the family to salvation and happiness. Strindberg's suggestion that familial compliance to the Adam and Eve model would lead to salvation and happiness, clearly serves as a repudiation of Ibsen's claim that it would lead to a family's suffering and eventual demise in face of overwhelming religious obligations.

The play, therefore, follows on a certain level, Elis's pathway to spiritual salvation and his acceptance of his role as the interim (F)ather of the household. The play's positive conclusion is brought about by Elis's acceptance of this role. The final few lines of the play, as well as the final stage directions, emphasize this point:

ELEONORA. We are going to the country, Benjamin. Within two months! Oh, if the time would only pass quickly. [She takes calendar and tears the pages off one by one.] April, May, June, and the sun is shining on them all. Now you must thank God, who helped us to the country.

BENJAMIN [Bashfully]. Can't I say my thanks in silence?

ELEONORA. Yes, you can say it in silence, for now the clouds are gone, and it can be heard up there.

[Kristina has entered from L. and stopped. Elis and Mrs. Heyst from R. Kristina and Elis start to meet each other with loving smiles] (Strindberg 1958:174-175).

What is further underscored here is the promise of a future romantic relationship between Benjamin and Eleonora – the two children in the play. During the first act, a tentative courtship scene leads to Benjamin's acceptance of Christ as his redeemer. The suggestion, thereafter, is that if Eleonora and Benjamin marry, Benjamin too will assume the role of a

(F)ather himself – a role unto which Eleonora will happily submit, having led him to this acceptance in the first place:

ELIS. You look so happy and cheerful, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN. She [Eleonora] talked so beautifully to me.

ELIS. What did she talk about?

BENJAMIN. She told me some of her own stories – and a lot about religion.

ELIS [Rising]. Which made you happy?

BENJAMIN. Yes, indeed! (Strindberg 1958:143-144).

The two budding (F)athers in the play – Benjamin and Elis – are victims of pride; Elis because he denounces the need to suffer for ones sins, and Benjamin because he was overly confident that he would pass his Latin examinations. They are, therefore, brought to atonement and reminded by Kristina that “it is a sign of grace to suffer when you are innocent” (Strindberg 1958:133). It is only after accepting their own subordination to the celestial Father (God himself – Lindkvist) that they can hope to become the conduits towards the divine for the remainder of the family, thereby leading the family towards salvation.

Strindberg, therefore, subverts Ibsen’s image of ‘bearing the cross’ by not only undermining Ibsen’s critique of Calvinistic patriarchal religious notions by casting Christ as a woman, but also promises salvation in exchange for accepting the burden of carrying the cross – of suffering and atoning for your sins. He, therefore, restores the potency of the (F)ather (that Ibsen undermined) by rewarding his male characters after they have atoned for their sins – Elis recaptures his control of his wife as well as the family and, thereafter, the good name of the imprisoned father has been restored by the promise of his imminent release. Strindberg, then “tried to retain the old Creationist hierarchy as part of Darwin’s new tree of life” (Shideler 1999:6).

3.4. Conclusion

At this point, it seems clear that these two authors were engaged in a religious argument in their respective attempts to re-examine, displace or re-assert the role of the father within the family owing to the effect that Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* had on the family of the nineteenth century. Strindberg, in *Easter*, is suggesting that the role of the father as symbolic and functional head of the household, even when it is under threat, is still the best structural arrangement, all things considered. *Ghosts*, however, seems to be transforming the notion of the father-as-saviour into an impotent father so as to underline the need to re-examine the religiously-based patriarchal family structures that block alternative modes of thought.

Within a wider context, the nuclear family units of the nineteenth century, therefore, based upon the biblical model proposed in the Adam and Eve narrative, were central in the debate surrounding the gradual decline of religiosity during the time. Unmistakably one can surmise that Darwin's *The Origin of Species* played a seminal role in the restructuring of patriarchal family. The role of the (F)ather – representing a conduit to God bestowed with a divine authority – was clearly under threat; unquestionably losing its divine status.

This proves significant for a contemporary Afrikaans practitioner who is concerned with the religiosity of the Afrikaner cultural identity in relation to the family, as stated in chapter one. Before embarking on a discussion of ...*van ons vaders*, the practical component of this thesis, a very brief elaboration of what is meant by the term 'Afrikaner' will be done so as to frame the family that is presented in therein within a specific dramatic context.

4. The Displacement of the Afrikaner (F)ather

4.1. Introduction

The Afrikaner family, to a large extent, shares many similarities with regards to authority to those that Ibsen and Strindberg were grappling with. “Afrikaners are the only people that were born a Calvinistic nation” (Oliver 2010:3), so it would make sense that the Afrikaner culture formed with religious doctrine in place from the outset. The Afrikaner culture is one that, up until recently, considered themselves a deeply religious culture with its feet firmly rooted in religious ideology – “geloof [is] nog altyd ‘n integrale deel van die Afrikaner se psige” (Pietersen 2011:i).

This is probably because “only the Dutch Calvinistic religion was tolerated during the first 143 years after colonisation [and] [o]ther denominations were simply absorbed by the Reformed faith” (Oliver 2010:3). Commenting on the Afrikaner’s uniquely conservative religious views, Oliver (2010:3) notes that

the Afrikaners shared amongst other things an ox wagon trek, civil war, war against empires, war with indigenous people and a gold rush with other countries that also formed during the same period in other parts of the world (such as Australia and North America). But unlike these nations, there were no public saloons, bar girls and Wild West shooting in the streets of South Africa due to the influence of the conservative faith of the nation.

The culture, then, would unsurprisingly also lay claim on a family structure that mirrors that of Adam and Eve, as discussed in chapter two.

The Origin of Species, therefore, was viewed with just as much suspicion within the Afrikaans culture of the twentieth century than as the nineteenth century patriarchy of Europe. Reverend J. D. Vorster, moderator of the NG Church and the brother of the fourth South African Prime Minister, John Voster, fearing that the theory of evolution would uproot the divine authority of the patriarchy, wrote in the *The Star* of 21 September 1955 that “[t]he theory of evolution is in direct conflict with the teaching of the Bible and should not be included in school textbooks” (Pietersen 2011:ii). The Church’s fear of evolution and the effect thereof was clearly evident because

[i]n die *Kerkbode* van 27 Mei 1981 erken ds. S. J. Eloff van die Algemene Sinodale Diens dat beroemde professore skool- en universiteitshandboeke van tyd tot tyd ondersoek om te verseker dat daar nie standpunte ingesluit word wat evolusionisme (lees evolusie) ondersteun nie (Pietersen 2011:ii).

The Afrikaner culture, with its families, as well as its social structures built around the unquestioned divine authority of the father, would certainly not allow any theories that would uproot its patriarchal family tree. Within the Apartheid era, with many voices of protest blocked by censorship – both within theatre and the wider literature – it comes as no surprise that the Afrikaner today has perhaps a somewhat disadvantaged view the contemporary structure of the family, thereby still conforming to the biblical rules of the authority of the patriarch (discussed in chapter two).

The struggles that the nineteenth century scholars and literary figures of Scandinavia (and the wider Europe) faced with the publication of *The Origin of Species* were not necessarily shared with South Africa (in any significant way) because of the ban on any literature that would threaten or displace the authority of the Calvinistic religious (and political) structures. The Apartheid government, under the Christian National Education System, blocked easy access to Darwin's theories:

Kinders is [...] met 'n geruste hart aan skole toevertrou omdat ouers geweet het dat, onder die vaandel van Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys, 'n alles-insluitende Afrikanerpakket ten opsigte van moraliteit en kultuur, met die Bybel as sentrale ikoon, aangebied is (Pietersen 2011:ii).

There have been Afrikaans theatre practitioners (such as Reza de Wet) that have attempted to dismantle the structures of authority of the white, Afrikaans (F)ather (both within the family and within a wider cultural framework), however only recently has there been a noticeable effect in terms of the religiosity of the culture (as revealed in the statistic discussed in chapter one).

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the specific Afrikaner-model that the production, ...*van ons vaders*, presents and, thereafter, in chapter five, discuss how ...*van ons vaders* attempted to problematize this model in relation to *The Origin of Species*. In so doing, I will first define what is meant by the term 'Afrikaner' and 'Afrikaner Identity' within the context of the play, thereby clarifying the reasoning behind the production's attempt to displace the structures of the patriarchal family. This will be done by referring to Van Niekerk Viljoen's book, *Ideaal en Werklikheid* (1981) as it provides an excellent concise working model for the specific 'Afrikaner' that I am problematizing with ...*van ons vaders*.

Crucially, the point must be underlined that when I am referring to the 'Afrikaner' in this chapter, I am not referring to *all* Afrikaners, as that would amount to cultural stereotyping. I

am therefore only highlighting certain aspects that Van Niekerk Viljoen points out to be present in certain respects of the cultural identity. This is only done so as to serve a creative purpose for ...*van ons vaders* and does not attempt to be a list of what constitutes an *actual* Afrikaans individual (as that would fall outside the scope of this thesis). In summary, the Afrikaner that I am referring to is a largely fictionalised model of an Afrikaner (F)ather that serves a limited creative purpose. Similarly, when I am referring to the Afrikaner culture, I am referring not to the entirety of the Afrikaans culture as it exists today, but rather to a somewhat fictionalized model to be utilized for the creative goals of ...*van ons vaders*.

4.2. The Afrikaner (F)ather and (H)is Identity: Towards a Working Definition

The Afrikaner culture has historically seen itself as a somewhat exclusive culture within the wider African context. This is perhaps because it has continually had to define itself in relation to other cultures, instead of being able to exist autonomously; first to Dutch, then against English, and finally as a threatened tongue within a larger African framework (owing to its infamous connotations to Apartheid). Oliver (2010:3) adds that

[s]ince 1652, South Africa was part of an empire: the first one and a half century under the economic-driven Dutch company and the next one and a half century under the spatial and cultural driven British Empire.

The journey of the Afrikaner's path towards autonomy is one that can perhaps be seen as rather metaphorical. Poetically, almost like a family drama itself, the Afrikaner tried to separate himself from its Dutch heritage, shortly thereafter attempting to move away from the British parentage, and finally, separate itself from its African siblings. Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:59) reiterates this point, suggesting that

[e]en van die Afrikaner se kenmerke wat hom 'n Afrikaner maak, is juis 'n gesamentlike strewe by alle Afrikaners om die identiteit, die afsonderlikheid van die Afrikanervolk as volk in die toekoms te handhaaf en te bewaar, en ook om dit te verryk en uit te bou.

The Afrikaner culture, therefore, is one that is inexorably linked to a sense of separateness from other cultures and exclusiveness within itself. This is most telling, as Dutch journalist Fred De Vries (2011:3) relates the alleged story of the first Afrikaner that occurred in March 1707:

Op 'n dag in die nasomer het vier jongmanne, goed gekoring, die rustige Stellenbosch te perd binnegeery. By die watermeul aan die rand van die dorp het hulle by die meulenaar en skrywer Dirk Simonsz ingebars. Hulle het so gevloek en tekere egaan dat Simonsz hulle summier uitgesmyt het. In die verbygaan het hulle boonop sy vrou vir 'n hoer uitgemaak. Landdros Johannes Starrenburg en heemraad Jan Botma het op die petalje afgekom. Drie van die vier mans het hulle vining uit die voete gemaak, maar die 16-jarige Hendrik Biebouw wou nie padgee nie. Hy het die landdros met 'n meelsak probeer slaan en dié het hom met 'n sweep gedreig. Biebouw het hom kordaat aangekyk en die historiese woorde gespreek: '...ik wil niet lopen, 'k ben een Africaander, al slat die landrost mijn dood, of al setten hij mijn in den trunk, ik sal nog niet wil swijgen.'

De Vries (2011:5) highlights that Biebouw's

rebelse gees sou onder die nageslag voortbestaan. [...] Verder het sy hardkoppigheid voortgeleef in die apartheidstrategie wat kort na die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, toe die hele wêreld nog diep geskok was oor die Jodevervolging, besluit het om rassisme in wette vas te lê en die swart meerderheid permanent buite die speelveld te plaas.

He concludes that "Biebouw se oorlewingsdrang leef post-1994 voort by die Afrikaners wat nou as gekortwiekte minderheid probeer om hul plek te vind in die nuwe, demokratiese Suid-Afrika met die ANC aan die stuur van sake (De Vries 2011:5).

This highlights three points; the first is that it underpins the notion that the Afrikaner has a problematic relationship with his identity within a wider South African context. The second point that one must make, is that, when referring to the Afrikaner, I am not referring to non-white Afrikaans speaking individuals. Non-white Afrikaans speakers "was in die apartheidjare [as] tweederangse burgers [beskou] en het dus met heeltemal ander probleme te kampe gehad" (De Vries 2011:6) and therefore fall outside of the scope of this particular study. In fact, Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:59) argues that the Afrikaner prides itself in its "rassesuiwerheid."¹⁰ The third, and final point, is that the Afrikaner culture appears to be somewhat torn between a conservative ideal of the past – the 'Afrikaner (F)ather' – and the contemporary Afrikaner that, in some way, tries to contend with this sins of the father.

¹⁰ This term carries along with it a tinge of irony. An example of this mentality occurs in 1960 when the motion was suggested that coloured Afrikaans-speakers should be represented in parliament, to which H. F. Verwoerd dramatically replied, "Ek sal nie die geskiedenis ingaan as die man wat die Afrikanervolk op die pad van verbastering geplaas het nie" (De Vries 2011:6). De Vries contends that "Verwoerd moes geweet het dat dit onsin was, want die suiwerheid van ras – daardie 'witheid' waarop Afrikaners hulle soms so graag beroep – is 'n fabel." The poet, Breyten Breytenbach, in 1973, proclaimed that "[o]ns is 'n bastervolk met 'n bastertaal. [...] In daardie gedeelte van ons bloed wat van Europa kom, was die vloek van meerderwaardigheid" (De Vries 2011:6).

Through a post-Darwinian lens, ...*van ons vaders*, tries to address the divide between these two foundational differences; however, before embarking on a discussion thereof, it will be fruitful to first discuss the Afrikaner (F)ather that ...*van ons vaders* fictionalises.

4.2.1. The Afrikaner as ‘*volk*’

“Wanneer ons dit het oor die kulturele identiteit van die Afrikaner, het ons te doen met ‘n bepaalde volk, die Afrikanervolk,” reasons Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:58). The concept of a ‘*volk*’ is one that translates difficultly to English, especially in relation to the Afrikaner. The term translates literally to ‘a people,’ however the Afrikaans word seems to carry along with it a specific politically-charged undercurrent. Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:58 – 59) describes a *volk*, in relation to the Afrikaner, in the following way:

‘n Volk is ‘n groep mense met ‘n gemeenskaplike kultuur of lewenstyl, dus ‘n kultuurgemeenskap; en die term ‘kulturele identiteit’ van ‘n volk slaan dus op die wese van ‘n volk, naamlik sy kultuur. Wanneer ons dit het oor die handhaaf en uithou van die Afrikaner se kulturele identiteit, beteken dit dus heel eenvoudig die handhaaf en uitbou van al dié wesenlike dinge wat die Afrikaners tot ‘n bepaalde volk maak.

Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:32) doesn’t stop there, however. He notes that the Afrikaners are unique within South African as they “as volk geroepe is tot ‘n bepaalde taak en funksie hier in Suider-Afrika.” This highlights a crucial point that I mentioned earlier, but will become increasingly important.

The Afrikaner (F)ather identifies himself as a culture (a “*volk*”) exclusively chosen by God for the purposes of promoting a sense of virtuousness and piety. Here, one cannot seem to ignore the metaphorical connection to the Jews and early Christians who also considered themselves as ‘chosen people’ and, therefore, constructed their own early cultural identity around their divine specialness – a fact that reiterates the Afrikaner (F)ather’s interesting desire to challenge the Darwinian theory of the randomness of natural selection. The Afrikaner ‘*volk*’, then, becomes a helpful frame within which one can examine the Afrikaner family and the specific crises that arise within this structure.

It should be noted that, to some extent, contemporary Afrikaner dramatists (such as Reza de Wet) already grappled with the Afrikaner (F)ather within the framework of family drama; for example in her seminal work, *Diepe Grond*, however the play does not exclusively operate on the premise of Darwinian thought – a principle that occupies the reasoning behind ...*van ons vaders*.

According to Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:58 – 69), there are five facets that, in conjunction with one another, form the identity of the Afrikaner (F)ather and, therefore, the Afrikaner family. They will be very briefly introduced here and, in the next chapter, will be discussed in relation to ...*van ons vaders*. Again, the point should be made that this Afrikaner (F)ather is only constructed as a model for a creative purpose and should not be regarded as a factual definition.

4.2.1.1. Conservatism

The Afrikaner (F)ather is undeniably associated with a strict sense of conservatism. Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:60) underlines this point when he argues that

[o]ns Protestants-Christelike lewensbeskouing eis van ons om alle fasette van ons kultuur, lewenstyl en tradisies steeds te toets en te hervorm volgens die enigste onfeilbare maatstaf, naamlik die Woord van God.

As a culture that based its sense of morality squarely on the shoulders of conservatism of religious thought (particularly Calvinism), it comes as little surprise that the Afrikaner (F)ather would view a work such as *The Origin of Species* with a great sense of distrust. Not only would it undermine the conservative framework of the culture with its roots in strict Calvinistic doctrine, but it would also displace the Adam and Eve narrative that gave that doctrine its divine authority.

The Afrikaner (F)ather's conservatism, therefore, “uit hom op positiewe wyse tot behoud en beskerming van die volk en sy kulturele instellings” (Van Niekerk Viljoen 1981:60). In essence, it serves as a method to protect traditional values.

The Afrikaner family, therefore, is one that is led by the father through a conservative pathway to salvation, much like the suggestions of *The Book of Proverbs* discussed in chapter two. ...*van ons vaders* addresses this aspect of the Afrikaner through the character of Erasmus and specifically through his relationship with his daughter, René.

4.2.1.2. Sense of Place/History

“In sy oorsprong is die Afrikaanse kultuur gekenmerk deur sy sterk landelike inslag en deur die Afrikaner se hunkering na die platteland, die buitelug en die veld,” argues Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:67). The suggestion is that the Afrikaner (F)ather constructed a mythological

ideal around the idea of the veldt – creating, in essence, an romanticized ‘Afrikaner Eden’ in the process.

The Afrikaner family, therefore, cultivated a sense of unity with the land – thus consolidating its sense of culture closely with a sense of place, much like Adam in his act of naming the land and the animals, also laying claim on them. There is, therefore, an unmistakable link to be made between Eden and the idealism of the veldt to which Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:67) refers. Furthermore, one cannot help but notice the similarities of the Afrikaner’s relationship to the veldt (and the ‘Groot Trek’) and the Jewish nomads of the Bible after their exodus from Egypt. Both cultures travelled to obtain a God-given promised land, therefore both laying claim of ownership upon a country owing to religious influence.

Darwin’s publication, here, would problematize this construct by removing the foundation of belief upon which this historical sense of ownership is based – the Bible’s assertion that the Afrikaner (F)ather is chosen by God with specific historical purpose and must, like Adam, lay claim on the land upon which he is placed.

This relationship between the (F)ather and the myth of the veldt is specifically explored in ...*van ons vaders* with reference to Katima Mulilu – the symbol of Eden.

4.2.1.3. Racial Purity

Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:62) argues that “die Afrikaner se kultuur [...] ‘n strewe behels na die handhawing van die rassesuiverheid van die Afrikanervolk, sy identiteit dus in rasseverband.” The Afrikaner (F)ather, however, found various ways in which to justify his stance on institutionalised racial separation.

Most importantly, and most relevant to this study, Christo-centric religious ideologies were utilised in order to support its agenda. Crucially, Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:36) reveals that the Afrikaner’s racial separation laws were put in place to protect the morality of not only the Afrikaners themselves, but also function as gatekeepers of morality to the other cultures:

In ‘n wêreld wat skree om en dwing tot eenheid en integrasie ten spyte van die harde realiteit van etniese en nasionale verskeidenheid, het ons in ons wêrelddeel erkenning en agting gevestig vir die onontkombare werklikheid van etniese en nasionale verskille, nie as ‘n boosheid nie, maas as iets moois, ‘n uiting van ryk menslike verskeidenheid.

Racism, in relation to the Afrikaner (F)ather, is explored in ...*van ons vaders* by the racial stereotyping expressed by Erasmus, Hannah and Phillip.

4.2.1.4. Language

The Afrikaner (F)ather, by the very existence of the term ‘Afrikaner’, could not exist without being tied to the Afrikaans language. There is therefore a certain sense of protection and possessiveness surrounding the cultivation and continuation of the language, viewing other languages with a certain sense of suspicion. “Ons het die jongste jare heelwat alarmklanke oor die welstand en handhawing van ons Afrikaanse taal gehoor. Daar is ongetwyfeld rede tot bekommernis,” maintains Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:67).

This fear is not unfounded as it would appear that the culture’s power is invariably tied to its language. “By ons Afrikanervolk is taal [...] na my mening beslis ‘n noodsaaklike element vir Afrikanerskap” (Van Niekerk Viljoen 1981:63). The culture, therefore, is inexorably linked to the language that it speaks. Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:63) believes that “sonder Afrikaans daar geen werklike Afrikaners kan wees nie.”

This is explored in ...*van ons vaders* through the relationship between René and her first (seemingly Jewish) husband, Martin.

4.2.1.5. Religion

Van Niekerk Viljoen (1981:64) states that Afrikaners are unique in that “die Protestants-Christelike godsdiens en lewensbeskouing ‘n essensiële element is van ons Afrikanerkultuur.” It is also the duty of Afrikaner to recognise that they are “geroepe [...] om [potensiële Afrikaners] te bearbei en te wen vir die Protestane Christiendon” (Van Niekerk Viljoen 1981:64).

For the Afrikaner (F)ather, religion lies at the root of what constitutes being a Afrikaner. The culture is framed by its conservative Calvinistic faith. Recalling the statistic mentioned in chapter one pertaining to the Afrikaner’s declining religiosity, it comes as no surprise that

[i]n die nuwe Suid-Afrika, waar ander groepe ook nou hulle vryheidstrewes verwesenlik het, is sommige Afrikaners ontnugter en ervaar hulle ‘n gevoel van onmag omdat hulle nie meer polities en godsdienstig die hef in die hand het nie en voortaan slegs ‘n klein deeltjie van ‘n groot bevolking gaan wees (Pietersen 2011:i).

Religion, in ...*van ons vaders*, plays the most important thematic role both within the production as a whole as well as within the family unit presented in the play.

5. Questioning the Afrikaner Family in ...*van ons vaders*

Following from the previous theoretical framework, a practical presentation was created in order to answer the research question posed at the outset: How can a contemporary Afrikaans practitioner address similar religious concerns that plagued Strindberg and Ibsen – through a Darwinian lens – within the structure of family drama?

This presentation took the form of a production that, during its stages of development, was shaped and reshaped during the course of the writing of this thesis. I discovered that, in assessing the personal lives of Ibsen and Strindberg, I was able to gain valuable information that shaped a reading of their respective texts and, moreover, highlighted the religious concerns that were relevant during the time of their creation. Similarly, in this chapter, I will discuss the personal circumstances that lead to the creation of the production. Thereafter, I will systematically address the aspects of the production that tie into the previous phases of the research question and, finally, assess the success or failure of the production in meeting its research goals.

5.1. A Personal Note

...*van ons vaders*, it must be mentioned, arose from intensely personal experiences that systematically influenced its creation. Much like Ibsen and Strindberg, as discussed in chapter three, a reading of this text can only be done by linking it to the personal experiences and influences that shaped its creation.

As stated in the introductory chapter, I was raised in Durbanville, however I was not raised by my biological parents, but rather by my grandparents owing to my father's death and my mother's mismanagement of financial affairs. My grandfather was born in 1938 and my grandmother in 1944. The generational gap that existed between us always dramatically separated our views on, among other things, religiosity. From my perspective, they were still clinging to a past ideal of the family unit and the patriarchal structures that shaped it. My grandfather was clearly influenced by the biblical narratives with the role of the father as the locus of the familial unit. My grandmother seemed to subscribe to this arrangement. I was only later to discover, however, that my perception of these circumstances were not necessarily a reflection of reality.

My grandfather, therefore, seemed clearly to fall within the typical Afrikaner framework that I discussed in chapter four – the five facets that comprise the Afrikaner (F)ather.¹¹

I, on the other hand, was always uncomfortable within this framework. I felt that there should be a reassessment of what constituted the structural arrangement of the family. To a certain extent, this was because I was influenced by contemporary media that suggested that I was probably alone in this particular arrangement – from my perspective, it seemed as though most of the contemporary (western) world was already ‘liberated’ from these strict religious structures that dictated the pivotal role of the father and the subordination of his wife and children within the family unit. My grandparents, however, was still involved in a previous era where this was largely acceptable.

Furthermore, during my studies in 2012, I was introduced to the work of Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg in a somewhat more detailed manner than during my undergraduate studies. It was during a production that I directed of the Afrikaans translation of *Easter* by Bartho Smith (*Pase*) that I discovered both the efficacy of the family drama medium to communicate essential ideas, as well as the hindrances that prevent one from creating them in their original ‘realistic’ settings.

It is from this personal context that the inspiration for the production arose.

5.2. Presentation

Something should be said, first, about the presentational style of the production – both in terms of its visual style as well as its interpretation.

In Henrik Ibsen’s realistic plays, the “appearance of his scenes [...] and the careful detail of the stage-directions” (Northam 1952:ii) play a seminal role in the interpretation of the drama. In a production of *Ghosts*, for instance, one is limited in showing certain seminal visual and dramatic cues such as the garden without altering the effect that the original text intends. In my own production of *Spoke* in 2012 (translated to Afrikaans by Nerina Ferreira), I was unable to produce certain effects owing to the financial and practical restraints. I had to resort to alternative visual metaphors to communicate similar ideas that the original intended (Addendum A, Figure 1).

¹¹ To prevent the assertion from arising that I am resorting to clichés, I should mention that I am only highlighting limited aspects so as to make my point in a concise manner. There are obviously many other variables at play.

Strindberg, equally, has similar difficulties in presenting his realistic plays, such as *Easter*. Beyond criticism that the play has been labelled as “muddled and childish” (Mitchell 1986:157), it also has the practical difficulty that it relies heavily on a glass structure wherein the family is “held up to public ridicule in its glass veranda” (Mitchell 1986:158) which also includes a centrally placed window. The symbolism in *Easter*, then, in relation to the placement of the window becomes problematic to communicate. Much of the drama revolves around what the family sees and what other people (do not) see inside the household. Again, therefore, the attempt had to be made in my own production (of *Pase*) to find a suitable alternative visual metaphor to reimagine the original circumstances (Addendum A, Figure 2).

For my production of *...van ons vaders*, I chose to do away entirely with realistic set-pieces, relying instead on five chairs placed symmetrically in a row on the apron of the proscenium arch stage (Addendum A, Figure 3). This was done partially for financial reasons, but mostly for practical reasons. I realised during my two previous productions that while it is possible to translate visual metaphors suitably into alternative ones, and also to do so rather successfully, it still remains a somewhat awkward alternative metaphor and therefore reconceptualises the original symbol systems of the play. During the writing of the text, I decided that all of the environments and scenes will be imaged by both the actors and the audience simultaneously so as to increase the sense of unity between the actors and the audience – this included all the sets and stage props. It also allowed for a simpler rehearsal process and allowed the focus of the work to shift to the acting and interpretation of the text.

In presenting the production in this way, I removed many opportunities for utilising visual metaphors, instead, therefore, relying on textual metaphors to drive the thematic undercurrent of the play. The only visual element that remained, however, was the actors sitting in chairs, facing the audience; and the only remaining props being magazines under Phillip’s chair, a handbag for Hannah and a small red Bible for Leana. While it did limit the visual aspects of the play, it allowed for greater commentary on the genre of ‘family drama’ as well as the textual metaphors present in the play.

5.2.1. Family Drama

During the productions of *Pase* and *Spoke* I began questioning what the genre of ‘family drama’ meant and, furthermore, the limitations and possibilities that the genre allows. Stephen Mintz (1985:2) argues that “the family provides a bridge between two fundamental domains of human life and experience – between social processes and psychological

processes.” The family, therefore, is the primary agent of socialisation and “provides a vehicle for studying the transmission and adaptation of cultural and psychological patterns from one generation to the next” (Mintz 1985:2).

The family, then, owing to this immense social importance, is clearly an effective vehicle for discussing not only issues of the family, but also “the organization of other realms of life, such as economics, politics and religion” (Mintz 1985:2). I found, therefore, that plays that revolve around domestic issues are able to address social concerns in a much wider spectrum than simply those that are immediately present within the family unit itself.

...*van ons vaders* utilizes this medium to address the concerns outlined in the previous chapters of this thesis. It deviates from the traditional ‘realistic’ family dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg in two very significant ways.

Ghosts and *Easter*, as well as their other domestic dramas, are unaware of the presence of the audience. The plays, therefore, function under the premise that the fourth wall separates the action from the spectators. This separation allows for the drama to proceed in a way that is unaffected by the audience. I found this to be limiting and found, rather, that I could increase the social responsibility of the audience by including them in the action of the play. ...*van ons vaders*, therefore, utilizes the device of an interview so as to include the audience in the development of the story. The audience, consequently, must feel as though they are part of the action in a significant way and has a direct line of communication between the characters and themselves. The characters confess their feelings to them, comment on the action to them and also are aware that the audience is watching their lives unfold. In this way, the audience shares responsibility for the action that occurs onstage and are discouraged to become passive consumers of the story.

On another level, it also adds a sense of informality to the production. The effect of which is that this family must not *seem* like a fictionalized family, but must rather appear to be a family much like any other family of any person watching the performance.

The second most important point of departure between Ibsen and Strindberg’s family dramas is, as discussed before, their visual presentational styles. Whereas Ibsen and Strindberg’s plays were originally performed with visual realism in mind, ...*van ons vaders* avoided a realistic appearance. The positive effect of the five chairs is that the actors’ expressions and feelings are always exposed to the audience. Metaphorically, it also highlights this particular

family's disconnectedness from each other – their desire for autonomy and to escape the clutches of the (F)ather. By removing direct contact with each other, the production suggested that this family has a decidedly alienated relationship to one another.

Finally, the only significant props that were used were the magazines, the Bible and handbag. With this in mind, certain textual metaphors will be discussed so as to further highlight the intention and meaning behind the production.

5.3. Textual Metaphors

...*van ons vaders*, at its root, is querying the contemporary structure of the Afrikaner family. Within this context, I felt that it might be prudent to reassess the history of the family itself – a task that I attempted to undertake in chapters two and three. I found that, at the root of the family tree, lays the seed of the creation of the first family – Adam and Eve.

It is this narrative – along with the book of Proverbs – that I used as a springboard for the dramatization of the familial circumstances in ...*van ons vaders*.

5.3.1. Adam and Eve

The original biblical narrative of Adam and Eve consists of three acts – in the first act, God creates Adam in his own image; this precedes the second act in which Adam asks for a helper, is given Eve and they live harmoniously in Eden until, dramatically in the third act, the serpent entices Eve to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and is subsequently banished from the garden; taking the entirety of humanity along.

...*van ons vaders* borrows from this narrative. Erasmus and Hannah, the original couple, meet in the wilderness of Namibia, in Katima Mulilu. Already, the attempt is made to merge the South African context with the biblical one. Katima Mulilu is described by Erasmus as having “bome oral. Dig, dig, dig. En daar is twee beeldskone riviere wat daardeur loop” (Addendum B). The two rivers that run through Katima Mulilu, the Chobe and the Zambezi, mirror the two rivers that run through the Garden of Eden – the Tigris and Euphrates.¹²

¹² According to the book of Genesis 2:10 – 14, there are four rivers that ran through Eden: “The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.” Only the final two, however, are found today in the Middle East while the Gihon is geographically unconnected to the others, as it is on a different continent.

The image of the Garden of Eden is further underscored by the early inclusion of the metaphor of the snake:

Erasmus. Daar was baie diere wat vrylik deur die dorpie geloop het. Leeus, zebras, slange.

Hannah. Slange! Dit was 'n nagmerrie. As jy jou kom kry is daar 'n slang in jou huis (Addendum B).

The audience, however, is given an early clue that the metaphor will be subverted during the course of the play:

Erasmus. Ja, ek was eenkeer deur 'n slang gepik.

Hannah. Was dit nie twee keer nie?

Erasmus. Ja, twee keer. Een van die jonge het dit vir my uitgesuig. Die gif (Addendum B).

The displacement of the serpent-metaphor to the man, rather than the woman – the phallic figure of subversion and destabilization – along with the sexual pun, suggests that the biblical metaphors within the play will not be presented without in the process of including them, also querying them. The play's religious agenda, therefore, is similar to that of *Ghosts* in which Mrs. Alving's criticism of the structure is framed by destabilization of the biblical imagery.

The idea of animals and the ironic displacement of animals within the Adam and Eve narrative, is further emphasised by the inclusion of the Afrikaans hymn, *Soos 'n Wildsbok*. When the family sings

Soos 'n wildsbok wat smag na water, smag my siel na U, o Heer

U alleen is my hartsverlange en ek bring aan U die eer.

U alleen is my bron van krag. In U teenwoordigheid wil ek wag.

U alleen is my hartsverlange en ek bring aan U die eer (Addendum B),

they are not only referencing the fact that they are surrounded by animals in Eden, but are also equating themselves to animals, therefore ironically linking biblical hymns and animal-imagery to Darwinian thought.

Similarly to Adam and Eve, Hannah and Erasmus are placed together in the garden by external influences of power. A policeman – representing not only law, order and righteousness, similar to God himself – places them together. He is not only a policeman, of course, but also Hannah's own (F)ather, doubling the authority of the patriarch. This is a something that is mirrored in Erasmus as he, too, becomes a (F)ather and a policeman, doubling his divine and authoritarian connection to God. The consequent relationship

between Hannah and Erasmus seem ideal during the beginning stages of the development of the drama. Their somewhat syrupy engagement scene underlines this sense of perfection framed within the ideal romantic setting of the veldt. The perfection of Katima Mulilu is further underlined by Erasmus's description thereof:

My kommandant het dit aan my beskryf as 'n tropiese woud – nog amper heeltemal onversteurd deur die mens en sy moderne samelewing. Ek wou so lewe. Eenvoudig (Addendum B).

Finally, the town's extreme distance from other places gives it the exclusive status of a promised land:

Dit was iets heeltemal anders as Kaapstad. Dit was soos 'n avontuur. [...] Ek is opgetel by die naaste lughawe deur sersant Hartman. Ons klim toe in so 'n groot vier-by-vier, en ry na die dorp (Addendum B).

Soon, however, the audience becomes aware that the idealism of the veldt is not without its problems. Hannah, confessing in an interview about her fears in Katima Mulilu, declares that her

probleem met Katima Mulilu was eintlik net dat ek nooit my man gesien het nie. Hy was nooit by die huis nie. Hy was altyd op die pad – uit op die veld besig met...wel... ek weet nie. Seker om die kommuniste uit die land te hou. En ek was bang – gaan hy terug kom? Gaan hy dood wees? Gaan ek hom ooit weer sien? (Addendum B).

This raises the first red light with regards to the idealism of this 'Eden.' The audience is reminded of the charged political circumstances of the time. The Apartheid government was at the height of its power and was utilizing both the army as well as the police force to exact political power. René picks up on this point, and expresses her distrust of the idealised town by describing it as

'n [k]lein dorpie met 'n klomp swart mense wat hulself afgesloof het vir 'n paar wit mense waar die mans stink na die veld en die vrouens pligsgetrou die kombuis oppas en reg staan met hul donderse pienk voorskote (Addendum B).

As a model for the contemporary family, the audience should by this point have picked up on the play's distrust of the Adam and Eve family model. In order to localize the commentary even further and to problematize the Christian structures of the narrative, the banishment from paradise occurs not by the presence of a serpent, but by the introduction of the NG Church – the Afrikaner (F)ather's symbol of organized religiosity.

5.3.1.1. Erasmus and Hannah: The Fall from Grace (thanks to the Church)

The latest addition to the small town is the introduction of a church into this idyllic haven. When the church opens its door on its first Sunday, Erasmus takes the family – so as to conspicuously display their virtuousness – to the opening sermon. René, a child at this point, does not yet have a clear distrust of religion; instead, her retaliation is simply tied to a juvenile aversion to being bored. Erasmus, the leader of the household, makes the decision that the family must sit in the first row of the church. Hannah seems initially uncomfortable, adding that “almal [gaan] ons sien,” however Erasmus declares piously that “[d]it maak mos nie saak nie,” underlining his desire not only to *be* devout, but also to be *seen* being devout (Addendum B).

This mirrors *Ghosts* wherein the Pastor’s desire to not insure the orphanage is tied not to actual devoutness, but rather also to a desire to display his devoutness. In ...*van ons vaders*, it is precisely this desire to appear devout that causes the family’s exodus from ‘Eden.’ When René embarrasses the family in church, the embarrassment is heightened by the fact that Erasmus urged the family to sit in the first row of the church. The family’s initial fall from grace, therefore, is tied to the patriarch’s desire to maintain a high social standing – he is able to assert control over the women in his household in the presence of other fathers and, more importantly, in the presence of God:

Erasmus. Jy is in die teenwoordigheid van God. Gedra jou (Addendum B).

The family’s embarrassment is, much like Mrs. Heyst in *Easter*, linked to a fear of social scandal:

Hannah. Ek is nog nooit so verneder nie...

Erasmus. Die hele kerk het ons gehoor!

Hannah. Ek gaan nooit weer die dominee in die oë kan kyk nie... [...] Ek kan nooit weer my gesig in die publiek wys nie. Wat gaan die Van der Merwes dink? (Addendum B).

Therefore, when the family leaves Katima Mulilu, they are doing so not only because they ‘fell from grace’ owing to Erasmus’s failure as a (F)ather, but also because of a fear of social repercussions. The play, therefore, is trying to assert the social significance in the Afrikaner culture of appearing to be in command of the family. In the Adam and Eve narrative, after Adam fails in controlling his wife who acted autonomously, the Bible goes on to describe ways in which successive (F)athers can exact more strict control over their families so as to

avoid a similar fate. ...*van ons vaders*, through Erasmus, living in a post-Darwinian society, dramatizes his struggle to maintain his dwindling control over his family while simultaneously showing Hannah's increasing autonomy.

The play's Adam and Eve metaphor, therefore, serves to query the Adam and Eve model that I discussed in chapter two. This model, wherein the (F)ather stands as the central figure of authority within the household, is problematic as it assumes that being able to control the decisions of the family are synonymously linked.

5.3.2. Knowledge and Power (of the (F)ather)

Within the play, there are three structures of authority that lend power to the (F)ather in the play. They are the police, the army and the church. Before dealing with these three structures, it is important to register that there are two male characters in the play – Phillip and Erasmus – and, moreover, to register their relationship to a changing world influenced by Darwinian thought. This is best illuminated by examining their opening interviews.

Erasmus. Ek is maar 'n gewone man. Wat jy sien is wat jy kry. Ek maak ordinêre besluite en ek doen redelike ordinêre goed. Ek doen uitreikwerk vir die kerk, by voorbeeld. Ek is baie lief vir my familie, ek sorg vir hulle so bes ek kan en ek dink ek maak oor die algemeen goeie, ordinêre besluite. Daar is niks fout daarmee nie, moet my nie verkeerd verstaan nie, maar terselfde tyd dink ek het ek altyd iets meer verwag (Addendum B).

Erasmus's assertion that he is a "gewone man" (Addendum B) is revealing in many respects. Not only are we, at this point, aware that he is the patriarch of the household, but his interview also suggests that he views himself as normative and the decisions that he makes, as the normative decisions within the world of the play. In contrast, Phillip states that

there are many things that you regret when you get older. I'm fifty-five now – almost past my sell-by date. The one thing that I look back at and I wish I could change, was that I wish I knew more. I want to know a lot more than I know. I want to learn a lot more, I want to... God, I don't know. They say that knowledge is power, so in some way, I always felt somewhat disempowered. Am I making sense? I felt inferior. I just didn't *know* things (Addendum B).

Phillip's constant repetition of his uncertainty reveals that, in a world that is changing, he, too, is uncertain about the direction in which he is heading. The traditional structures of authority that have protected and shaped his upbringing are shifting. He realizes that he must

change along with the social constructs that are reshaping around him, or else he will become obsolete – thus his reference to being “past [his] sell-by date” (Addendum B).

The way in which these two men grapple with the changing world reveals the way in which the play addresses the crisis that the (F)ather is experiencing in the contemporary culture that the play attempts to represent.

5.3.2.1. The Army

Erasmus lives, for the most part, in a state of denial about the changes that are shifting the basis of authority within the family. This is most telling when Phillip relates the story of his experiences in the army. The story’s obsession with faecal matter in some way summarises the play’s attitude towards this structure of authority.

Erasmus. Die weermag het jou geleer hoe om ‘n man te wees.

René. Ekskuus?

Erasmus. Dit bou karakter. Lewenslesse.

René. Nee, apparently het dit jou geleer hoe om jousef te bekap.

Hannah. René, nie voor die mense nie!

Erasmus. Soos ek sê, die weermag het vir jong manne disipline geleer. Selfstandigheid. Selfrespek. Eerbaarheid (Addendum B).

The army, for Phillip, is a structure for which he only holds a somewhat sentimental memory. For Erasmus, on the other hand, the army represents something far more than simply a memory of the distant past. Erasmus feels that the absence of the army, as a bastion for masculinity, is singularly responsible for the youth’s current lack of discipline and ambition and, therefore, their disinterest in shaping themselves into the (F)athers of tomorrow. Phillip, however, realises that the army – as a symbol of oppressive authority – has to be reconsidered. A point which René picks up on when she states that

René. The point is, I would never send my son to the army.

Erasmus. Ja, maar waar het jy hom toe gestuur? Na ons toe om grootgemaak te word teen ons omkoses? (Addendum B).

This absence of the army within the current world of the play, similarly signifies the (F)ather’s dwindling authority within the culture as a whole. René’s refusal to expose her son to this (masculine) world, serves as an expression of her retaliation against this structure of authority.

5.3.2.2. The Police

As a substitute for the army, Erasmus turns to the police. He joined the police at sixteen, opting rather to leave school (again, we are reminded of the differences between him and Phillip, who constantly seeks more knowledge). His desire to be in the police force reveals something about his desire to be a guardian of traditional values within the wider culture, and not only within the family unit itself. This suggests that not only is he uncomfortable with the shifting paradigm of authority, but he is actively trying to prevent this shift from occurring.

The police, therefore, do not feature much as a physical entity, but figures prominently as a metaphorical device of actively preventing social change. This is presented in the play, for example, by Erasmus's encouragement of Phillip's racism, thus fulfilling the (F)ather's function of protection of traditionalist (and somewhat outdated) beliefs:

Erasmus. Phillip, listen to me. I've been dealing with them since my days in Katima Mulilu and I promise you, there isn't a person alive as lazy as a kaffir. [...] You mustn't feel guilty. I am sorry, but a black will always be a black. And sometimes they just need to be reminded who's boss (Addendum B).

Erasmus's distrust of contemporary shifts in social paradigms is also put on in the limelight when René attempts to marry her first husband, Martin. Martin, it is revealed by René, is "Engels. En 'n ek vermoed ook 'n bietjie Joods" (Addendum B). The fact that he is Jewish doubles the suspicion that Erasmus feels towards him (other than the fact that he is English) and what he represents – a window into a wider cultural framework. Erasmus links his distrust of other cultures and other ideas in this way also to his inherent racism:

Erasmus. Ek is jammer, Hannah, daar's iewers hier 'n slang in die gras. Hy't 'n agenda.

René. Wat? Net omdat hy vir my lief is, het hy 'n agenda?

Erasmus. Ek sien net nie die aantrekking nie.

Hannah. Kyk, jy kan miskien 'n bietjie gewig verloor, my kind.

René. Ek is op die nuwe weigh-less diet, ma.

Erasmus. Jou ma's reg. In elk geval, soos jy nou lyk sal net 'n kaffir ooit in jou belang stel (Addendum B).

5.3.2.3. The Church

The final structure that the (F)ather utilises to obtain and maintain authority within the household (and the wider culture) is the church. In the play, two churches are presented. The first church is the Afrikaans NG Church, and the second church is never named, but is presented, according to René, as "a hip and happening church." She adds that "[a]ll the young

people come here” (Addendum B). This nameless church represents a church attempting to reconstruct itself in a changing society in order to appeal to a younger audience.

The original NG Church is, for Erasmus, the most important symbol of traditionalist values. Even Hannah – Erasmus’s wife – has been included in his obsession with religion and the church. She continually measures herself against the standards that the church has placed upon her. This is telling of the church’s enormous influence within the structure of the family unit. When she worries, for example, about the wellbeing of her daughter, René, her emotions are tied completely to the structure of the church:

Ek dink ek is ‘n slegte ma. Wag, miskien moet ek verduidelik. Ek is baie onseker oor... oor als. Ek het myself konstant bevraagteken. Het ek iets verkeerd gedoen? Moet ek dit anders doen? Ek het my kind Christelik grootgemaak, ek het haar waardes geleer, ek dink ek het alles gedoen wat ‘n ma moontlik kan doen (Addendum B).

The main thrust of the story in the play comprises of the ironic influence that the church has on this (F)ather. Erasmus buys a computer for his household, but as Hannah comments, “[v]ir e-posse. Wie moet ons e-pos? Ek ken niemand met e-pos nie!” (Addendum B). He does this, seemingly, so as to, through the structure of the church, aid in his “uitreikwerk” (Addendum B).

Another family, therefore, is presented – the Labuschagne family – whose twenty-one-year-old daughter, Leana, is the focus of Erasmus’s outreach project. The computer and the church, thereafter, are linked when René reveals that Erasmus, through the medium of the church, enters into an extramarital affair with Leana. The church, therefore, plays an ironic role in not only undermining the sanctity of the marriage between Erasmus and Hannah, but also because it is later used as a means to disguise the secrets of the family:

Hannah. Waar was jy gister? Ek moes alleen kerk toe gaan.
Erasmus. Ek het saam met haar kerk toe gegaan.
Hannah. O. Die koor het vandag gesing. Ons het *O God, my Herder* gesing. [...]
Hannah. Almal het my gevra waar jy is.
Erasmus. Wat het jy vir hulle gesê?
Hannah. Wat moes ek vir hulle sê?
Erasmus. Seker wat jy wil. Jy gaan my in elk geval soos die vark laat lyk.
Hannah. Ek het vir hulle gesê jy’s besig met die uitreik.
Erasmus. Het hulle dit geglo?
Hannah. Ja. Want dis waar.

The tragic influence that the church and Erasmus’s decisions have on the family, are telling of two things: First, he wishes to maintain the patriarchal status quo. Secondly, he is unhappy

about the world that is shifting and nostalgically longs for a time when he could still maintain his authority at the head of the household. When he gives Leana Hannah's old dress, for example, he does this to accomplish these two tasks. The dress is a vintage 1950's dress that, for Erasmus, represents the old world order that he longs for:

Erasmus. Ek het dit vir haar gekoop die eerste week toe ons getroud is.

Leana. Regtig?

Erasmus. Ja, maar sy't dit nooit gedra nie. Dis so goed soos nuut.

Leana. Gee sy om as ek dit dra?

Erasmus. Nee, man. Ek dink nie sy weet dis in haar kas nie.

Leana. Wow, ek voel so hipster! (Addendum B).

He puts his new mistress into this dress so as to try and emulate the circumstances of the original state of his marriage in the 'Eden' of Katima Mulilu, thus revealing his desire to maintain a historical status quo.

Phillip, on the other hand, distrusts the structure of the church. When René takes him to church after her divine vision, he responds in quite a similar way in which René initially responded. He reminds her, in fact that "[w]hen we met, you told me that you never want to go back to church ever again" (Addendum B). Mirroring the original church scene, Phillip pleads,

Do we have to sit in front?

René. Yes, I want to feel the Holy Spirit descend on me first (Addendum B).

Phillip's distrust is underscored when he complains that "[w]e sang for three hours. Not since my days in the army, have I ever been so exhausted" (Addendum B). The effect that the church has on Phillip, therefore, is decidedly negative.

Both Phillip and Erasmus's relationship to the church, link back, importantly, to the previously mentioned theme of knowledge and the basis of power and illuminates the attitude of the play towards religiosity in general. Phillip, in his constant quest for new knowledge and to expand his horizons, reads magazines such as *Popular Mechanics* and *National Geographic* which are decidedly populist publications and fall within a limited scope, but still highlight his desire to expand his knowledge. Erasmus, on the other hand, steadfastly clings to traditionalist beliefs and the power that the dwindling authority of church provide.

5.3.3. Changing with a Changing World

Erasmus, in his quest throughout the play to maintain his authority, refuses to shift his beliefs and, therefore, by the end of the play, becomes somewhat obsolete within a changed world. The changes that each character undertakes throughout the play is worth analysing briefly so as to finally illuminate the family structure and religious ideas that the play queries. The best way to do this is by examining the final monologues of each character.

Erasmus states by the end of the play, similarly to the beginning, that he is “’n gewone man” (Addendum B). He admits, however, that having made one unique decision has seemingly stripped him of his ordinary status. His pathway to obsolescence is brought to the surface by his unfortunate plea that “[hy] weet nie wat [hy] wil hê nie” (Addendum B). He is uncertain of his position within this changing world, in contrast to his initial confidence and certainty. The reference to sitting on the fence typifies this insecurity. He finally concludes his interview with more indecisiveness:

Aan die een kant van die draad sit my vrou en aan die ander kant, die vrou vir wie ek lief is. As ek een moet kies, is dit... (Addendum B).

The audience is left wondering as to his final choice, although the implication is made that he chooses to reclaim his authority by selecting the younger girl who will indefinitely be financially dependent on him.

Hannah, his wife, however, is freed from his authority. Her interview concludes with the small gesture that typifies her tentative new autonomy. She explains that she “[het] vir die eerste keer na die Waterfront gery. Op my eie. Ek het ’n fliek gaan kyk. Oor Rachmaninov. Ek dink ek gaan weer klavier begin speel” (Addendum B). Her desire to play piano – to reclaim her lost creativity – symbolises her slow path away from the traditional limiting structures as the submissive wife of the patriarchal nuclear family towards the autonomy promised by a changing world.

René, however, is consumed by her yearning for revenge to retaliate against her (F)ather. After failing to symbolically strip him of his authority by attempting to exorcise him, she reconsiders her career to become, instead of a teacher, a “geestesbesweerder [...]. Ja, ’n eksorsis” (Addendum B). This misplaced new ambition typifies the dangers of, while arguing for a new system, one becomes consumed by it. She lives her life in extremities – first as the wife of a Satanist Jew and, finally, she becomes more religious than even her own father. The

tragic implication is that her journey towards autonomy is corrupted by her extreme desire to overthrow her (F)ather.

Leana's interview, on the other hand, reveals a troubling final nail in the patriarchal coffin. She admits that

[m]y lewe was nie lekker nie. Dis 'n geheim. Ek het baie geheime gehad, maar Erasmus het dit als beter gemaak. Hy is soos 'n pa vir my. My vader. Dis okei, nè? (Addendum B).

Here the play conflates the notion of a father as a paternal figure, a father as a biological entity, as well as a Father as a religious figurehead and problematizes it by including a sexual undercurrent. Her desire to supersede Hannah and become the new wife-to-the-(F)ather brings with it the tragic opposite movement to Hannah's character – Hannah's autonomy from the (F)ather is reversed by Leana's submission to this system.

In conclusion, ...*van ons vaders* opens the debate around the contemporary notion of the role of the (F)ather within a contemporary Afrikaans nuclear family. Each of the character's journeys through the course of the drama represents a particular side of the debate.

5.4. Reflecting on ...*van ons vaders*

The difficulty in writing this play is inexorably tied to the personal nature of the text. I found it difficult to separate my personal opinions of religious subject matter and those that were required for the production. I found, however, that with an analysis of *Ghosts* and *Easter*, I was able to assess that both authors had, to some extent, a personal relationship to their subject matter. The characters in the play, however, do not individually need to reflect the opinion of the author, but the author's agenda comes across owing to the particular arrangement of the individual characters in the wider context of the drama.

In reflecting, therefore, on the success or failure of the production, I must admit that the production had a certain margin of success as a personal exploration of the subject outlined in chapter one. I found that an effective manner in which an Afrikaans practitioner could address religious concerns within the Afrikaans culture, was to use the family as a microcosm of analysis so as to serve as a metaphor for the culture as a whole. The 'family drama' genre, therefore, in a post-Darwinian world is an effective tool for addressing socio-religious concerns within this structure.

6. Summary and Conclusion

I set out to study the effect that Charles Darwin's publication, *The Origin of Species* had on the religious family dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg – with specific reference to *Ghosts* and *Easter*. In doing this, I found that the most effective way in which to accomplish this task was first to assess the history of the contemporary Judeo-Christian family unit. I examined the Adam and Eve narrative, and found that this narrative was the foundation of “the nuclear heterosexual pair-bond.” The Adam and Eve narrative, therefore, helped this arrangement to be “established as the basic unit of society” (Frymer-Kensky 1996:55).

Eve, owing to her disobedience to the two men in charge of the Garden of Eden, was punished in the third act of the story. God commanded;

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over you (Genesis 2:17).

This commandment, I found, was the cornerstone of a pattern that would emerge in subsequent families that based their arrangement of authority on the Adam and Eve model, thus creating the families roles wherein “[h]usband and work (childbearing) define the woman [and] wife and work (farming) defines the man” (Trible 1979:80). Inherent in this structure, “God predicts, [...] women will love men who will rule over them” (Frymer-Kensky 1996:57).

The patriarchy, I subsequently argued, “is inexorably tied up with deep religious roots [...] because of the widely perceived (rightly or wrongly) absolutist rule of a divine father” (King 1990:24). In practical terms, this led to creation of the (F)ather – a term Ross Shideler defines as a conflation of the divine Father and the earthly father – as the earthly father represented a direct connection to God himself. He served as both the connection and the conduit that, within the family, provided the moral compass that would guide the family to salvation. The notion of the father, therefore, was amalgamated with God – the divine Father – thus giving rise to the concept of the (F)ather.

Before the publication of *The Origin of Species* in the nineteenth century, I argued, the Bible's proposal as to the creation and structure of the human family was the only feasible option in a Christo-centric society. After Darwin's publication, however, society and the (F)ather had to redefine (H)is role. Shideler (1999:8) notes that if God had not made “Adam

in his own image, nor Eve from Adam's rib, then the narrative, the biblical story that valorised a traditional male-dominated family structure, had to be replaced.”

I subsequently argued that, owing to personal reasons within their own families, Ibsen and Strindberg attempted to address this displacement of the (F)ather. A reading of *Ghosts* and *Easter* highlighted the two sides of this argument. After discussing these two plays, I went on to question the possibility of creating a play that queries similar concerns within the Afrikaans context.

Before completing this creative task, it was first important to create a working definition of an Afrikaans (F)ather. I found that while it is currently impossible to define or even ascertain the existence of an *actual* Afrikaans (F)ather within the limited scope of this thesis, I was able to construct a working model (albeit somewhat fictionalized) in order to create a new play that queries the authority of this (F)ather. This led to the creation of *...van ons vaders*, the practical component which took a similar, albeit altered form of a family drama that entered into a discourse surrounding the previous theoretical framework as outlined in the preceding chapters.

Much of the research for this thesis was drawn from existing literary sources. A challenge within the structure of such a work is to bring together four types of texts that appear to have little obvious connection to one another. On one level, the examination of biblical texts in relation to a scientific text (such as *The Origin of Species*), presents a particular difficulty when brought in relation to feminist literary discourse – such as Tribble (1979), Frymer-Kensky (1996) and Shideler (1999) – without resorting to some form of textual bias. Slightly simpler, however, is to link it to fictional dramatic work that enters into a discourse with the existing material.

A particularly difficult component, however, is the cross-cultural link that a researcher must create between the main body of international literary texts to a contemporary South African (and particularly, Afrikaans) context. Chapter four attempted to do this, but I found that within the limited scope of this thesis that it became increasingly problematic to create a viable link so as to create a new work.

The creative output, on the other hand, proved particularly successful in terms of its goal of creating a new family drama. The original research goal of writing and performing a new and original family drama addressing religious concerns within the Afrikaans context was carried

out with some margin of success. The play did indeed address the issues of textual bias by not allowing any character within the play to find complete resolution – disallowing the presence of a clear protagonist.

The method in which this research was conducted could perhaps illuminate ways in which future creative researchers can guide their own creative processes. The aggregation of four exceedingly different types of texts that this research employed can, in future, hopefully guide research in a similar manner.

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Addendum A



Figure 1. A scene from *Spoke* (2012). (Photo by André Gerber, Stellenbosch).



Figure 2. A scene from *Pase* (2012). (Photo by André Gerber, Stellenbosch).



Figure 3. A scene from *...van ons vaders* (2013). (Screencapture by André Gerber, Stellenbosch).

Addendum B

...VAN ONSE VADERS

'N FAMILIEDRAMA

OOR 'N KONTEMPORÊRE AFRIKANER GESIN

André Gerber

René	Llandi Beeslaar
Hannah	Licia Pienaar
Phillip	Stefan Reinmuth
Leana	Lizzy Richardson
Ersamus	Jaco van Niekerk

René. Kyk, een ding wat julle sommer nou van my moet weet is dat ek geen illusies oor die lewe het nie. Ek weet wat gaan vir wat. Ek weet wat kry mens en ek weet die lewe nie noodwendig regverdig is nie. Ek het baie swaar gekry – jy dink jy doen goed, net sodat dit amper onmiddelik weer van jou af weggevat word. Ek was moeg, ek was seer, ek was eensaam. Maar weet jy, ek het nou nuwe insig gekry. Vandat ek God gevind het en ‘n persoonlike verhouding met hom begin het, is ek ‘n nuwe mens. Ek is positief en ek is eerlik en ek is nie meer skaam om te wees wie ek is nie.

**

Hannah. Ek weet nie... Ek kom van ‘n ander tyd af. Vrouens het nie toe die vryhede gehad wat hulle vandag het nie. Wat was jou opsies dan nou eintlik? Jy moes maar doen wat jou pa vir jou sê. Jy was bang; jy’t nie noodwendig baie uitgekom nie... Ek weet nie eintlik hoe om myself nou uit te druk nie. Jy het skool toe gegaan, jy’t klavier gespeel, of een of ander tydverdryf gehad wat jy nou maar gedoen het om jouself besig te hou terwyl jy wag om te trou. En dan, wanneer jy trou, bestaan jou dag uit huis skoonmaak, wasgoed was, kosmaak, skottelgoed doen en dan more doen jy dit maar weer. Maar nie meer nie.

**

Phillip. You know, there are many things that you regret when you get older. I’m fifty-five now – almost past my sell-by date. The one thing that I look back at and I wish I could change, was that I wish I knew more. I want to know a lot more than I know. I want to learn a lot more, I want to... God, I don’t know. They say that knowledge is power, so in some way, I always felt somewhat disempowered. Am I making sense? I felt inferior. I just didn’t *know* things. Except that now I do –

**

Leana. My lewe was nie lekker nie. Dis ‘n geheim, daai. Niemand mag dit weet nie. Ok? Ek het ‘n klomp geheime, weet jy. Dis nie altyd lekker nie. Dis moeilik. En vir my is die hoeveelheid geheime wat ek in my rondra altyd op een af ander manier gekoppel aan my geluk.

**

Erasmus. Ek is maar ‘n gewone man. Wat jy sien is wat jy kry. Ek maak ordinêre besluite en ek doen relike ordinêre goed. Ek doen uitreikwerk vir die kerk, by voorbeeld. Ek is baie lief vir my familie, ek sorg vir hulle so bes ek kan en ek dink ek maak oor die algemeen goeie, ordinêre besluite. Daar is niks fout daarmee nie, moet my nie verkeerd verstaan nie, maar terselfde tyd dink ek het ek altyd iets meer verwag.

**

René. Hierdie is die storie van hoe ek God gevind het.

Hannah. Hierdie is die storie van hoekom ek nie meer bang is nie.

Phillip. This is the story of how I learned the most valuable lesson that I will ever learn.

Leana. Hierdie is die storie van hoe geheime my die gelukkigste meisie in die hele wereld gemaak het.

Erasmus. Hierdie is die storie van hoe ek die mees uitsonderlike besluit van my lewe geneem het. En hoe ek my familie uitmekaar geskeur het.

**

René. Ok, so waar moet mens begin? Dis nogal embarrassing. My naam is René en dis my ma.

Hannah. Sy's my dogter, maar ek het ook 'n kleinseun.

René. Ja, ek het 'n seun, maar hy kan nie vandag hier wees nie. O, and this is my husband, Phillip.

Phillip. Hi, you can just call me Phil.

Erasmus. Ek is Erasmus.

René. Dis my pa.

Erasmus. Ja.

René. En, ja, dis my familie.

Leana. Hi, ek's Leana en ek...

René. Anyway, ek weet nie heeltemal wat julle wil hê ons moet doen nie...

Erasmus. Sy't nog nie klaar gepraat nie, René.

René. Wat? Wil sy iets se?

Phillip. Sweetheart...

Hannah. René, los dit.

Phillip. Why don't we just start.

René. Nee, sy wil mos praat, so praat nou. [Stilte.] Goed, ma, wil jy begin?

**

Hannah. Hallo? Sjoe, ek weet nie eintlik wat ek moet sê nie... Uhm... Ek is grootgemaak in Grootfontein in Namibie. Katoliek. Ja, ons was 'n gelowige huishouding. Gebid, gesing. Saint Judith was ons patron saint. O, en my ma kon baie mooi klavier speel, so dis waar ek my liefde gekry het. Ek is op Hoërskool na die Convent School for Girls in die Oos-Kaap. Ek het klavier geneem – Royal Schools eksamen gespeel. Kry mens nog dit? Ek het baie moeilike stukke gespeel. Rachmaninov... ta-tei-te-ta-tei-te-ta-tei-te-ta. So iets. Wat nog? Ek onthou dat ek altyd vir vier aande en vyf dae moes ry op die trein om by die klooster te kom. Ek moes die trein kry in Windhoek want dit het die gestop by Grootfontein nie. My pa was 'n polisiekommeraris en hy is, ek dink toe ek in graad elf is, verplaas na Katima Mulilu.

**

René. Ja, kom ons praat oor Katima Mulilu.

Leana. Waar is Katima Mulilu? [Stilte.]

Phillip. It's on the northern border of Namibia.

**

Erasmus. Ek het op die Kaapse vlakte grootgeword. Ag, ons het nie veel gehad nie. Ons was eenvoudig, maar ek onthou dat my ma het ongelooflike klas en styl gehad. Daar was nou vir jou 'n vrou van formaat. Ons het net drie pare skoene in die huis gehad wat ek en my broers moes deel en ek onthou dat sy het altyd seker gemaak dat, maak die saak waarheen ons gaan nie, daardie skoene altyd versorg moes wees: die vetters uitgeryg, gepolitoer, en netjies in die klein kassie gepak. Ja, ons was arm, maar ons was nie vuil nie. My ma het altyd 'n punt gemaak dat ons almal teen alle tye skoon en netjies moet wees. Ons het 'n kom gehad, en al die broers moes een keer 'n dag daarin bad. Ek onthou sy sou so ontsteld raak as ons buite in die sand gaan speel het na ons gebad het. Dan het ons sulke pakslae gekry dat jy eerder maar gestaan het vir die res van die aand. My pa was baie lief vir my ma. Sy was regtig 'n wonderlike vrou – ek dink, tot 'n groot mate, was sy eintlik alles want mens sou wou he in 'n vrou. Maar ons het swaar gekry. Dié dat ek die skool verlaat het op sestien en toe aangesluit het by die polisie-kollege. Dit was omtrent so tien jaar vantevore, toe word ek verplaas na Katima Mulilu.

**

Hannah. Ek weet nie eintlik hoe om dit te beskryf nie. Dit was tropies.

Erasmus. Daar was bome oral. Dig, dig, dig. En daar is twee beeldskone riviere wat daardeur loop.

Hannah. Wat was hulle name?

Erasmus. Die Chobe en die Zambezi.

Hannah. O ja, ek het een keer...

Erasmus. Daar was baie diere wat vrylik deur die dorpie geloop het. Leeus, zebras, slange.

Hannah. Slang! Dit was 'n nagmerrie. As jy jou kom kry is daar 'n slang in jou huis.

Erasmus. Ja, ek was eenkeer deur 'n slang gepik.

Hannah. Was dit nie twee keer nie?

Erasmus. Ja, twee keer. Een van die jonges het vir my uitgesuig. Die gif.

**

Erasmus. Dit was 'n klein dorp. Daar was toe omtrent 100 mense wat daar gebly het – die polisiekomesaris en sy gesin, die winkeleienaar en sy vrou...

Hannah. O, ek onthou hulle!

Erasmus. Twee Jode wat vir die Zambiers Westerse goed verkoop het...

Hannah. Ou Shirley en Shylock!

Erasmus. En die Lokale Kommissaris en Sekretaris van Naturellesake.

Hannah. Dis swart mense.

Erasmus. Dié het in elk geval kort daarna sy werk verloor weens politiese redes.

Hannah. Ek het nie baie van hom gehou nie.

**

Erasmus. Toe ek Katima Mulilu toe verplaas is, was ek verskriklik opgewonde. Dit was iets heeltemal anders as Kaapstad. Dit was soos 'n avontuur. My kommandant het dit aan my beskryf as 'n tropiese woud – nog amper heeltemal onversteurd deur die mens en sy moderne samelewing. Ek wou so lewe. Eenvoudig. Ek is opgetel by die naaste lughawe deur sersant Hartman. Ons klim toe in so 'n groot vier-by-vier, en ry na die dorp. Dit was 'n vier-uur rit. Ons kom toe daar aan, en hy nooi my vir ete saam met sy familie. Ek sê toe nou maar uit die aard van die saak ja, ek gaan pak toe my goed uit in die enkelkwartiere en besluit dat ek seker myself netjies moet maak. Nou ja – daar was toe nou nog nie water in die tenk by die enkelkwartiere nie, want die gebou was nog nuut, so ek moes na die ete gaan presies soos wat ek in die dorp aangekom het.

**

Hannah. Ek was op vakansie by die huis en my pa was weg om 'n nuwe polisieman by die lughawe te gaan oplaai. Ek moes toe my ma help om die kos voor te berei. Daar was nie 'n groot verskeidenheid nie, so ons het maar hoender gemaak. Hoender en 'n baie klein slaai. In elk geval, die aand kom aan, ek is nog nie eens uit my voorskoot uit nie, en daar kom 'n man by die voordeur in.

**

Erasmus. Dit was die mooiste meisie wat ek in my lewe gesien het.

**

Hannah. Sjoe, hy was 'n aantreklike man.

**

Erasmus. Sy was so skoon.

**

Hannah. Bygesê, hy was ook die enigste man.

**

Erasmus. Kry ek so skaam dat ek in my vuil klere daar staan.

**

Hannah. Staan toe ek daar in my pienk voorskoot. Die vernedering.

**

Erasmus. Ek het onmiddelik geweet dat dit die vrou is met wie ek gaan trou. Sy was skoon, sy was netjies, sy was versorg...

**

Hannah. Ek was sewentien.

**

Erasmus. Ons het haar hele skoolvakansie saam deurgebring.

Hannah. Op ons laaste aand saam...

**

Erasmus. Hannah, ek wil iets vir jou vra, maar voor ek jou vra, moet jy belowe dat jy sal ja sê.

Hannah. Ek dink ek weet wat die vraag is.

Erasmus. Jy doen?

Hannah. Ek weet nie. Hoekom vra jy nie?

Erasmus. Nee, maar jy moet eers ja se.

Hannah. Wag, hoe moet ek ja sê as ek nie weet wat jy wil vra nie?

Erasmus. Vertrou jy my?

Hannah. Ja.

Erasmus. So is dit 'n ja?

Hannah. Wag, was dit jou vraag?

Erasmus. Nee, dit was nie.

Hannah. Wel dan nee!

Erasmus. So is jou antwoord nee?

Hannah. Ja!

Erasmus. Regtig?

Hannah. Nee!

Erasmus. So dis ja?

Hannah. Nee!

Erasmus. Nee ja, of nee nee?

Hannah. Vra net die vraag!

Erasmus. Sê eers ja!

Hannah. Ja!

Erasmus. Regtig?

Hannah. Ja!

Erasmus. Dis fantasties!

Hannah. Ek's bly!

Erasmus. [Pouse.] Ek is lief vir jou.

Hannah. Ek ook. [Pouse.] So wat was die vraag?

Erasmus. Sal jy met my trou?

**

Hannah. Ons was nie ryk nie.

Erasmus. Maar ons was ook nie arm nie.

Hannah. Ons het die nodige gehad.

Erasmus. Dit was 'n paradys.

Hannah. Nege maande na ons getroud is, is enigste kind gebore.

Erasmus + Hannah. René.

**

René. So nou's dit my beurt? Ja, dit was nie vir my so great nie. Katima Mulilu was die versinnebeelding van die Afrikaner Calvinisme. 'n Klein dorpie met 'n klomp swart mense wat hulself afgesloof het vir 'n paar wit mense waar die mans stink na die veld en die vrouens pligsgetrou die kombuis oppas en reg staan met hul donderse pienk voorskote.

**

Hannah. My probleem met Katima Mulilu was eintlik net dat ek nooit my man gesien het nie. Hy was nooit by die huis nie. Hy was altyd op die pad – uit op die veld besig met...wel... ek weet nie. Seker om die kommuniste uit die land te hou. En ek was bang – gaan hy terug kom? Gaan hy dood wees? Gaan ek hom ooit weer sien? En... ek was verveeld. Ek meen, wat moet mens doen? Ek het klavierlesse op die dorp gegee, ek het die huis skoongehou, ek het gaan tee drink by die bure – die van der Merwes. O, daai vrou kon skinder. As sy nie van jou gehou het nie, kan jy maar vergeet. Sy het die Damesaktueel met 'n ysterhand regeer. Ek dink in elk geval nie sy't regtig ooghere vir my gehad nie. Maar toe die eerste kerk op die dorp gebou is...

**

René. Dit het als gebeur toe hulle die eerste kerk op die dorp gebou het.

**

Hannah. Waar moet ons sit?

Erasmus. Kom ons sit voor.

Hannah. Maar dan gaan almal ons sien.

Erasmus. Dit maak mos nie saak nie.

Hannah. Dis baie ongemaklik hier.

René. Hoekom kon ek nie by die huis gebly het nie?

Hannah. Wel, dan sou jy nie die mooi rokkie kon dra wat ek vir jou gemaak het nie.

René. Ja, seker.

Hannah. Hou jy nie daarvan nie?

René. Dis ok...

Hannah. Ek het baie hard daaraan gewerk...

René. Ja, dis seker mooi.

Hannah. Pas net op vir die knopies. Ek moet hulle nog ordentlik vaswerk.

René. Hulle sal nie loskom nie, ne?

Hannah. Nee, solank jy nie aan hulle vroetel nie.

René. Hierdie gaan so boring wees.

Hannah. Sjuut. Moenie dat jou pa hoor nie. Bly eerder net stil, asseblief. Ek wil regtig nie vandag 'n bakleiry hê nie.

Erasmus. Hulle gaan nou begin.

René; Erasmus; Hannah.

Soos 'n wildsbok wat smag na water, smag my siel na U, o Heer

U alleen is my hartsverlange en ek bring aan U die eer.

U alleen is my bron van krag. In U teenwoordigheid wil ek wag.

U alleen is my hartsverlange en ek bring aan U die eer.

René. [Stilte.] Ek moet piepie.

Erasmus. René, sit stil.

Hannah. Toe nou, hou op vroetel.

René. Ek het gesê ek wil nie kom nie.

Erasmus. Jy is in die teenwoordigheid van God. Gedra jou.

Hannah. Erasmus, asseblief.

René. Hoe lank nog? Ek moet pie!

Hannah. Asseblief, my kind. Sjuut nou. Knyp net!

René. Maar mamma, ek moet...

Erasmus. Jy soek nou moeilikheid en gaan dit kry.

René. Maar ek moet régtig gaan!

Hannah. René...

Erasmus. Luister jy nou baie mooi vir my –

Hannah. Erasmus...

René. Ek gaan myself natpie!

Hannah. René!

Erasmus. As jy nie jouself nou begin gedra nie –

Hannah. Erasmus! Die hele kerk kyk vir ons!

René. Hier kom dit!!!

Erasmus. [Gryp haar aan haar kraag] – gaan ek jou by hierdie kerk uitsleep en jou so hard bliksem dat jy gaan kruip vir die res van jou lewe!

Hannah. Erasmus! Haar rok gaan skeur! [Stilte.]

**

Hannah. Ek is nog nooit so verneder nie...

Erasmus. Die hele kerk het ons gehoor!

Hannah. Ek gaan nooit weer die dominee in die oë kan kyk nie...

Erasmus. Wat is fout met jou!

Hannah. Die bure dink seker ons is mal.

Erasmus. Die ergste is dat jy nie eens spyt is nie!

Hannah. Erasmus, ek kan nie...

Erasmus. Kyk wat het jy aan jou ma gedoen!

Hannah. Ek kan nooit weer my gesig in die publiek wys nie. Wat gaan die van der Merwes dink?

Erasmus. Toemaar, toemaar. Ek sal gaan verduidelik.

Hannah. My dogter het haarself netgepie voor die hele kerk. Kaal!

Erasmus. Hannah, dis ok.

Hannah. Ek wil weggaan. Ek wil weg kom uit hierdie dorp uit.

Erasmus. Ek sal met die dominee gaan praat. René sal om verskoning vra.

Hannah. Nee. Jy luister nie na wat ek sê nie. Ek wil loop. Ek wil nie meer hier bly nie. Die plek maak my benoud. Dis beknop. Dis te gevaarlik. Ek weet nooit waar jy is nie. Ek weet nooit of jy weer huistoe gaan kom nie. Ek is bang. Ek wil weg.

**

René. Binnekort was ons weg van Katima Mulilu af.

Erasmus. Ook maar goed want ek hoor die swartes het daai plek oorstroom.

Phillip. Ja, that was about the time that I was in the army.

Erasmus. Dis hoekom die kinders van vandag geen dissipline het nie.

**

Phillip. The army? Funny story – we were out on the velt in Botswana at that point in a stolen car because we had to get back to the border. But before that, we were involved in a shootout with some black communists who were attacking us left right and centre. Bang, bang, bang. I promise you, there was probably 50 or 60 of them, which was a fuckload at that point. Barry, one of the guys, ran out of ammunition and in those days, you really could only be responsible for yourself. Anyway, so he decided, no, fuck this, and God hear me, he jumped in a hole in the ground which turned out to be a fucking longdrop. Well, we managed to get away, but I swear the smell in that car – you have never smelt anything like it. I mean, God, only kaffirs can shit out a stench like that. Anyway, I shit you not, we weren't even driving for ten minutes when one of the other guys, Rick, said, 'man, I gotta go.' I was driving so I said, 'no, fuck.' I mean, we couldn't stop. But he just went on, 'you guys, I gotta go, I gotta go!' I mean, fuck, what should you do? You couldn't drive off the road because they planted landmines and if we stopped in the road we were vulnerable to attack. Problem was, he looked as though he was about to spew his shit all over us, so I stopped the car, he jumped out, pulled down his uniform and did his business while we stood watch. But this is the thing: the uniforms that we wore were attached from the head to feet, like an overall. So you can imagine, Rick stood up, pulled up his uniform, and realized he'd shit all over himself!

**

Erasmus. Die weermag het jou geleer hoe om 'n man te wees.

René. Ekskuus?

Erasmus. Dit bou karakter. Lewenslesse.

René. Nee, apparently het dit jou geleer hoe om jouself te bekak.

Hannah. René, nie voor die mense nie!

Erasmus. Soos ek sê, die weermag het vir jong manne dissipline geleer. Selfstandigheid. Selfrespek. Eerbaarheid.

René. Eerbaarheid? Verskoon my terwyl ek sterf van ironie.

Phillip. René, leave it.

René. The point is, I would never send my son to the army.

Erasmus. Ja, maar waar het jy hom toe gestuur? Na ons toe om grootgemaak te word teen ons omkoste?

René. Jy weet hoekom ek dit moes doen.

**

René. Kyk, ek is baie lief vir my kind. Ek was getroud met Martin. Hy was Engels. En 'n ek vermoed ook 'n bietjie Joods. Anyway, ek het eintlik met hom getrou om my ouers te spite. Ek was op onderwys kollege en ek het geweet daar is niks wat hulle meer sal haat nie.

**

René. Gaan pa kom na die troue toe, of nie?

Erasmus. Nee, ek gaan nie kyk hoe jy jou naam gat maak in die hof nie.

Hannah. My kind, hoekom trou jy nie net in die kerk nie? Ek sal vir jou 'n mooi rok maak...

René. Nee, ma, ek wil regtig nie nog 'n rok hê nie.

Erasmus. Of is jy nou net so goddeloos soos daai man van jou?

René. Kyk, ek gee nie meer om wat julle sê nie. Julle kan of na die troue kom, of julle kan by die huis sit.

Erasmus. Jy weet natuurlik dat hy nie eintlik in jou belang stel nie.

Hannah. Erasmus...

René. Reg, so ek neem aan julle gaan nie kom nie?

Hannah. Jou pa wil net die beste vir jou hê.

René. Dan sal hy my troue ondersteun.

Erasmus. Ek is jammer, maar ek weier om geassosieer te word met daardie sirkus. En ek gaan nie begin oor daai slagpat man van jou...

Hannah. Erasmus...

Erasmus. Ek is jammer, Hannah, daar's iewers hier 'n slang in die gras. Hy't 'n agenda.

René. Wat? Net omdat hy vir my lief is, het hy 'n agenda?

Erasmus. Ek sien net nie die aantrekking nie.

Hannah. Kyk, jy kan miskien 'n bietjie gewig verloor, my kind.

René. Ek is op die nuwe weigh-less diet, ma.

Erasmus. Jou ma's reg. In elk geval, soos jy nou lyk sal net 'n kaffir ooit in jou belang stel.

**

René. Daardie gesprek het drie groot uitwerkings op my lewe gehad. Die eerste was dat ek nooit weer my pa sou vertrou nie. Ek was regtig lief vir Martin. Die probleem was net – en dis die tweede groot uitwerking – dat die huwelik 'n disaster was. Nodeloos om te sê het ek opgeëindig in 'n Satanistiese kult wat my eersgebore René wou offer aan demone van die vure van hel. Toe skei ons. So ja – die huwelik was 'n disaster, maar daaruit het ek gekry 'n meesterstuk van 'n kind.

**

Erasmus. Wat sy op ons voordeur gelos het.

**

Phillip. 1997. That was when my life changed. It's odd, but I really can't remember the exact date when it happened. It might have been a Sunday night. Whatever. The point is that nothing before that night was ever really important. Easier, yes. Simpler. But at the same time, kak boring. 1997 was when I met René for the first time. I don't know whether it was her personality, the way she carried herself, or what it was, but something drew me to her. I was in Johannesburg for an interview and I went to a bar, *The Bird Cage*, and that's where I met her. I think she spoke to me first...

**

René. So ek sien jy's ook alleen hier?

Phillip. Sorry?

René. I see you're also here alone?

Phillip. Oh, yes. I've got an interview tomorrow.

René. For what?

Phillip. Stone Crusher.

René. What?

Phillip. A position opened at the stone crushing plant. Manager.

René. That's... interesting.

Phillip. Ja.

René. So what do you do with crushed stones?

Phillip. A lot of things. Make roads...

René. Oh. Do you think you'll get it? The job, I mean.

Phillip. Well, I don't know... I've only got matric.

René. That's not so bad. My dad only has standard 8. And he's doing fine.

Phillip. Well, I hope get the job. What are you doing here? Alone?

René. I ran away from my Satanic husband.

Phillip. Oh.

René. Yes. And I left my son with my parents.

Phillip. Oh.

René. [Begin huil.] And now, I'm going to become an alcoholic.

Phillip. Oh. [Pouse.] I'm sorry to hear that.

René. Don't be. I know I'm just being silly, but I want to be happy, you know.

Phillip. Yes. I understand. I read in *Popular Mechanics* that crying is thought to help reduce stress, which can have a damaging effect on your health and has been linked to a number of health problems including heart disease, high blood pressure, type-2 diabetes and obesity.

René. Obesity? Are you saying I'm fat?

Phillip. No, the opposite. You're not obese because you cry so much!

René. What are you saying!?

Phillip. God, that really came out wrong. Can we start again, please? Hi, I'm Phillip.

René. René.

**

René. Ek het nie op my man gecheat nie. Want kyk, daar was versagte omstandighede. Ons sou anyway skei. Eventually. Martin het net baie goeie geld gemaak. Ek kon dit mos nie opoffer nie. Ek het 'n kind. Anyway, goddank is hy kort daarna dood so dit het ons almal 'n baie awkward gesprek gespaar. Kort daarna is ek en Phillip saam – officially. Wel, ons is nie getroud nie want ek wou nie so vining weer daai fout maak nie, maar ons bly toe saam.

**

Phillip. Ja, I got the job, the problem was just that I couldn't keep that job. Or the next one. Or the next one. Or any of the jobs, for that matter. I read in *Popular Mechanics* that if tension in the workplace arises, it's not always a good idea to react violently.

René. No that wasn't the fucking *Popular Mechanics*. That was me.

**

René. In elk geval, hy kon nie 'n werk hou nie. Dié dat ons alles verloor het, en ons toe saam met my ouers gaan bly. En dis toe die kak liederlik die fan gestrike het.

TWEEDE BEDRYF

René. Dankie dat ons kon kom, ma.

Hannah. Hoe lank beplan julle om te bly?

René. Ek weet nie. Tot Phillip besluit om 'n werk te kry.

Erasmus. I can't believe it.

René. Ons het alles verloor. Alles!

Hannah. Wel, almal sukkel, hoor.

Erasmus. Los dit nou.

Hannah. Nee, ek sê maar net. Ons is ook nie eintlik finansieel op 'n goeie plek nie, hoor.

Erasmus. Laat my daarvoor bekommer. Come, let's get the fire going.

**

Phillip. Something is seriously wrong with country, Erasmus

Erasmus. Tell me about it.

Phillip. It's not as though I'm a racist, you know.

Erasmus. [Agreeing.] Hm.

Phillip. But when you are paid to do a job, you've got to do it. It's as simple as that.

Erasmus. Phillip, listen to me. I've been dealing with them since my days in Katima Mulilu and I promise you, there isn't a person alive as lazy as a kaffir.

Phillip. It's as though they've got no ambition.

**

René. Kyk, ek sê nie Phillip het nie ambisie nie, maar hy moet begin opstaan vir homself. Dis hoekom ons nou al vir jare aan die gang is en nêrens kom nie.

Hannah. Ja...

René. Nou blameer hy die werkers by die *plant*, maar hy kan nie sy humeur so verloor nie. Die man is in die hospitaal!

Hannah. Nee!

**

Phillip. You can push me and you can push me, but you can only push me so far, hey.

Erasmus. You really musn't...

Phillip. But I do, because René, you know.

Erasmus. You mustn't feel guilty. I am sorry, but a black will always be a black. And sometimes they just need to be reminded who's boss.

**

Hannah. René, ek verstaan, maar het julle die baas probeer kontak en verduidelik?

René. Wel, Phillip gaan dit nie doen nie, so toe moes ek dit nou maar doen.

Hannah. En?

René. Nee, hy wil niks weet nie.

Hannah. Maar wat het jy vir hom gesê?

René. Dat hy sy gat in rat moet kry en sy werkers begin beheer.

Hannah. Jy kan ook 'n bietjie aggressief wees, my kind.

René. Ek is nie aggressief nie, ma!

**

Erasmus. Look, here's the plan. You stay here, look for a job, we can do some work around the house. Let's not worry about it.

**

René. Ek bekommer my net, ma. Ons het letterlik niks oor nie. Ons moes ons huis opoffer, ons meubels verpant. Ek weet regtig nie wat om te doen nie!

Hannah. Wel, ek weet nie, ons sukkel ook verskriklik. Ek weet nie waarheen ons geld gaan nie.

**

Phillip. I know you guys are also struggling, so I promise we'll be careful.

Erasmus. No, we'll be fine. If push comes to shove, I'll take another loan on the house.

**

Hannah. Jou pa het illusies. Ons het al klaar twee huislenings wat ons moet afbetaal. Ek weet regtig nie hoe ons gaan regkom nie. Hy't nou die dag ten duurste 'n rekenaar gekoop. Vir e-posse. Wie moet ons e-pos? Ek ken niemand met e-pos nie!

René. Die oomblik wat ons die geld het, sal ons help.

Hannah. Gaan jy ook 'n werk soek, René?

René. Waar moet ek werk, ma?

Hannah. Daar is seker skole hier rond? Ons moet net kyk in *Die Burger*.

René. Ek gaan nie weer werk vir R2000 'n maand nie.

Hannah. Ja, maar, René, werk is werk.

René. Nie vir R2000 'n maand nie. Dis slave-labour!

Hannah. My kind, jy's in geen posisie om jou neus op te trek vir werk nie, hoor.

René. Fine, dan sal ek die bure se huismeid gaan word.

Hannah. Sjuut! Nethou hoor hulle jou.

**

Hannah. Ek dink ek is 'n slegte ma. Wag, miskien moet ek verduidelik. Ek is baie onseker oor... oor als. Ek het myself konstant bevraagteken. Het ek iets verkeerd gedoen? Moet ek dit anders doen? Ek het my kind Christelik grootgemaak, ek het haar waardes geleer, ek dink ek het alles gedoen wat 'n ma moontlik kan doen. Wel, alles wat ek moontlik kon doen. En tog is my kind se lewe rampspoedig oppad na nerens. Wel, as sy vir R2000 'n maand 'n onderwyser wil wees nie, moet sy dan 'n ander beroep vind. Verkieslik een waar sy op mense kan skree.

**

René. Nou wat? Nou sit ek rond die huis. Ek kyk TV. Fok tog, ek haat Durbanville. Daar is iets kak depressing aan hierdie plek. Dis so obvious. Reality TV... boring. Crime and Investigation... wat de fok? Movie magic... g'n mens se dag is so lank nie. So ek tel maar 'n tydskrif op... een van Phillip se *Popular Mechanics*. "Social media is the way of the future. It has redefined the way in which we communicate, connect and even find jobs." Fok, ek kort 'n *Facebook*. Ek hoor dis *all the rage* met die kinders deesdae.

**

René. Ma, hoe sit mens die ding aan?

Hannah. Daar's 'n knop aan die kant!

René. Aan watter kant?

Hannah. Die linker kant!

René. Daar's niks hier nie. Kom kyk net!

Hannah. Dan is dit aan die ander kant! Ek hekel.

René. Dis nie hier – toemaar. Hier's dit. Ek het dit. Ok. *Loading*. Loading loading loading. O. Internet... watter knop is dit? Hoe werk hierdie ding? Wat moet ek op kliek?

Hannah. Wat maak jy?

René. Ek wil op die internet rondrits. Waarop moet ek kliek?

Hannah. Ek het dit neergeskryf in my boekie. Dis op die blou "E".

René. Maar hiers een met 'n koevertjie?

Hannah. Nee. Langs die koevertjie.

René. Ok ok.

Hannah. Is jy seker jy moet aan die ding karring. Ek dink nie jy moet nie. Netnou kom daar 'n virus op die komper.

René. Ma! *Get with it!* Mens noem dit 'n computer deesdae!

Hannah. My kind, moet dit net nie breek nie! Ons kan regtig nie 'n nuwe een bekostig nie.

René. Ja, whatever.

**

Leana. Soos ek gesê het, my naam is Leana. Leana Labescacne. Oom Erasmus het altyd by ons huis kom uitreikwerk doen.

**

Erasmus. Ja, hulle't 'n interessante familie. Kyk, ons het dalk probleme, maar daai arme kinders...

**

Leana. Wie bly in ons huis? Wel, my suster, my ma en my pa, my oupa.

**

Erasmus. Die moeilikheid het gekom toe ek hulle wou oornooi vir ete.

**

Hannah. Nee, nee en weereens nee. Ek wil nie daardie mense in my huis hê nie.

Erasmus. Hoekom nie? Is hulle nie goed genoeg vir jou nie?

Hannah. Dit het niks daarmee uit te waai nie. Ek wil net nie my huis oopmaak vir elke Janrap en sy maat nie. Jou uitreik werk bly daar en jou persoonlike lewe bly hier.

Erasmus. Hulle kan nie hulle omstandighede help nie.

Hannah. Dit gaan nie daaroor nie. Ek hoef net bloot eenvoudig nie met hulle te meng nie.

Erasmus. Is dit omdat hulle in Kraaifontein bly?

Hannah. Nee. Hulle is net nie my mense nie.

René. Ma, hierdie rekenaar is besig om my mal te maak...

Erasmus. Dis net 'n ete!

Hannah. Nee, dit is nie! Dit begin met 'n ete, maar dis nie waar dit eindig nie! Volgende gaan hulle wil oorkom vir tee, dan moet ek hulle elke keer entertain soos een of ander hofnar. Ek weet nie wat om vir hulle te sê nie! Waaroor moet ons praat? Gekande worsie-resepte? Voor jy jou kom kry, moet ek saam Tygervallei toe gaan! Ek vat nie so 'n mens Tygervallei toe nie. Sy kan Cape Gate toe gaan. Dis mos in Kraaifontein. Nou wil sy by óns kom inkopies doen! Wat is volgende? Ek kan nie, ek kan nie! Ek kry sommer stuipe!

René. Wat gaan aan?

Erasmus. Jou ma wil nie hê die Labeschane familie moet kom kuier nie.

**

Leana. Nee, ek het nie enige vriende nie. Ek het nou die dag vir die eerste keer Tygervallei toe gegaan. Ek wou maar net kyk hoe dit lyk. Hulle het herbou. Ek het die taxi gevat. Die reuk was baie sterk. Ek sprei my toe met die laaste bietjie Hoiti-Toiti wat oom Erasmus vir my gekoop het. Ek wou aansoek doen vir 'n werk by Foschini, maar die manager het net vir my gesê dat ek nie gepas is vir die pos nie. Dit was 'n *sales* pos. Op die vloer. Oh well, ek sal maar weer probeer.

**

Hannah. Charity begins at home, Erasmus.

René. Wie is hulle?

Erasmus. Dis die Labeschane-gesin. Hulle bly in Kraaifontein.

Hannah. Ja, maar nou wil jou pa die mense by ons huis inbring.

René. O. Wel, laat hulle kom.

Hannah. Wat?

René. Ja, laat hulle kom.

Hannah. Gaan jý vir hulle kosmaak?

René. Kom die hele gesin?

Erasmus. Nee. Net Leana.

Hannah. Wat? Die kind?

René. Regtig?

Hannah. Wat moet ek met haar oor praat? Sy's een-en-twintig?

Erasmus. Die familie is nie hier nie. Sy's alleen.

René. Ja, ma. Sy's alleen. Laat haar kom.

**

René. Is ek 'n aaklige mens?

**

Hannah. René, wat dink jy doen jy?

René. Toemaar, ma. Jy sal sien.

Hannah. Ek het natuurlik nie 'n idee wat om te maak nie.

René. Hoender en 'n klein slaai?

Hannah. Wel, dis al wat ek aanmekaar kan skraap in sulke kort kennisgewing.

**

Phillip. What are you up to, René?

René. Nothing.

Phillip. Listen to me, we are at the mercy of your parents. Please, please, please don't make a scene.

René. What are you saying?

Phillip. Nothing.

René. No, come now. You've started. Finish.

Phillip. Sometimes you can just be a little...dramatic.

René. Phillip. I love you. I do. I really do. But there are some things that you should just stay out of. Because you aren't part of it.

Phillip. Just remember that whatever you do affects me as well.

**

Leana. Moet ek enigiets saamvat na die ete toe?

Erasmus. Nee wat. Hannah sal alles maak.

Leana. Wel, ek het 'n paar gekande worsies.

Erasmus. Nee, ek sê mos, Hannah sal alles maak.

**

Hannah. Natuurlik moet ek alles maak. René, gaan jy my kom help?

René. Ek's nou daar!

Hannah. Wat maak jy so op die komper!?

**

Phillip. Topics to avoid around the dinner table, according to *Men's Health*. Money...

**

Leana. Dink oom hierdie rok pas by my?

Erasmus. Ja, dit lyk baie goed op jou!

Leana. Tannie Hannah het baie goeie smaak.

Erasmus. Ek het dit vir haar gekoop die eerste week toe ons getroud is.

Leana. Regtig?

Erasmus. Ja, maar sy't dit nooit gedra nie. Dis so goed soos nuut.

Leana. Gee sy om as ek dit dra?

Erasmus. Nee, man. Ek dink nie sy weet dis in haar kas nie.

Leana. Wow, ek voel so hipster!

**

Phillip. Religion...

**

René. Hoe het julle hierdie familie ontmoet?

Hannah. Nee, jou pa. Die kerk het mene gevra om kospakkies rond te ry vir die Kraaifontein Uitreikprojek.

René. So hulle bly in Kraaifontein?

Hannah. Ja. Ek weet nie hoekom hulle kerk nie dit doen nie. Nou moet die Durbanville-gemeente betrokke raak.

René. Maar hoe pas hierdie mense in die prentjie?

Hannah. Jou pa kan mos nie die kospakkie aflewer en ry nie. Hy moet mos boesemvriende met almal wees. Ek bid net dat dit die laaste keer is wat ek so iets moet doen.

**

Phillip. Politics...

**

Erasmus. Jou ma-hulle kon nie kom nie, nè?

Leana. Nee, hulle's by P. E. in die hof.

Erasmus. Hoe gaan dit met die saak?

Leana. Ek weet nie.

Erasmus. Praat hulle nie met jou nie?

Leana. Ja, maar ek luister nie.

**

Hannah. Dis nie dat ek nie met hulle wil praat nie, maar daardie familie is 'n saak vir die Here.

**

Leana. Ek bid maar net elke dag vir hulle.

**

René. Wat gaan dit help, ma?

**

Erasmus. Jou ma moet net sterk wees. God bewaar sy volk. Gun aan almal...

**

Hannah. Mens kan net hoop.

René. Hoop vir wat?

**

Erasmus. Genade.

Hannah. Geduld.

**

Erasmus. Ons is hier.

Hannah. Hulle's hier.

Erasmus. Is jy gereed?

Hannah. Is jy gereed?

René + Leana: Ja.

Hannah + Erasmus. Reg. Kom ons begin.

**

Phillip. And most importantly remember...

René. What are you doing? Come on, she's here.

Phillip. Nevermind.

**

Erasmus. Ons is hier!

Leana. Hallo, tannie.

**

Hannah. Al wat ek wou weet, is wat dra sy?

**

Hannah. Naand.

René. Hallo Leana. Ek's René.

Phillip. And I'm...

René. Dis my man, Phillip.

Leana. Tannie se huis is baie mooi.

Hannah. Dankie, my kind.

Erasmus. Ha! Almal kom so goed oor die weg. Wil julle nie mekaar 'n drukkie gee nie?
René?

René. Eksuus?

Hannah. Erasmus?

Erasmus. Wat, Hannah?

**

Hannah. Daai rok lyk baie bekend.

**

Hannah. Nee, niks. [Pouse.]

Phillip. Let's go sit.

Erasmus. So ja.

Hannah. Verskoon my, ek's nou terug.

René. Ma?

Hannah. Ek gaan gou kamer toe.

René. So, kan ek vir enigiemand iets skink?

Erasmus. Nee, ek is nog piekfyn. Leana?

Leana. O, uh, nee. Ek's reg, dankie, tannie.

René. Moet my asseblief nie tannie noem nie.

Leana. Jammer, tannie. My ma het altyd vir my geleer dat jy net jou vriende en jou geliefde op hul name noem.

Rene. Jou ma's reg. [Pouse.] So, hoe was die verkeer?

Erasmus. Daar was weer padwerke op Langeberg.

Phillip. Sjo, you must have waited a while, hey?

Erasmus. Ten minutes.

Phillip. Hey, I heard the petrol prices are goig up?

Erasmus. Again?

Phillip. Ja, forty cents this time.

Erasmus. [Sug in mismoedigheid.]

Leana. Beteken dit die taxi pryse gaan ook op? [Pouse.]

Rene. Ek weet nie... Ek het nog nie so daaraan gedink nie.

Phillip. So René tells me that your parents are in P. E?

Leana. Yes, oom.

Phillip. I know P. E. I used to work there. When was it?

René. 2001. Your fifth job.

Phillip. Oh, ja. More blacks.

Leana. Ekskuus?

Phillip. Oh, I'm sorry. I mean more indigenous people.

Leana. I'm sorry, oom, maar ek weet nie of ek saamstem nie.

Erasmus. Wat?

Leana. Mens moet probably nie so praat nie. Hulle kan dit nie help nie.

René. Regtig?

Phillip. Sjo, my girl, listen to me. When you've worked with a black as long as I have, you'll think differently. They're all criminals. All they can do with their little brains are steal and destroy. They're fucking useless.

Leana. Wel, ek het nou die dag in 'n taxi gery.

René. Hoekom sou jy so iets doen?

Leana. O, ek wou werk in 'n klerewinkel, maar...

Hannah. In 'n klerewinkel, sê jy?

René. O, ma's terug.

Hannah. Ekskuus. Jy wou in 'n klerewinkel werk?

**

Hannah. Uit my kas uit. Dis waar sy dit gekry het. Erasmus het dit seker vir haar gegee. Hoe durf hy! En sonder om my te vra!

**

Leana. Ja, tannie. Tannie ken mos Tygervallei?

Hannah. Jy wou werk in Tygervallei? Wat's fout met Cape Gate?

Leana. Nee, niks nie. Maar Tygervallei is daar by Durban Road, so dis nader aan...

Hannah. Ek weet waar Tygervallei is. Erasmus, kan ek met jou praat?

Erasmus. Hoekom?

Hannah. Kom net hier asseblief.

Erasmus. Hannah, wat gaan aan met jou? Ons het gaste...

René. [Hoes.]

Phillip. Are you ok?

René. Yes, I just choked.

Hannah. Toemaar, los dit. [Pouse.]

Erasmus. Reg, kan ons almal nou net 'n lekker aandjie verder geniet? [Pouse.]

Phillip. [Sug.] P. E.

Leana. Eksuus?

Phillip. No, I'm just thinking.

René. Wat maak jou ouers in P. E.?

Erasmus. Dis mos nie belangrik nie, René.

René. O nie?

**

René. Is ek 'n aaklige mens?

**

Leana. Nee, oom. Dis ok. Tannie, my ma-hulle...

Erasmus. Hannah, is die kos al reg?

Hannah. Nee. Nog nie.

René. So, Leana, hoe lank lewer my pa al kospakkies vir julle af?

Leana. Ek weet nie. Ek kan nie eintlik onthou nie.

Erasmus. Jy was nog 'n kind.

Hannah. Kom nou, Erasmus, sy's nogsteeds 'n kind.

Leana. Ek is al een-en-twintig.

Erasmus. Seker nou al vir veertien jaar.

Hannah. Ja, toe ons hier aankom moes ons heel voor in die kerk gaan sit.

Leana. So, ja, dis nogal lank.

Erasmus. Nee, want nadat ons hier aangekom het, was dit eers 'n rukkie voordat ek by die uitreik betrokke geraak het.

Hannah. Dit voel nie so nie.

Leana. Nee, wag. Ek was op pad Hoërskool toe, so ek was dertien.

Erasmus. Maar dis toe ek met julle betrokke geraak het.

René. So hoeveel jaar is dit?

Erasmus. Nie veertien nie, maar agt jaar.

Leana. Ja.

René. O. Ek verstaan, ek verstaan. Dis nogal lank. Nou sê my, uhm, in daardie tyd, wanneer het jy jou liefde aan my pa verklaar?

[stilte.]

Leana. Ekskuus, tannie?

Hannah. René.

René. Wat, ma? O, jammer. Dalk's sy doof. Wanneer het jy jou liefde aan my pa verklaar?

Hannah. René, wat doen jy?

René. Nee, niks nie, ma, ek vra net. So toe; antwoord die tannie!

Leana. Uhm...

Erasmus. Wil enigiemand tee hê?

Hannah. Ja, ek dink ek wil tee hê.

René. Sit!

Hannah. René, jy is besig om 'n scene te maak.

René. Nee, ma.

Erasmus. René...

René. Ek het dit alles ontdek toe ek hier aangekom het. Ek wou op die rekenaar vir my 'n *Facebook* profile skep, maar toe kom ek per ongeluk af op die e-posprogram...

Erasmus. René...

René. Hoe lank het julle nou al die rekenaar, Ma?

Hannah. René, hierdie is absurd. Jy is besig om jouself te verneder.

René. Ek is nie besig om myself te verneder nie! Wat toe ontdek ek al die korrespondensie.

**

Leana. Liewe oom, ek was baie selfsugtig. Ek moet vir die kerk dankbaar wees vir die rekenaar wat oom gereel het hulle vir my moet koop. Ek sien dit as 'n teken van die Here. Liewe Jesus het oom in my lewe gebring vir 'n rede. My familie, my lewe, is nie meer so

moelik nie met die wete dat oom daar is om my te troos. Oom is nou my nuwe familie. Liefde, Leana.

Erasmus. Liefste Leana. Dankie, vir jou mooi e-pos. Dit het my dag gemaak. Ek weet nie of ek hierdie reg doen nie. Laat weet indien jy dit gekry het. Liefde, oom.

Leana. Liewe oom. Ek het iets op die hart wat ek met oom moet deel. Oom was altyd soos 'n pa vir my, so ek voel ek moet eerlik wees. Onthou oom dat oom die Here in my lewe gebring het? Ek was nog jonk – veertien – maar die dag toe ek bekeer is, is n dag wat ek nooit sal vergeet nie. Oom het vir my belowe dat alles beter sal wees. En oom was reg. Wel, tot onlangs. Met die hofsaak het my lewe baie kompleks geword. Ek weet nie meer of ek 'n huis gaan hê hierna nie. Ek weet nie eens of ek 'n familie gaan hê nie. Ja, hulle was nie die beste familie nie, maar dis al wat ek het. Ek het gebid en gebid en, uiteindelik, het die Here met my kom praat. Hy het in 'n visioen aan my verskyn in 'n vloeiende wit mantel en lang, ligbruin hare. 'n Wit lig het om hom geskyn. Hy het my Maria genoem. Hy het vir my gesê dat daar net een person is wat my sal kan troos – wat my kan help in die donker tye wat die duiwel oor my pad gebring het. My ma het vir my geleer dat jy net jou vriende en jou geliefde op hul name kan noem. Ek glo dit nogsteeds. Erasmus. Erasmus. Ek noem jou Erasmus want ek het jou lief. Ek weet wat die wêreld gaan dink, maar ek weet ook wat die Here vir my gesê het. Erasmus, jy is die liefde van my lewe.

**

René. Ek is 'n aaklige mens.

**

Hannah. Erasmus? [Stilte.] Erasmus, is dit waar?

René. Jy's 'n vark.

Phillip. Sweetheart, please stop.

René. No, this man –

Phillip. René. Stop.

Hannah. Loop. Loop asseblief.

Erasmus. Hannah...

Hannah. Loop net asseblief!

Erasmus. Jammer.

DERDE BEDRYF

Hannah. Nege-en-veertig jaar. Dis hoe lank ek en Erasmus getroud is. Hierdie jaar is dit vyftig. Vyftig jaar.

**

Phillip. I fucking told you not to throw a scene. What the fuck was that?

René. Listen to me, you won't talk to me like that. That is my mother out there. She deserved to know.

Phillip. Really? Really? And what? Was that supposed to make her feel better? Was she supposed to thank you?

René. No, but what else? Is she supposed to stay married him?

**

Leana. Wat nou, Erasmus? Wat gaan ons nou doen?

Erasmus. Moenie daaroor bekommer nie. Ek sal dit alles self uitsorteer.

**

Phillip. Don't make this about her. I'm not fucking stupid. This was about you. You're angry at your father and now you want to punish him. What's wrong with you?

René. With me? With me? Something wrong with me? What are you saying? This has got nothing to do with me. My mother had to do everything for him and this is how he repays her? I won't allow her to be treated like that. And another thing, Phillip, there is something wrong with you if you think this is at all acceptable.

Phillip. Well, what do we do now? We're fucking stuck in this house.

**

Leana. Ek het geweet dit was 'n fout. Ek moes nie.

Erasmus. Moenie jou daaroor bekommer nie. Ek sal met Hannah praat. Sy's onredelik.

Leana. Wat het ek verkeerd gedoen? Ek is lief vir jou!

Erasmus. Ek weet, ek weet. En ek vir jou ook.

Leana. Al wat ek wil hê is om saam met jou te wees. Ek gee nie hom wat enigiemand dink nie.

**

Hannah. Kan julle twee asseblief stilbly. Netnou hoor die bure julle.

Phillip. Ja, of course.

René. Ma...

Hannah. Ek wil nie nou praat nie, René. Lekker slaap.

René. Ma, ek...

Hannah. René, los my. Ek wil nie nou met jou praat nie.

René. Ma, ek wou net...

Hannah. Wat? Wat wou jy gedoen het? René, jy het in een aand my hele lewe geruineer. Hoe moet ek die bure in die oë kyk? Vanaand was so 'n sirkus, hulle't seker alles gehoor. Hoe moet ek ooit weer my gesig in die kerk wys? Die sel-groep? Die hekel-klub?

René. Maar ma...

Hannah. Die goed is belangrik vir my, René. Want dit is al wat ek het.

René. Ma, hoe kan hulle jou kwalik neem? Dis nie jou skuld nie.

Hannah. Nie my skuld nie? René, in watter wêreld leef jy? Ek weet presies hoekom jou pa dit doen.

René. Ek verstaan nie! Wat gee hom die reg...

Hannah. Ek gaan nie verder vanaand met jou daaroor praat nie. En nog 'n ding, René; Ek hoop dat jou kind nooit aan jou doen wat jy vanaand aan my gedoen het nie.

René. Mamma...

Hannah. Nag.

**

Phillip. Well, this is awkward.

**

René. My pa het nie daardie aand huis toe gekom nie. Ook nie die res van die naweek nie. Maar iets het met my gebeur. Ek het besef ek het 'n fout gemaak. Ja, dit gebeur min, maar hierdie keer het iets groot in my verander. Toe ek grootgeword het, het my pa 'n idiaal voorgehou. Ek het seker geweet daar daar iets onderliggend fout in hul huwelik was, maar ek het dit geignoreer. Vir my ma se onthalwe. Sy is die belangrikste persoon in my lewe, so dis hoekom ek dit gedoen het. Dit was die regte ding om te doen. Ek weet dit was. Maar daardie aand het ek 'n droom gehad. Ek was nie eintlik 'n godsdienstige mens nie – nie na my episode in die kerk en my eerste man se betrokkenheid in die okkulte nie – maar toe ek daardie aand gaan slaap, het alles verander. Ek het gedroom ek loop deur my ouers se leë huis. In die sitkamer, op die televisie was *The Lion King* besig om te speel op 'n ou video. Ek ek loop toe na die televisie en – ewe skielik – verdwyn die huis. Ek staan toe in die veld. Die pleine van Afrika. Ek het geweet dat dit Katima Mulilu is. Ek weet nie hoe ek dit geweet het nie, maar dit was definitief Katima. Daar was diere orals. Die twee riviere – die Chobe en die Zambezi het oor die veld gevloei. Daar waar die twee riviere mekaar ontmoet, daar het my ma en my pa gestaan. Hulle was kaal. Hulle het mekaar omhels onder 'n reuse Granaatboom waarvan die vrugte onbeskryflik rooi was. Ek wou na hulle toe loop, maar ek kon nie. Ek het skielik besef dat my voete binne-in die grond gewortel was. Daar was 'n oomblik van paniek, maar ek het gesien dat hulle is gelukkig. Toe verskyn daar 'n meisie in 'n wit rok met knopies wat hang aan getorringde garingtjies. Maar dit was nie ek nie. Die meisie het aan my pa 'n granaat van die boom aangebied. Hy neem dit, hap daauit en toe begin dit klaphard reën. Ek wou so graag na hulle toe hardloop, maar ek was vas. My arme, my hande, het in houd verander. Ek kon hulle nie help nie. My ma huil bloed wat oor die hele landskap vloei, maar die meisie se wit rok vlek nie. My pa word al jonger en jonger en my ma word ouer. Voor enigiets verder gebeur het, word ek wakker. Dis nogal weird, nè? Anyway, ek het Susan Coetzer se *Oros vir die Siel* op die bedkassie gesien. Ek het geweet dat dit God was wat met

my gepraat het. Dit was alles 'n teken. Dis hoekom my lewe so 'n disaster was. Ek was veronderstel om hier op te eindig sodat ek my ma se rots kan wees.

**

Phillip. What?

René. I said, I want to go to church. Get ready.

Phillip. When we met, you told me that you never want to go back to church ever again?

René. But what about the dream, Phillip?

Phillip. It was just a dream, though.

René. Yes. A dream from God. I've been enlightened!

Phillip. Well, *National Geographic* says that dreams are only our unconscious mind's way of making sense of our lives and that...

René. Phillip, listen to me. I don't care what the *Popular Mechanics* say, I –

Phillip. No, but it was the *National*...

René. I don't care if it was the *National Geographic*, *Men's Health* or the fucking *Huisgenooit*, Phillip! We are going to church and that's that. I was touched by an angel and, God as my witness; we're going to praise him!

Phillip. Fine.

**

Erasmus. Ek is lief vir Hannah. Natuurlik is ek.

**

Leana. Hy is nie regtig lief vir haar nie.

**

Phillip. This church is Afrikaans.

René. Don't be ridiculous. You'll be fine. This is a hip and happening church. All the young people come here.

Phillip. Do we have to sit in front?

René. Yes, I want to feel the Holy Spirit descend on me first.

Phillip. René, I...

René. Shuut. They're starting.

René. (Phillip).

Daar is mag in Sy woord!
Soos die waters druis sy stem.

Soos die son op die see se blou,
so die rykdom van sy trou.

Want aan U is die mag
en die heerlijkheid en krag.
En aan U is die eer
en die lof, want U regeer.

**

Phillip. We sang for three hours. Not since my days in the army, have I ever been so exhausted. But it wasn't over. During the sermon, something happened. René got a fit of some sort – she, and this is the entire truth – she started talking, well, nonsense. It might have been Afrikaans, I don't know. I thought she was getting an epileptic seizure, but apparently she was being 'descended upon by the Holy Spirit.' I've worked on stone crushing plants my entire career. Crushing stones is electricity intensive, you know. And quite honestly, being 'descended upon' looks a lot like being electrocuted.

**

Leana. My ma het my vandag gebel van P. E. af. Ek het vir haar alles vertel. Die hele storie. Al die tekens. Dit was in die geheim, maar hulle was daar. Hy het altyd vir my geknippoog as niemand kyk nie, hy het my hand so 'n bietjie stywer vasgehou, hy het in die geheim vir my geglimlag. Hy het my selfs eenkeer na 'n spa in Mosselbaai gestuur. Ek het dit alles vir haar vertel. Sy was so trots op my. Ek hoef nie meer in Kraaifontein te bly nie, het sy gesê. En wat van tannie Hannah? Sy sal fine wees. Onthou, sy't al klaar geleef. Sy's net 'n ou vrou wat nooit vir Erasmus kon gee wat hy nodig gehad het nie.

**

Hannah. Ek kom van 'n ander tyd af. Ek het nie geweet van... daardie dinge nie. Wie moet jou sê? Jou ma? Mens het nie daarvoor gepraat nie. Dit was nie ordentlik nie. So, mens was bang. Op my huweliksdag het my ma vir my 'n nagrok gegee. Dit was die een wat haar ma vir haar gemaak het toe sy getroud is. Sy het 'n olielamp langs ons huweliksbed geplaas en vir my gesê ek moet die lamp uitblus voordat ek gaan lê en dan my oë toemaak. Ek moet my oë toemaak en dink aan God. Nege maande later is my kind – my enigste kind – René, gebore.

**

Hannah. So, jy's terug.

Erasmus. Ja.

Hannah. En daai meisie?

Erasmus. Dis nie belangrik nie.

Hannah. Waar was jy gister? Ek moes alleen kerk toe gaan.

Erasmus. Ek het saam met haar kerk toe gegaan.

Hannah. O. Die koor het vandag gesing. Ons het *O God, my Herder* gesing.

Erasmus. O.

Hannah. Almal het my gevra waar jy is.

Erasmus. Wat het jy vir hulle gesê?

Hannah. Wat moes ek vir hulle sê?

Erasmus. Seker wat jy wil. Jy gaan my in elk geval soos die vark laat lyk.

Hannah. Ek het vir hulle gesê jy's besig met die uitreik.

Erasmus. Het hulle dit geglo?

Hannah. Ja. Want dis waar.

Erasmus. Waar is Phillip en René?

Hannah. Hulle's nog by hulle kerk.

Erasmus. O. Ek het eintlik gekom om...

Hannah. Erasmus... [Stilte.] Onthou jy die eerste week wat ons getroud is? Ons kon toe nie 'n wittebrood bekostig nie. So, ons lewens het eintlik maar net soos normal aangegaan. Ons het vir die eerste paar maande saam met my ouers gebly. Maar jy het iets gedoen wat ek nooit sal vergeet nie. Jy het in die katalogus wat saam met die *Sarie Marais* gekom het, vir my 'n rok bestel...

Erasmus. Hannah...

Hannah. Asseblief kan ek klaar praat. Jy het vir my 'n rok bestel. Dit was nie 'n uitsonderlike rok nie, maar dit was mooi. Ek het dit nooit gedra nie, want dit het – vir my, ten minste – waarde gehad bo en behalwe die prys wat jy daarvoor betaal het. Dit was die heel eerste ding wat jy ooit vir my gekoop het, Erasmus. Ek wou dit bewaar. Ek wou dit koester. Want dit was myne. Myne en joune. Dit was die eerste steen waarop ons ons lewe saam sou bou. Dit was die rok waarin ek begrawe wou word. Dis hoekom ek dit nooit gedra het nie.

Erasmus. Hannah, ek sal...

Hannah. Nee, Erasmus. Ek wil dit nie terug hê nie, want dit beteken nie meer dieselfde vir my nie. Ek dog net jy moet weet. En ek hoop dat sy dit net so waardevol ag soos wat ek het.

Erasmus. Hannah, ek het nie geweet nie.

Hannah. Nee, want jy het ook nooit gevra nie, Erasmus. Jy het my nooit enigiets gevra nie. My opinie is nooit belangrik nie.

Erasmus. Ek is jammer, Hannah, maar...

Hannah. Hoekom?

Erasmus. Ekskuus?

Hannah. Hoekom het jy dit gedoen?

Erasmus. Ek...

René. Ma, ons is terug. Hoekom is pa se kar...

Hannah. René!

René. Wat maak jy hier?

Phillip. Sweetheart...

Erasmus. Dis my huis.

René. O? Dis jou huis!?

Hannah. René, die bure gaan julle hoor!

René. Net omdat dit jou huis is, dink jy jy's beter as ons almal?!

Erasmus. Dis wat ek kry van julle in my my huis inneem. Ek kan nie glo dis die kind wat ek grootgemaak het nie.

René. Soos jy gesê het, Pa, net 'n kaffir sal ooit in my belang stel.

Erasmus. Loop. Loop uit my huis uit!

Hannah. Erasmus!

Erasmus. Loop! Loop!

René. Jy sal nie my uit die huis uitkry nie! Ek is hier vir my ma!

Hannah. Asseblief, die bure gaan julle hoor.

Erasmus. [Ignoreer Hannah.] Is dit so!? Is dit?!

Phillip. [Deurgaans.] Sweetheart... René, listen...

Hannah. [Deurgaans.] Asseblief. Hou op. Stop! Die bure gaan julle hoor!

René. Kom weg van my af! Los my, los my! Satan! Wyk! Wyk, Satan, uit hierdie huis uit!

Erasmus. [Deurgaans – lag histeries.]

René. Jy soek amok in hierdie huishouding! Jy sal nie verder hier tempteer nie! Met die mag van die Here Jesus Christus Almagtige God beveel ek jou om te wyk! Wyk!

[Stilte.]

Leana. Hallo? Ek het geraas gehoor... Is almal ok? [Stilte.]

Hannah. Hoekom? [Stilte.] Antwoord my!

Leana. Ek was jaloers. Jy het nooit jou man waardeur nie. Julle familie is perfek.

Phillip. My girl, you've got some serious misconceptions.

Leana. My ma is in die hof op die oomblik.

Erasmus. Leana, los dit.

Leana. Sy is besig om haar pa te dagvaar. [Pouse.] Maar hy is ook my pa.

Phillip. What?

Leana. Ek praat nie daaroor nie, want mense judge my. Die probleem is net... my ma het nooit vir my opgekom nie. Sy het my nooit beskerm nie. En toe het Erasmus hierdie hofspraak georganiseer.

Erasmus. Leana, regtig, dis nie nodig nie.

Leana. Omdat my pa vir ek en my ma forseer het om... om...

Phillip. O, my god.

Erasmus. Kom, ons gaan nou loop.

Leana. So dis hoekom ek dit gedoen het. Erasmus het my lewe verander. Ek is lief vir hom.

Hannah. En ek?

**

Phillip. There are many things you regret when you get older. Many things you learn. That afternoon I aged about a hundred years. I always thought Afrikaners were fucked up. Well, now I've got proof. I saw with my very own eyes a family's life fall apart. But after this... well, now they're also my family. You asked me at the beginning whether, if I could go back, I would change anything. I realize now that, everything considered, that if you could turn back time, you wouldn't be able to learn the most valuable lesson: Never live with your in-laws. So, I'm Phillip, I'm fifty-five, and today I know a lot more than I ever thought I'd know before.

Erasmus. Ek is maar 'n gewone man. Wat jy sien is wat jy kry. Ek neem ordinêre besluite... Of wel, ek het altyd. Nou het ek een uitsonderlike besluit geneem. Ek is nie meer 'n gewone man nie. Ek is nie méér gelukkig nie, maar ek is ook nie minder gelukkig nie. Ek weet nie wat ek wil hê nie. Aan die een kant van die draad sit my vrou en aan die ander kant, die vrou vir wie ek lief is. As ek een moet kies, is dit...

Leana. My lewe was nie lekker nie. Dis 'n geheim. Ek het baie geheime gehad, maar Erasmus het dit als beter gemaak. Hy is soos 'n pa vir my. My vader. Dis okei, nè?

Hannah. Ek kom van 'n ander tyd af. Vrouens het nie toe die vryhede gehad wat hulle vandag het nie. Nou het ek ewe skielik baie vryheid. Ek klim nou die dag in my kar en vir die eerste keer na die Waterfront gery. Op my eie. Ek het 'n fliek gaan kyk. Oor Rachmaninov. Ek dink ek gaan weer klavier begin speel.

René. Kyk, een ding wat julle sommer nou van my moet weet is dat ek geen illusies oor die lewe het nie. Daar is net een waarheid. God se waarheid. Satan het beproewing oor my pad gebring, maar met die Here se hulp is ek op die pad na vergiffenis. Ek het uiteindelik my ware roeping gevind. En dit betaal meer as R2000 'n maand. Ek gaan 'n geestesbesweerder word. Ja, 'n eksorsis. Prys die Here.
