

Stages on Pages: A comparative study of Pieter-Dirk Uys' one man shows as an autobiographical alternative to memoir.

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DECLARATION

This research has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not being currently considered for any other degree at any other university.

I declare that this Dissertation contains my own work except where specifically acknowledged.

Student Name and Number

Signed.....

Date.....

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I seek to analyse the use of autobiographical monologues and elements in selected scenes from the political revues *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2009) by South African playwright-performer Pieter-Dirk Uys. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the use of autobiographical writing in revue performance as an alternative method for presenting autobiography to spectators. My argument is that the unique style and format of the revue-form provides a distinct approach to the live performance of autobiography. The analyses centre on the revues *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* in a literary comparison with Uys' two prose narrative memoirs, *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002) and *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting* (2005). These two book-length print memoirs have passages of text that correspond with the autobiographical monologues and other dramatic elements in the revues that I have selected. The aim of providing the comparative analysis of Uys' revues with his memoirs is to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of these genres insofar as Uys has employed each to attempt to write and perform aspects of his life-story. In order to facilitate these analyses, I have researched international studies on the interdisciplinary field of performance autobiography. I have come to rely on two key theorists of performance autobiography, Sherrill Grace and Deirdre Heddon, and I have applied their theories to my study of Uys' revues. I discuss several autobiographical scenes in *Foreign Aids*, comparing them with passages from *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, and I compare a selected monologue in *Elections and Erections*, the revue, with a passage containing the same material in *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*. The comparison between the revues and the memoirs reveals the narrative and stylistic similarities and differences between Uys' writing and performance of the self in performance narrative as opposed to prose narrative. The study identifies the most salient features of Uys' autobiographical performances, including the thematic links between the individual life-story and the concern with social welfare, the sharing of intimate anecdotes regarding his own sex-life and the sexual practices of South Africans, and the relationality between the self and other represented in dialogues where he portrays himself and other characters speaking to each other.

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Chapter One: Crossing paths - performance and autobiography

My hypothesis is this: Pieter-Dirk Uys' revues provide South Africa with a distinctive solo form of performance which is unique to his personality and particular style of performance, and provides us with an alternative form of autobiography. Through my reading of Uys' plays, and my viewings of video recordings of his plays, revues and farces, I have settled primarily on the analysis of four main texts: the autobiographical monologues and elements in the revue *Foreign Aids* (2001); the memoir *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*¹ (2002) and to a lesser extent an autobiographical monologue in *Elections and Erections* (2009) and his other memoir, *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting* (2005). The reason for my selection lies in the fact that the abovementioned revues were among the few that were available to me; many of the revues are not available in either print or digital form. Of the revues of which I was able to obtain copies, these particular revues exhibited the most conspicuous autobiographical performative acts.

In addition, much of the autobiographical content in *Foreign Aids* is re-featured within passages in Uys' first memoir, *Elections and Erections* (2002). In *Between the Devil and the Deep* (2005), there is a passage which has been adapted into a monologue and incorporated into the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009). Due to these features, I have decided to provide a comparative analysis of the following texts: *Foreign Aids* in relation to the memoir *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, and the monologue in the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009) in regard to the appearance of an earlier form of it in the memoir *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*.

Having come from a background of study within the department of Drama and Performance Studies at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, with a move to the English Studies programme within the same institution, I have been inspired to draw on my knowledge of and interest in the performing arts and apply the literary study of autobiography and identity to the interdisciplinary field of performance autobiography.

¹ As one can see, there is the potential for confusion since the title "Elections and Erections" has been used twice by Uys, for a revue and a memoir. To avoid confusion, I will refer to the memoir by its full title, *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, including its year of publication where appropriate (2002). I shall refer to *Elections and Erections* the revue, as the revue, and I will include the year of publication of the DVD of its performance which I have used for analysis in parentheses (2009).

Through the analyses of *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2009), I attempt to prove that Uys performs autobiographical acts which constitute performance autobiography. Performance autobiography refers to the practice amongst playwrights and performers to turn their life-stories into performance-based narratives. Through scripts and rehearsals, theatre-practitioners immerse themselves in the reservoir of personal experience, selecting key events to reframe them within a play; on stage they enact (and re-enact) selections from the archive of private history they have accumulated over the course of their lives. Significantly, this interdisciplinary practice has been adopted by various individuals from marginalised backgrounds in order to become speaking subjects that resist political and social forms of oppression. According to Deirdre Heddon, one of the key theorists of performance autobiography I rely on:

Autobiographical performances provide a way to talk out, talk back, talk otherwise. Here, the marginalised subject can literally take centre stage, and whilst visibility, *per se*, does not mean political power or equal rights, this potential for agency has been acknowledged by many practitioners, and theorists of autobiography.

(Heddon, 2008: 3)

Heddon postulates that one of the characteristic activities within autobiographical performance is the advocacy to write and perform for social reform: “Within the realm of performance, where performer and spectator share the same space and time, the political potential is manifest as performance enables the staged life to resonate with the broader realm of public consequence” (Heddon, 2008: 20). Performance autobiographers have the opportunity to express their desire for social and political change directly to a live audience. This is applicable to Uys’ theatre practices, since Uys believes theatre must challenge authority, especially in South Africa, where the society has been subject to the institutionalised racism of the apartheid regime and the post-apartheid government which refused to provide antiretroviral drugs for South Africans suffering from the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or AIDS.

So far, performance autobiography in South Africa is not a significant area of research amongst local academics and international scholars, who have yet to investigate South African performance autobiography. Heddon, one of the key theorists whose research I refer to throughout this thesis, admits (concerning her own work): “my research is also limited to performers located in either the UK or the USA, since these are the works to

which I have had access” (Heddon, 2008: 12). Sherrill Grace, at the University of British Columbia, who is the other key theorist whose research I have come to rely on, bases her analyses of performance autobiography on the work of Canadian playwrights and actors (Grace, 2006: 18). In my search for academic treatises on performance autobiography, I have been unable to locate any written by South African scholars of autobiographical studies, although I have encountered essays and articles which describe the autobiographical elements in South African playwrights’ and performers’ work (which I discuss in chapter two).

Due to this lack of scholarly attention to an important South African cultural phenomenon, I have been motivated to contribute to the study of South African performance autobiography. I believe that in order to make this research credible, it would be in my best interests and in the interests of the reader to prove that performance autobiography is visible in the body of work of an established South African playwright-performer. It is for this reason that I chose to study Uys, because he is one of South Africa’s most famous stage entertainers, with a career spanning 40 years. He is renowned for his lampoons of prominent leaders in South Africa’s governments, from members of the apartheid state (particularly the government of the 1980s under former state-president Pieter Willem or P.W. Botha to prominent figures in the post-1994 democratic governments (especially former state-president Thabo Mbeki and key members of his government, between 1999 and 2001). Uys is known for performing impersonations of various members of Parliament, as well as performing several fictional characters that have become staples of his one-man shows, particularly his “alter-ego” Evita Bezuidenhout, who has become a respected public figure in her own right. All the above-mentioned characteristics of Uys’ revues are familiar to the theatre-going public, and I seek to challenge the reader by making her and him see Uys in an autobiographical light. I have chosen to assess how autobiographical content has been incorporated, interpreted and appropriated in his preferred form of one-man theatre, the political revue, and how this compares to prose narrative treatment in the published memoirs.

The revue

The revue is the quintessential “one-man show” for which Uys has shown a preference; it is a style of performance which Uys has practised since the 1980s. Uys’ revues are

arrangements of sketches and monologues lampooning politicians, important South Africans as well as South African stereotypes². This style appears to me to have autobiographical potential as well, since it is a genre where one lone man³ can play the roles of writer, set designer, director and actor. In one-man shows, there is an increased likelihood that the autobiographical individual retains more control over the production. In Uys' case, this guarantees him greater authorial control.

It may seem inappropriate to study the revues as a primary form of autobiographical practice, since the object in revues is primarily that of lampooning politicians. One may argue that this is an act of concentrating on others rather than on one's self, which if anything may seem more of a potentially biographical act rather than a self-referencing performance. Uys himself states that the plays are more potentially autobiographical than the revues. Uys claims: "My revues mustn't last...They must go, here-today and gone-tomorrow, as events and attitudes change" (McMurtry, 1993: 316). It would seem from this that Uys' attitude to the revues is that they are a transient form of theatre, dealing with issues with short life-spans. However, it is evident that many of the topics he is most interested in are persistent in South African society, such as South Africa's on-going battle to cope with HIV and AIDS. In *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002) Uys establishes connections between the narrative of his life-story with his narrative of the social HIV/AIDS crisis, and attempts to convince the spectator and the reader that there is a relationship between these narratives.

Nevertheless, whether Uys prefers plays to revues for self-referential performance or not, autobiographical acts still arise in *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (2009). Just as much as Uys uses satire and drama to communicate his ideas about politics and AIDS-welfare, he has come to rely on his life-story as a performance-based narrative too, at least during performances of *For Fact's Sake* (1999) and *Foreign Aids* (2001). Uys has found ways to share his life-story and express his social concerns within the same narrative

² Uys' favourite stereotypes include the Jewish "African Princess", otherwise known as the *kugel* (particularly the character Nowell Fine) and the "proudly white South African" (a fat, beer-guzzling, racist white man whose beliefs in white superiority are contradicted by his drunken stupor, repulsive appearance and vulgar language, as seen in performances of *Beyond the Rubicon* (1986), *Dekaffirmated* (1999) and *Foreign Aids* (2001)).

³ Since I am working with a particular playwright and actor who happens to be male, I tend to refer to the masculine through much of the following chapters. Performance autobiography has, however, been a fruitful medium for many women performers, and I refer to some women's performance autobiographies in chapter two.

frame in the revues, as well as his memoirs. By establishing connections between these two narrative discourses in both of these genres, he has proved that self-reflexive writing and performance and the writing and performance of a socially conscious demand for reform are compatible⁴.

Since Uys' revues have long served as a platform for satirising the apartheid and post-apartheid status quo and for conscientising the public about political shortcomings and malpractices, Uys' breakthroughs in autobiographical performance coincided with his activist concerns about the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic that continues to afflict South Africa. As a consequence Uys has appropriated autobiographical writing and performance to tie in with his HIV/AIDS-awareness and sex education campaigns.

In South Africa, there has not been much study to establish the lengths to which autobiographical content has entered the theatre world. Proving that autobiography exists in the theatre work of Uys, an established playwright and performer, will go some way to addressing this gap in scholarship, even where Uys is not particularly considered to be an autobiographical performer. This is why Uys has been chosen as the case study. Best understood as an impersonator, a parodist, a satirist and a politically-motivated playwright, Uys has not previously been studied for his contribution to the advancement of autobiographically motivated performance. However, there are elements in his revues which are irrefutably self-referential, and turn aspects of his life-story into stageable content, which Uys apparently believes will advance his goals of social reform. While I will not go as far as to claim any of his plays or revues are wholly self-representational (since they incorporate fictional elements and sketches too), Uys has developed ways in which to present audiences with at least some autobiography-related performances.

Discussing an established theatre personality in the context of autobiographical studies will help to prove the value of autobiography in drama and vice versa. The added advantage of choosing Uys as a case study for performance autobiography is that he is also the author of two published prose narrative memoirs in which parts equivalent to sections of his revues also appear. Comparing and contrasting the ways he has used both

⁴ Please refer to chapter three (pp. 74-111) for an analysis of *Foreign Aids*, in particular focusing on how Uys is able to accomplish this compatibility.

genres to turn anecdotes from his life-story into readable and watchable entertainment will demonstrate how performance autobiography has advantages over prose narrative autobiography, and also how writing autobiography is still valuable for the performer.

A critical vocabulary

Since performance autobiography is a specific area of study with peculiar attributes regarding its practices and its practitioners, this case study should be equipped with its own specific terminology. There are terms that have been handed down to us by theorists in this field, such as Grace and Heddon, that will help describe the case study of Uys' revues and memoirs in a performance autobiographical light, and there are terms and definitions that best describe Uys in regard to his approaches to performance. Since autobiographical performance is not an established area of academic study in South Africa, detailing these terms would be valuable here, for the sake of this argument and perhaps for any succeeding studies in this field.

Playwright-performer

First used by Mervyn McMurry (1993) to describe Uys' theatrical practice, the term "playwright-performer" is useful for this study, given the circumstance that Uys is a playwright who acts in his own revues and plays. Uys is the playwright-performer of the revues *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2009) which are analysed in chapter three. The term is appropriate throughout the study of performance autobiography, since it becomes apparent that both Grace and Heddon acknowledge that many performance autobiographers write and perform their own work⁵.

⁵ Some of the Canadian playwrights who perform their own autobiographical scripts include Joy Coghill, Linda Griffiths, Sharon Pollock, R.H. Thompson and Guillermo Verdecchia (Grace, 2003: n.p.). Heddon gives a substantial list of U.S. and U.K. playwright-performers (Heddon: 2008: 2).

Memoir

Memoirs are an established genre of autobiographical writing, and are Uys' preferred form of autobiographical writing. In *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001), authors Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson define memoir as: "A mode of life narrative that historically situates the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant; the memoir directs attention more to the lives and actions of others than to the narrator" (2001: 198).

This definition is justifiably applicable to Uys' two memoirs. I wish to show in this dissertation that Uys' style of writing in the memoirs is similar to his playwriting style in the revues, since in both genres he demonstrates his belief in maintaining relationality and the constant appearance of many other characters, both real and fictional, instead of assuming a central, egocentric autobiographical role. Throughout his memoirs Uys refers to conversations and interactions he has had with a variety of characters, prioritising their voices in his memoirs at the expense of his own. This approach to memoir also corresponds with the ethos of Uys' revues, where he performs a host of characters instead of relying on his own persona as the continuous vehicle for performance. I analyse sections of the memoirs that also appear in Uys' revues, illustrating how his attitude towards performing one-man shows transfers to his approach to writing autobiography.

The topic of HIV/AIDS in Pieter-Dirk Uys' revues

Professor Mervyn McMurtry, an established authority on Uys' work, states that during 1993 he had been given the impression by Uys that he would be retiring from performing revues with the performance of his "last" one-man show, *An Evening with Pieter-Dirk Uys* (1992). He found he was mistaken (1993: 317); Uys would perform *The Poggenpoel Sisters* (1993) and continue to perform revues right up to the present. In November 2011 he is touring with his latest one-man show *Desperate First Ladies*. My point is that Uys continues to perform revues in which he satirises prominent political figures and discusses his concerns about the state of South African current affairs. With *Foreign Aids* (2001) he took on a substantially greater autobiographical approach in theatre, believing that it would assist him in producing more socially relevant revues. Having said that *Foreign Aids* set a standard for performance-based autobiographical narrative in Uys' revues, my study will analyse this standard of autobiography in chapter three.

The motivation for some, if not all, of his revues is to satirise political affairs for the theatre-going public's entertainment: "Fighting fear and political madness with humour has been my way of life since the 1970s" (Uys, 2002: 6) he proclaims. Uys' primary goal in the revues is to convince audiences - through laughter and facts - that current social conditions need to be reformed. Thinking that his career as a South African satirist was in severe trouble (Uys, 2002: 35) now that his primary inspiration for his revues, apartheid, had fallen, Uys sought new inspiration to inspire his revues. In the late nineties and the early twenty-first century, Uys found his new focus: the South African HIV/AIDS epidemic.

HIV/AIDS became the central theme for the educational road show *For Fact's Sake* (1999) and the revue *Foreign Aids* (2001). Uys claims: "*Foreign Aids* is probably the most important theatre I have created" (Uys, 2005: 193), since it is in this revue that he deals with HIV/AIDS in the greatest detail, voicing his concern for the welfare of South Africans with respect to the prevention of infection and of the transmission of the virus. Uys' activism is now an essential element of his public persona and he has developed methods of making sure the performance of personal anecdotes resonates with this social issue. In *Foreign Aids* and the memoir *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* he describes how fear dominated his life, and the journeys he has undertaken to dispel fear — of apartheid, sex, and HIV/AIDS — within himself and amongst fellow South Africans.

Telling personal stories of fear has led Uys to become an increasingly autobiographical subject in some of his productions. The chief of these (and the specific text studied in chapter three) is *Foreign Aids* (2001). Uys' preparedness to reveal personal anecdotes from his childhood and sex-life demonstrates his hope that this would encourage other South Africans to commit themselves to open debate; since Uys believes maintaining secrecy around personal acts can facilitate the transmission of HIV. Stephan Meyer says that "[w]hen we address an audience — testifying about our personal and collective identities through auto/biography — we enter into communicative relations in public spheres and engage ourselves in struggles for justice" (Meyer, 2006: 2). Discussing Uys

without discussing his activism undermines the acknowledgement of how important this factor is for understanding his personality in an autobiographical sense.

Uys' need to confront South Africa's (and his own) confusion and ignorance regarding HIV/AIDS compelled him to interrogate his own attitude to the virus, and the culture of sexual ignorance in which it thrives, and to draw on his own experience and refer to it in performances, in order to demonstrate that the fears surrounding sexual behaviour are as real to him as they are to his audiences. This enables Uys to connect personal memory and his skills at making narratives, and weave them into the grand narratives of his revues. His concern with the epidemic serves as the gateway for him to personalise his response to politics, both past and present. Uys' practice of taking on topical issues, such as HIV/AIDS, and incorporating personal information into the discussion of these issues, has opened autobiographical possibilities in South Africa.

The chapters ahead

In chapter two, to prepare the reader for an autobiographical performance analysis of selected content from Uys' revues, I provide a survey of the readings on performance autobiography that I have come to rely on for my analysis of Uys' revues. I map out the chronological development of performance autobiography as a distinctive theoretical discourse, working from before theatre was theorised as a form of autobiographical practice, to current and prominent research in this field.

I discuss Philippe Lejeune's autobiographical pact from his essay "Le Pacte Autobiographique" (1973), since it has been the basis of Sherrill Grace's own model for performance, the "performance autobiographical pact" which she described in her conference paper "Performing the Auto/Biographical Pact: Towards a Theory of Identity in Performance" (2003). Grace and her contemporary Deirdre Heddon are the core theorists whose work I have read in order to develop my personal understanding of performance autobiography. Chapter two includes reviews of their key writings. I look at Grace's abovementioned conference paper, and an anthology of essays by theorists and playwright-performers titled *Theatre and AutoBiography* (2006) which she co-edited with Jerry Wasserman. With regard to Heddon, I have researched her specific text on the

subject, *Autobiography and Performance* (2008), in which she focuses on the political aspects of performance autobiography.

In chapter two I furthermore discuss examples of South African theatre that have not been studied within a performance autobiography discourse. In doing so, I seek to highlight the merits of further academic study of these playwrights and performers in the context of autobiographical studies. It is my intention that the discussion of these other playwrights and performers will aid the reader to anticipate the contrasting and unique approaches Uys has adopted in his own brand of theatre. In order to make that clearer, I refer to Uys throughout the discussion of these other South African playwrights and performers.

Thirdly, I discuss some of Uys' earlier revues and plays which display the manipulation and/or incorporation of autobiographical content. Starting with his 1980s run of revues *Adapt or Dye* (1981) and *Beyond the Rubicon* (1986), I trace the evidence of Uys' evolution as an autobiographical character in his own work up to the 1990s, concluding with *Dekaffirnated* (1999), in which an autotopographical aspect emerged.

Chapter three comprises the detailed analysis of Uys' revues. It is structured around the study of one revue in particular, *Foreign Aids* (2001), and I also consider an autobiographical monologue from *Elections and Erections* (2009). These revues were selected on the merits of their autobiographical elements as well as their availability for purchase. I found that many of his revues were not available from either online or library sources. As a result, I decided to give a more concentrated analysis of these revues in particular, since they evinced autobiographical elements that were viable for analysis in this dissertation. These particular revues were also the preferred choices for this study because the autobiographical content in them is comparable to passages in Uys' memoirs. The fact that versions of the same autobiographical content appear in both of the genres in which Uys is published makes my comparative analysis possible.

Establishing my methodology in chapter three, I analyse the monologues from *Foreign Aids* and the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009), applying relevant theory discussed in chapter two, while also comparing these revues to textual analyses of Uys' memoirs. I show how autobiography has been subjected to Uys' revue-style performative format, his

monological organisation and his one-man, multi-character dialogues. I intend for this to prove that Uys' revues provide autobiography with distinct performance strategies which make life-narratives open to new interpretations and inventions.

Although Uys' plays and farces are available from retailers, libraries, and free off his website (www.pdu.co.za), many of the revue-scripts are not publicly available in print or digital form. However, performances of scripts are occasionally recorded and published, especially in DVD format. In order to deal with this obstacle, I have relied on DVD recordings of the revues. On several occasions I have relied on my own transcriptions of Uys' monologues in order to reproduce them in this thesis to illustrate my analytical discussion. I also compare prose-narrative passages in the memoirs which are nearly the same as the autobiographical text from the revues. By discussing both the revues and the memoirs I wish to show that there is no simple generic transition from one medium to another.

Concluding in chapter four, I locate where Uys is in his career following the autobiographical breakthroughs he achieved in his revues during the 2000s, and I suggest how he has found a new means, through newspaper articles, to publish autobiographical stories. I survey the performance methods Uys employs in the revues in order to suggest their viability for future autobiographical performance. Ultimately, I advocate the employment of Uys' methods of performing autobiography in the revues as a viable practice for other South African playwrights and performers.

Chapter Two: Precursory international developments in performance autobiography.

Section A: An autobiographical performance theoretical framework

Before I analyse some of Uys' revues in substantial detail in chapter three, I need to familiarise the reader with the concept and study of performance autobiography. A body of work in this inter-disciplinary study has developed over the past several years, and surveying it now will help our understanding of Uys' work in an autobiographical context. As a result, this chapter provides a theoretical framework derived from international studies that will show how I draw connections between Uys' revues and autobiography.

My most valuable readings came from academic researchers Sherrill Grace and Jerry Wasserman, who co-edited *Theatre and Auto/Biography: Writing and Performing Lives in Theory and Practice* (2006) and Deirdre Heddon, who wrote *Autobiography and Performance* (2008). These authors and texts have been useful for different reasons: Grace has developed a model of how the participants in a theatre production correspond with the co-signators of the "autobiographical pact" created by Philippe Lejeune; both Grace's and Lejeune's models are described in this chapter. Heddon focuses on the politically-themed concerns one can find throughout performance autobiography, which is substantially relevant to Uys' political revues. The way in which autobiographical performance has emerged throughout the world is to write and perform personal narratives in response to the political context in which they are situated, especially where there has been a negative impact upon a playwright-performer's life. Given that Uys' writing and performance is in reaction to the apartheid and post-apartheid governments, Heddon has been valuable for studying this aspect of autobiographical theatre.

My research is based largely on the work of these two theorists, although there have been several other academic writings on performance autobiography⁶. Regardless of earlier work, I share Heddon's sentiment, that: "[...] I nevertheless sense that a consolidated overview of autobiographical performance practice, and the various concerns engaged and

⁶ Several of these readings are listed by Heddon in *Autobiography and Performance* (2008: 12).

raised by it, is missing” (2008: 12)⁷. Throughout this study I refer to some of the readings that, according to Heddon, provide worthwhile information about performance autobiography, but I agree that a definitive explanatory study of “performance autobiography” still needs to be created. My aim has been to find ideas about autobiographical performance that are relevant to describing Uys’ revues; in other words, a theoretical framework that describes the work of solo autobiographical performers who perform life-narratives in the form of monologues addressed to the audience. Even though there has been no one yet to further the study of performance autobiography in South Africa, it is evident that several past and present South African playwright-performers have combined narrative with memory to put their lives onstage. A study of the genre as practised by a prominent South African playwright-performer like Uys is long overdue.

Philippe Lejeune and “Le Pacte Autobiographique” (1973)

Autobiographical writing appears in a variety of forms, with many having become conventions in the genre. Novelistic narrative and prose forms such as the memoir are familiar, and understanding autobiography as a performative practice may seem unusual to South Africans. I wish to work from established autobiographical theory to autobiographical performance theory, since I believe showing the adaptation of autobiographical theory into performance will make performance autobiography more understandable. Since I rely on Grace’s theories to research Uys, and Grace adapts Lejeune’s theories to make hers understandable, I wish to look first at Lejeune. From this, one should be able to see how autobiographical theory is applicable to theatre, as exemplified in Uys’ revues.

Lejeune’s essay “Le Pacte Autobiographique” (1973) contains several important points which I think playwright-performers, Uys included, exemplify to their writing and performances. If performance practices exemplify Lejeune’s ideas, then they can be accepted as an avenue for legitimate autobiographical practice. To begin with, one should consider Lejeune’s definition of autobiography. Lejeune claims autobiography is “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (1973: 4).

⁷ At the time that this dissertation was started in 2009, Grace and Wasserman’s *Theatre and AutoBiography* (2006) and Heddon’s *Autobiography and Performance* (2008) were the most recent and most accessible literary resources available to me.

The autobiographical elements of Uys' revues deal with his life story, a "real person" concerning episodes from his life ("own existence") and how he thinks or feels ("the story of his personality").

Lejeune's condition, that the focus of an autobiography must be on an individual life, is challenged by several playwright-performers, since many of these autobiographical performers focus on their lives in relation to those of others. Due to this relationality, Grace describes autobiographical performance as "auto/biography"; theatre acts are more often than not a hybrid of autobiography and biography. Many performance autobiographers are usually auto/biographers, and the agents that emerge in the playwright-performers' life-stories are represented by several actors, or by playwright-performers on their own, especially when the autobiographical performance is a solo act. The playwright-performer demonstrates that his life-experience is informed and inspired by social interaction. By depicting other people as characters in the show, the playwright-performer shows the negative impact of harsh realities and how social evils inform his and others' life-stories. Many of these practitioners focus on negative circumstances in order to promote their desire for resolution. Uys himself also performs auto/biographically in his revues, and although he makes optimistic statements, he preoccupies himself in the revues with social problems afflicting South Africa. Uys is dedicated to the attainment of positive political conditions in South Africa, but in order to reach such ideals he is convinced that he must identify social and political problems plaguing South Africa so as to participate in the movement towards social reform. This is most visible in Uys' commitment to the HIV/AIDS-awareness movement that developed in response to the growing crisis⁸.

Lejeune lists memoirs, biographies, personal novels, autobiographical poems, journals, self-portraits and essays as autobiographical genres and states that there are other genres which are "closely related to autobiography" (1973: 4). I am certain that performance autobiography would not be considered a complete autobiographical form by Lejeune, nor would I try to claim that. As with the other aforementioned genres, I would claim that theatre productions can also be closely related to autobiography. However, Lejeune

⁸ One of the ways in which Uys has pledged himself to HIV/AIDS-awareness is by becoming a spokesperson for the charity group *Wola Nani*, which makes and sells red beaded AIDS ribbons and then gives the earnings to charity.

claims with regard to the abovementioned features of the genres: “It is obvious that the different categories are not all equally restrictive: certain conditions must be met for the most part without being satisfied completely” (1973: 5).

Lejeune describes two conditions as having to be “all or nothing” (1973: 5), namely that the author and the narrator must be identical, and the narrator and the principal character must be identical (4). This is an expectation that should be fulfilled in performance in order for audiences to recognise the revues as autobiographical. Uys can be described in terms of Lejeune’s study as “autodiegetic” (i.e. authors who refer to themselves in their texts as “I”), as Uys appears in his revues as a “grammatical person” (the written or intra-textual character). A characteristic of Uys’ increasing autobiographical presence in his revues has been his growing use of “I” in his narratives, since his earlier revues display considerably less self-reference.

Lejeune’s “autobiographical pact”

I have presented a diagram in figure 1.1 on page 16 of Lejeune’s formula for the autobiographical pact, as drawn by Grace. Note well that this is a diagram of Lejeune’s pact as she understands it. This is a version of the pact which is meant for other forms of autobiography previously listed in “Le Pacte Autobiographique”. In other words, this pact has not been applied to performance autobiography.

To recapitulate what the “autobiographical pact” is, the writer and the narrator are said to be the same individual; the difference is the author is extra-textual and the narrator is intra-textual. Meanwhile the reader, an extra-textual party, usually never encounters the author, but comes to understand him through his intra-textual protagonist. The narrator is an identical representative of the author as he or she has existed prior to the text. According to the diagram, if the author is identical to the principal character (narrator, *personnage* etc.) that the reader encounters in the text, then autobiographical legitimacy is assured. If autobiographical playwriting and performance adhere to this framework, we should be assured that performance has autobiographical credibility.

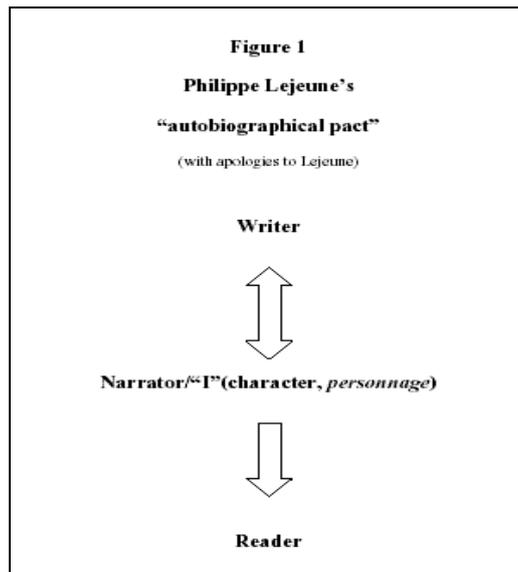


Figure 2.1. Philippe Lejeune's Autobiographical Pact as drawn by Sherrill Grace⁹ (Grace, 2003: n.p.).

Lejeune's writing is valuable to the theory of autobiography for his definitions and formulations. "Le Pacte Autobiographique" (1973) provides useful terms and conditions to apply to performance to identify its autobiographical nature¹⁰. Proving that Uys' revues can meet "Lejeunian" conditions helps to legitimate my case study. Although Lejeune has not considered theatre as an autobiographical avenue, his theory is developed further by Grace, whose theory I refer to in order to make Uys' work a case study within the ambit of autobiographical research. However, before turning to Grace, I wish to consider earlier autobiographical theorists' ideas about theatre and performance.

William L. Howarth and "Some Principles of Autobiography" (1974) and applications of his ideas to Uys' performance strategies in the revues

The year following that in which Lejeune wrote "Le Pacte Autobiographique", William Hogarth published his essay "Some Principles of Autobiography" (1974), which was one of the earliest scholarly works I read in preparation for my research on autobiography in relation to performance. Howarth does not write exclusively about playwrights whose writing exhibit autobiography; he refers to autobiographical writing in several genres

⁹ Grace, S. 2003. Figure 1: Philippe Lejeune's "Autobiographical Pact" (with apologies to Lejeune). [Online Image] Available at: http://www.english.ubc.ca/faculty/grace/thtr_fig.htm Accessed: 29 May 2009).

¹⁰ Of course, not all performances in which the playwright appears are autobiographical. Lejeune's autobiographical pact provides the tools to discriminate between those which are autobiographical and those which are not.

(such as oratory, poetry and self-portraiture) as possessing dramatic qualities. Howarth refers to what he calls the “dramatic” autobiographers (1974: 99), explaining that:

None of these writers has a thesis about his development; he assumes that he was and is essentially the same person, so his book depicts the past as a series of spontaneously ordered events. As an author he is unpretentious and impertinent, viewing life as a staged performance that he may attend, applaud or attack, just as he pleases.

(1974: 96)

Although Howarth does not give an analysis of autobiography that is particularly prescriptive for performance autobiography, I think that his concept of dramatic autobiography is still applicable to autobiographical playwright-performers. Howarth refers to “dogma” and “idiosyncrasy”. “Dogma” means the agenda an autobiographical writer may have to conscientise her/his readership about social or political concerns s/he has. Howarth claims dramatic autobiographers prioritise their style – their idiosyncrasy – over content: “Instead of dogma, they cherish idiosyncrasy – not merely as a lesson to others, but also as a performance of their innate skills” (98). Even though “Some Principles of Autobiography” is not a theatre-specific autobiographical study, I find the concept of a relationship between dogma and idiosyncrasy applicable to Uys’ case study. This is because Uys has had (and still has) political and social agendas in his revues, which we may call dogma, or perhaps even “counter-dogma”, since Uys is challenging the dogmatic policies of abusive governments (such as the apartheid state) with ideas of his own. A key example of dogma is visible in *Foreign Aids* (2001), where Uys takes a stance of clear opposition to the AIDS-denialist policies held by the Mbeki government¹¹. Uys has maintained a consistent denouncement of those whom he thinks of as the key players in executing these policies, Thabo Mbeki and former Minister of Health, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

Uys’ revues are possessed of several idiosyncrasies (to borrow Howarth’s term) that characterise his style of satirical performance and chief among them is Uys’ caricatural impersonations of political figures. Former president Thabo Mbeki has been a particular

¹¹ AIDS-denialism is the belief that there is no causal link between HIV and AIDS, and therefore drugs that are used to treat or prevent Aids, such as antiretrovirals, are pointless. Former state president Thabo Mbeki adopted this belief during his presidency, and it was an official policy of his government not to provide the public with necessary medical drugs and treatment that could have prevented the onset of AIDS. As a result, thousands of HIV-positive South Africans died; Uys has since accused Mbeki and his government of genocide (*Darling!*, 2010).

target in *Foreign Aids* and in *Elections and Erections* (the revue), among others¹². Uys has staged the farce *Macbeki* (2010), a parody of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (with Mbeki as the title character, who, like his Shakespearean counterpart, goes mad with power and becomes an absolute tyrant), and he has used ventriloquist style puppets of Mbeki in several productions¹³. The proportion of satirical impersonations vis-à-vis self-representational enactment appears to us as a lack of autobiographical opportunity in revue performance because the Uys-persona seems to be absent during the impersonation of satirical subjects. The substantial attention to the other can lead to the perception that the self loses importance in performance, and self-reflective performance appears to be diminished. On the contrary, there are still self-reflexive characteristics in these performances of the other. The idiosyncratic nature of the impersonations proves that Uys goes beyond mere re-enactment of another person's character; they clearly display elements of Uys' personality.

Although Uys reuses and dramatises these figures' words (which is evinced through Uys' mimicking their speech patterns and using their characteristic expressions) as opposed to speaking as himself, he incorporates new monological text into their speeches which shows that he is exploiting these figures' appearance and voices in order to project his own thoughts and words. The depiction of these personae provides a mask behind which the "real" speaker, Uys, can share his views. Uys' caricatured representation of these individuals gives audiences an opportunity to laugh at politicians for their actions in the real world. At the same time, the audience knows that the character who is truly sharing his point of view (or "dogma", to use Howarth's term) is the "Pieter-Dirk Uys performer" (2000: 350).

The audience can still hear Uys "speak" from under these impersonations. McMurtry says: "[...] fiction, being carefully crafted, is more complex and creative than the theatrical representation of non-fictional material" (McMurtry, 1993: 5). These are fictions Uys relies on that stylistically convey his personal "truth" or "counter-dogma" which serve an autobiographical purpose. Uys' fictional personae serve as one of his methods to launch impertinent attacks on political authority and figures. Bambi

¹² See *Foreign Aids* (2001) for Uys' parody of Thabo Mbeki in the character "Dr Thaboo Macbeki", and *The End is Naai* (2004) for his impersonation of Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

¹³ *The End is Naai* (2004) and the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009) in particular.

Kellerman, a fictional persona who appears in *Foreign Aids* (2001), is a good example of the use of fiction into which autobiographical facts and personal truths have been incorporated.

Howarth says that a dramatic autobiographer serves a double role, as an artist and as a public servant; he gives examples such as Benjamin Franklin (satirist and statesman) and Sean O' Casey (playwright and politician), among others (Howarth, 1974: 98). Each of these figures “[...] balances the demands of self and society, moving easily between isolation and involvement, recalling his life for private pleasure and public purpose” (1974: 98). Uys easily fits this description, since in the revues he presents his personal opinions on public affairs in such a way that it both entertains the audience and passes criticism on state policies, and in this way he functions as an entertainer and a public servant.

The idiosyncrasies of drama that Howarth discusses are applicable to Uys' revues, because Uys employs theatrical narrative devices in performance which we would not normally associate with prose narrative autobiography: “As in drama, the function of this narrative mode (dramatic autobiography) is to stress spectacle, the visible and pictorial aspects of life. Action, not exposition, becomes the author's principal tool, so his persona usually blurs its narrator and protagonist roles into one” (101). This is true of Uys, with regard to his presence as a playwright-performer and a performance autobiographer. In order for visible and pictorial aspects of his life to become accessible to others, they have to take place in Uys' body and through the delivery of life-narrative from his own mouth. To heighten the effect of life-story-telling, Uys makes a spectacle of his past by embodying and performing narrated incarnations of himself, as well as the characters with whom he speaks with in monopolylogues. “A First Sexual Experience” in *Foreign Aids* (2001) is my principal example of Uys performing a younger version of himself (which I analyse in chapter three). The Uys-persona is the blurred narrator/protagonist of which Howarth speaks, who remains present throughout a revue to introduce the fictional character-acts and impersonations, and immerse itself into personal narratives. All of this can only be achieved in performance autobiographical practices, since the transformation of an autobiographical subject into a spectacle relies on a visual interface, most notably the live theatre audience and the video recordings of such performances.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson: Textual/visual interfaces

Among the authors who have discussed performance autobiography are Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. Smith, Professor of Women's Studies and English at the University of Michigan, and Watson, Associate Professor of Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University, co-edited *Interfaces: Women/Autobiography/Image/Performance* (2002) which is an anthology of essays that offers "targeted readings of artists, practices, and works that mine the interface of visibility and performance" (2002: 7). Within the scope of their study, they claim to address two "suspicions" pertaining to women's autobiography: the idea that women's autobiography is "merely personal" and that it is "merely narcissistic" (2002: 4).

To elaborate, the form of narcissism referred to in this anthology is discussed by Jo Anna Isaak in her essay "In Praise of Primary Narcissism: The Last Laughs of Jo Spence and Hannah Wilke" (2002:50). Narcissism, which Isaak calls "the triumph of the ego's invulnerability" (50), is when "[t]he ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality, to let itself be compelled to suffer. It insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows in fact that such traumas are no more than the occasions for it to gain pleasure" (50). With regard to Uys, we can ascribe narcissism in this sense to his confrontation with South African politics through satire and lampoon. His unrelenting and irreverent impersonation of politicians whom he dislikes, in spite of the number of threats he has received from apartheid-related agents and current South African politicians, amounts to a form of refusal to be subdued by authority. Regardless of the various traumas which apartheid was responsible for, or the number of HIV/AIDS-related deaths attributed to the Mbeki government's AIDS-denialist stance against the provision of antiretrovirals, Uys constantly uses humour to undermine political authority regardless of his lack of political power. However, I would not go as far as to say that Uys is unaffected by "traumas of the external world", and in chapter three I will prove that Uys' autobiographical performances in *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (2009) go beyond this kind of narcissism.

Smith and Watson explain the suspicion of "merely personal" autobiography: it is a term applied by a "masculinist" (Smith and Watson, 2002: 12) reading of women's

autobiography. This approach to reading women's autobiography invites assumptions that women autobiographers cannot "[...] see beyond their narrowly self-interested lives; they can only write the personal, the domestic, the private life, and that truth cannot speak profound universal truths" (2002: 12). In my opinion, this dismissal is an unnecessary generalisation, since it is quite apparent in the number of contemporary women autobiographers and the number of women performance autobiographers that fundamental connections are drawn between the personal and the "universal" (or, if I may substitute another word that is more relevant to this study, the political). A strong contingent of women performance autobiographers (as described by Grace and Heddon in their texts) produces forms of theatre which implicitly address the impact of political and societal norms on everyday living experience. Although as a man, Uys is not the subject of the study of women's performance autobiography, the contestation against the suspicion of "merely personal" autobiography is relevant to this study of Uys, since there is an apparent relationship between the personal and the political that Uys conveys in the revues *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (2009). Having read Smith and Watson, I have sought in my analyses of Uys' revues and memoirs to show that the presence of "personal" or "narcissistic" autobiographical elements in Uys' revues and memoirs are more complicated than a masculinist reading would give credit for.

Some key ideas are offered in Smith and Watson's introduction, "Mapping Women's Self-Representation at Visual/Textual Interfaces" (2002: 1-46), which I found useful for Uys' case study. Although the study by Smith and Watson is concerned with women's self-representation in particular, I find that many of their ideas are applicable to Uys' revues. For instance, Smith and Watson claim that many women-artists and performers create "visual/textual interfaces" that "materialise self-enquiry and self-knowledge" (7). Theatre is a visual and textual interface, and Uys uses theatre as a platform to reveal personal details about himself and at times to interrogate himself as well.

They argue that the term autobiography has been "narrowly identified" as the "retrospective narration of great public lives", almost exclusively of "great men" (8). I, too, find this identification too narrow for my own case study. The elements of Uys' work that I consider autobiographical do not fit in with the old idea of autobiography as the retrospective narrative of a "great" public man.

Smith and Watson further describe women's autobiographical performance as "confrontational" (20), since performers' "personal convictions" are displayed, in order to challenge audiences' preconceptions; they perform "ethnic and racial identities, diverse sexualities and national affiliations" (21). I do not think these convictions are exclusive to women's autobiographical performances, since they occur in Uys' revues as well. Uys presents what Smith and Watson call "edgy material" (21). His monologues discuss taboo or uncomfortable subjects in a frank manner, as exemplified by *Foreign Aids*, which discusses embarrassing sexual acts using insensitive and vulgar language.

Performance has been a useful mode for many women wishing to present stories of identity since the 1970s, because it makes a visual impact that destabilises traditional perceptions of women. This relationship between performance and women's autobiography continues in the work of subsequent researchers, especially that by Grace, and I find research into women's autobiographical performance relevant to men's autobiographical performance as well.

Sherrill Grace and the performance autobiographical pact: Identifying the "role-players" in performance

Sherrill Grace is a lecturer and researcher specialising in the study of women's autobiography and performance autobiography in the department of English at the University of British Columbia. I have found her work useful for my own understanding and research of performance autobiography in order to research Uys' revues and memoirs, especially as she builds on Lejeune's theories to motivate her study of performance autobiography. What I have found particularly useful is the way Grace expands Lejeune's autobiographical pact formula in order to discuss theatre as autobiography. In her unpublished paper "Performing the Autobiographical Pact: Towards a Theory of Identity in Performance"¹⁴ (2003) she offers her own version of Lejeune's autobiographical pact. The diagram below shows her modifications to Lejeune's formula:

¹⁴ Grace, Sherrill. 2003. *Performing the Auto/Biographical Pact: Towards a Theory of Identity in Performance*. [Paper delivered to ACTR conference, May 2003] Available at: http://www.english.ubc.ca/faculty/grace/THTR_AB.HTM#paper. Accessed: 29 May 2009.

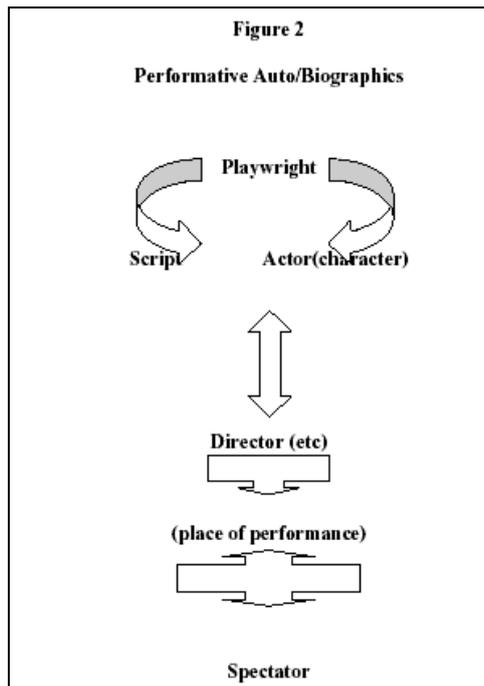


Figure 3.1: Grace's Performance Autobiographical Pact¹⁵ (Grace, 2003: n.p.).

Grace created this formula to accommodate “non-narrative, non-textual auto/biography” (Grace, 2003: n.p.). By “non-narrative”, Grace means that there is sometimes no conventional narrative form in performance autobiography, and by “non-textual”, she means that the play has not necessarily been written down prior to performance, and there is no published written script available to the public. Grace proposes that although performance autobiography can have a narrative, and can exist in written form, a broader definition and formula is needed to also accommodate performance autobiographical forms which will not fit into Lejeune’s formula.

Compared to Lejeune’s tripartite formula, Grace’s pact appears more complex. In her formula, she identifies the playwright, the actor (the physical embodiment of the autobiographical character and the intra-textual representative of the author), the director and the spectator (the counterpart to the reader). In addition, the principal character is performed by the actor, who is the same person as the author. To avoid confusion (since it is possible for the actor to play many characters) the principal character can be called the autobiographical or authorial character. For autobiographical purposes, I refer to Uys’ stage persona in the revues, also known as the narrator, as the authorial character. This is

¹⁵ Grace, S. 2003. *Figure 2: Performance Autobiographics*. [Online Image] Available at: http://www.english.ubc.ca/faculty/grace/thtr_fig.htm Accessed: 29 May 2009.

the character that appears throughout the revues that introduces the impersonations and fictional character sketches, and performs the monologues which have autobiographical elements.

Co-signators in the performance autobiographical pact

Some of the participants Grace describes in the pact have counterparts in Lejeune's formula. The playwright is akin to the author, who is the role-player who initiates the autobiographical pact, while the actor is the substitute in Lejeune's pact for the character/narrator. Grace shows a circular inter-relationship between the author, actor and the script before the director enters the process. The relationship between the three is cyclical because performances are not once-off ("one-night only") productions; a production can consist of performances that take place over several nights, where each performance is different from the other. This is unlike prose autobiography because usually only one version is published once. Once a print autobiography is distributed to the public, it is not as if it is going to be withdrawn from public access, returned to the author who will change it and then re-distribute it to the public. The availability of the autobiographical text to the reader traditionally marks the end of the writer's task in the pact. With performance, in a situation where the written text is not made available to the public, our only access to the script is usually through the performance of the text by the playwright-performer himself.

Grace's idea of a performance autobiographical pact is critical to my analyses of Uys' revues, since it has contributed to my approach to formulating a methodology to apply to Uys' revues. By identifying the roles of playwright, actor, character and director that Uys plays in the revues, I have been able to assess his revues according to a specialised version of Grace's pact which is particular to studying Uys' brand of one-man performance. A discussion of this version of the performance autobiographical pact and the description of the co-signators¹⁶ in the revues occurs in chapter three.

¹⁶ "Co-signator" is the word Grace uses to describe a party contracted to the performance autobiographical pact. For further details, please refer to: Grace, S. 2003. *Performing the Auto/Biographical Pact: Towards a Theory of Identity in Performance*. Available from: <http://www.english.ubc.ca/faculty/grace/wrks.htm>. Accessed 29 May 2009.

Sherrill Grace: *Theatre and AutoBiography*

Theatre and AutoBiography: Writing and Performing Lives in Theory and Practice (2006) edited by Sherrill Grace and Jerry Wasserman consists of a collection of essays which (Grace claims) “clarifies the role of autobiography in the theatre” (14). The compilation was the result of a theatre and autobiography workshop held in February 2004 titled “Putting a Life on a Stage: A Theatre and AutoBiography Workshop”. One of its main priorities was to determine how theatre can advance the study of autobiography. This workshop invited several theorists and performers to participate and then write essays based on their experiences during the workshop.

Based on the findings of the workshop, Grace claims: “At their best, auto/biographical plays are profoundly philosophical; they probe and weigh what it means to claim a personal national identity” (15). This concept of a “personal national identity” is evident in Uys’ revues, especially in *Foreign Aids*. To contextualise this term, basically Uys grapples with the issue of what it means to be a South African. By posing these questions, he invites the spectator to share his desire to have such questions about public and national identity answered.

Grace states: “At their best, these plays use the facts of a personal story to make us rethink the concept of *self* and the relationship of *self* to other” (15). Autobiographical performances are characteristically relational, and Uys’ revues are no exception. Grace refers to autobiography as “AutoBiography” or “auto/biography” because writing or performing an autobiographical text unavoidably gives details about the other lives with whom one’s life is shared. Performers can use many performative strategies to show audiences the characters that feature in a life narrative.

Essays in the anthology

Susan Bennett

Several of the contributors to *Theatre and AutoBiography* have been useful to me because their writing complements this study of Uys’ revues, and have contributed to the vocabulary which I use to describe Uys as an autobiographical performer. In “3-D A/B” (2006) Susan Bennett claims that “strategic fictions” must be created, saying that the actor’s physical body creates a fundamental difficulty for the representation of an

autobiographical subject (33). She states that the immediate and bodily appearance of the autobiographical subject makes autobiography believable, adding that we¹⁷ as the audience, “think that this is the real person, because we have been culturally trained to accept its evidentiary value” (34). The actor’s body in motion is like a moving photograph, creating a constant visual flow of the autobiographical narrative; we believe the acting autobiographer is as authentic as an autobiography can get. Bennett says: “If the sight of the human body in a photograph underwrites such a claim and the viewer’s response substantiates it, then the moving bodies of film make the production/reception exchange even more likely” (34).

Film is obviously a recorded version of something live¹⁸, which is applicable in my study since I relied on recordings of Uys’ performances in order to analyse the revues. In both film and live performance, audiences find that the visual appearance of the autobiographical subject makes the autobiography more believable, even if the performance of the autobiographical subject is scripted, rehearsed and stylised (in other words, creatively and performatively altered from its original, historic form). Of course, relying on recordings rather than actually being present at the performance has a certain impact on the study of *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (the revue), since I cannot describe live performance in the same way as an attending spectator can¹⁹.

Bennet claims that the body displays two orders of signification, an order of identity, and an order of “visual archive” (35). By identity, she means that the body’s presentation is not only representative of the author’s identity, but is representative of identities claimed on “its behalf” (35). Uys’ audiences already have preconceived notions of what Uys’ identity is, and how Uys’ body is capable of projecting that identity. Uys’ body is associated with dressing up in drag for his woman characters²⁰, and in various costumes used for impersonations. Uys’ attire for the Uys-persona is typically plain black clothing (Uys wears full black for *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* [2009] whenever he performs the authorial character) which does not convey much about his personality.

¹⁷ I infer that Bennett’s use of the term “we” refers to us as readers who see photographs in a print autobiography, although this “we” is also comparable to audiences who see the actor.

¹⁸ I am referring to films with live actors. The exception would be animated films.

¹⁹ Recorded revues do offer the researcher a crucial advantage though – one can replay scenes as often as is required.

²⁰ Uys is particularly fond of performing drag, even though transvestitism was illegal during the apartheid era.

When Uys starts to speak about his past, he is relying on his reservoir of personal memory that audiences are unfamiliar with, and when Uys is addressing the audience about his past, audiences literally see Uys in an unfamiliar way, speaking about himself while physically present with the audience.

By performing parts of his life-story, Uys tries to show himself in a new light that audiences have not hitherto associated with him. Audiences already have preconceived notions about Uys' identity, because they expect to see a man who will transform into another character (such as Evita) that is satirical, comedic and critical of the South African government, whether it is past or present. Audiences who have encountered Uys' work prior the development of Uys as an autobiographical onstage persona (which reportedly emerged from 1992 onwards in the revue *An Evening with Pieter-Dirk Uys*) are not prepared for Uys as an autobiographical performer discussing intimate aspects of his life-story. Uys' audiences typically expect him to perform fictional personae and impersonations, and speak about politically-related affairs which warrant satirical and comical criticism.

Bennett's concept of the body as a visual archive is readily applicable to Uys' performances of his past. The body is the vessel that houses the author's personal history; even if some aspects of the author's past are never performed. The body showcases parts of the performer's history which are chosen for performance, and can reveal aspects of the performer's history even if it is not the intention of the author to do so. Again, to apply this to Uys, his body has been defined by his career as an impersonator and a satirist. It has been his tool to transform into many characters, both real and fictional. He often claims in several of his revues how he now looks like P.W. Botha and does not even have to put on make-up to look like him²¹. All he has to do is pull his face, wave his finger and stick out his tongues (which are trademarks and publicly recognisable characteristics of the actual Botha) for audiences to recognise his Botha impersonation. Uys' body has become so compatible with his characters that he is able to become any of them with a minimal amount of preparation, changing into them while he continues to speak as the authorial character.

²¹ For instance, see the revues *The End is Naai* (2004) and *Elections and Erections* (2009).

I wish to re-appropriate the term “body politic” to describe Uys’ physical body in a political context, since his physical being houses years of life which have been assigned to politically-engaged performance. It has been shaped by its service to this cause. Even in the most autobiographical elements of Uys’ performances, I am reminded of Bennett’s comment: “We are not yet beyond the need to remind ourselves that the personal is political” (45). South African politics are so entrenched in Uys’ life that they cannot be severed from his identity and the performance of local politics: Uys’ physical body is a political body.

Ric Knowles

Knowles’ essay “Documentary, Autobiography, and the Utopian Performative in Canadian Autobiographical Solo Performance” (2006: 49) describes the work of Guillermo Verdecchia, an autobiographical performer whose performance style is similar to Uys’ in some respects. Knowles calls Verdecchia an “author-performer-autobiographical-subject”, (which is comparable to my description of Uys as an autobiographical playwright-performer) who performs a one-person, two-persona show (62) which is comparable to Uys’ revues, which are solo-enterprises where one person performs multiple personae. Knowles describes Verdecchia’s alter-ego, “Wideload”, as a “deconstructive, abject embodiment of media imaginings of Latino stereotypes” (62). I find this comparable to how one can describe Uys’ alter-ego, Evita Bezuidenhout, whose appearance is based on social preconceptions of the Afrikaner middle-aged white woman during the apartheid era, and as such is also an embodiment that deconstructs Afrikaner identity, Afrikaner women’s identity, and Afrikaner supremacy.

Knowles’ study also highlights the “trope of naming” that occurs in Verdecchia’s play, *Fronteras* (62). Verdecchia’s name is unfamiliar to people amongst whom he now lives, he being of Argentinian heritage but living in Anglophone British Columbia in Canada. Both he and his alter-ego resign themselves to the unfortunate situation that people cannot pronounce their names, and therefore choose English-sounding names that others can manage to say. Uys went through this, too, during his stay in England, telling the locals to pronounce his surname as “Ace” and subsequently going by the name “Peter Ace” (2002: 29, and 2005: 20) in order to accommodate people’s inability to say his Afrikaans

surname. Names are a significant aspect of one's identity, and Uys' compound name and surname have been issues in his identity.

In chapter three I discuss how Uys confronts his Afrikaner identity, since he felt the need to reconcile with it because of the association between Afrikaner cultural identity and apartheid. His most famous fictional character, "Evita Bezuidenhout", is the combination of a famous international first name and a familiar local surname, "Evita" being a reference to Argentina's famous first lady Evita Peron²². Although Evita is not Uys' proxy, and has little to do with representing Uys in an autobiographical context, her creation is the product of Uys' self-assessment of Afrikaner identity and his conflict with his "social identity" as a white Afrikaner privileged by apartheid. Evita is a vehicle for dissociating from the negative, apartheid-related aspects of Afrikaner identity which trouble his conscience.

Joanne Tompkins

Verdecchia becomes the subject of study yet again in Tompkins' essay "The Shape of a Life: Constructing Self and Other in Joan McLeod's *The Shape of a Girl* and Guillermo Verdecchia and Marcus Youssef's *A Line in the Sand*" (2006: 124). It is not only Verdecchia's case study in this essay that I find relevant, but what Tompkins says about him is applicable to Uys too. Tompkins immediately states that the plays she studies in this essay focus on "infamous events" and the "construction of the self and subjectivity generally" (124). "Infamous events" around which Uys' revues and autobiographical content revolve are features of apartheid and HIV/AIDS policies and practices which have influenced how Uys writes about himself autobiographically.

Tompkin's essay centres on the depiction of self and other and how autobiographical theory shifts when performance becomes an aspect of it. She cites numerous theorists (of written autobiography) in order to apply their ideas to plays. She cites Lejeune who speaks of the "image of the real" which pertains to the commitment of autobiography to "provide information about the 'reality' exterior to the truth" (Lejeune, 1973: 22). Tompkins claims Lejeune's "attention to the image of the real" (Tompkins, 2006: 125)

²² Uys further associates Evita Bezuidenhout with Evita Peron, since "she" performs shows at "Evita se Perron" in Uys' hometown of Darling in the Western Cape, "perron" being an Afrikaans term for a railway platform.

permits plays to explore the ways in which a fictional subject can be “(re-)configured” in performance. She uses the word “fictional” because she refers to plays where fictional characters feature in dramas about real events, claiming that they carry “traces” of the real life story, but the events these fictional characters are concerned with are not removed from reality (124).

With regard to how Tompkins’ line of thought is applicable to Uys’ revues, there are several instances in Uys’ revues where he presents fictional personae that carry so-called “traces” of the “real story”, which I assume means our reality, or, more precisely, the social reality the audience is familiar with. Tompkins proposes a shift in understanding the “self” and “other” in performance from meaning “role” and “actor”, and to rather mean “part of the development and portrayal of a character’s basic subjectivity, a subjectivity that will become further developed in performance” (126). Uys’ revues are *referential* (Lejeune, 1973: 22) because they refer to verifiable truths and facts which are the subject of the monologues in several of Uys’ fictional personae. For instance, Bambi Kellerman in *Foreign Aids* discusses her life-story, which is set in Nazi Germany, and her travels with her Kommandant-husband to escape Nazi-hunters, which is in effect a believable account since her story carries some resemblance to the flight of German Nazis from Germany after the fall of the Third Reich (some of the facts of her biography are a manipulation or inversion of several facts of Uys’ family background, which will be discussed in chapter three). Similarly, the story of Bambi’s need to purchase antiretrovirals outside South Africa is a reference to Mbeki’s government refusing South Africans access to antiretrovirals. Bambi’s life-story is partly an alternative to Uys writing autobiographically of his family’s background in a straightforward fashion, and a verifiable and referential construct based on true events.

This idea reinforces my belief that Uys’ performances of relative and proximate others substantiate the story of his development, contributing to the communication of his sense of self, his activism, his sexuality and his political opinions. Tompkins claims that the self that appears in the plays she analyses is a fictional construct whose existence depends on real events, and needs the other to help define it (126).

Louis Patrick Leroux

Leroux's essay "Tremblay's Impromptus as Process-driven A/B" (2006: 107) makes statements that draw attention to some fundamental realisations about autobiographical performance. He discusses two plays by Michel Tremblay, and foresees a challenge in analysing autobiographical performance. He says:

Aside from a few shared themes and character traits in both plays that might refer to the author's life – homosexual characters, narcissistic tendencies, authorial aspirations – we can only believe the author's claim to their autobiographical origins because he has declared it so. The intimate events or emotions detailed in both works cannot be authenticated by anyone other than the author because neither work makes explicit its autobiographical nature. How then can we analyse these plays as autobiographical drama?

(Leroux, 2006: 107)

Uys never claims that any of his revues possess an autobiographical nature. He inserts himself into his topics which are broader in scope than his own life-story. This does not diminish the momentum for my study of him, because autobiography is revealed whether it is Uys' intention or not. Uys is a "self-conscious"²³ writer and monologist and as part of his process to examine the impact of a social or political effect, he shares personal stories that illustrate this impact.

Leroux also discusses autofiction²⁴, a term coined by Serge Doubrovsky in 1977, described as the "fiction of real events" (Doubrovsky, 1988: 70, cited in Leroux, 2006: 107) which can include creative approaches to presenting a truth. Leroux paraphrases Doubrovsky's question, asking: "Where do we fit the impossible genre, that which is bound by an autobiographical pact but which accepts that, for the sake of art, the writer must tinker with the truth?" (2006: 108).

Several of the monologues and dialogues by fictional personae in Uys' revues incorporate elements of Uys' historical background and references to his activities in the past. Aside from providing creative approaches to the truth, or personal truths, fiction in autobiography helps Uys show audiences how he sees life around him, even in parts of the world where or at points in history when he is unable to be present. Uys sees his

²³ "Self-conscious" is Leroux's term to describe the works, by which he means productions, which "stage the writer as the writer" (107).

²⁴ "Autofiction" refers to fictional narratives used in the first-person mode in autobiography. Smith and Watson (2001) state that, "while autobiographical story-telling employs fictional tactics and genres, however, autofiction uses textual markers that signal a deliberate, often ironic, interplay between the two modes" (186).

frustration with political leaders as a part of his life (aside from this contributing to his livelihood) and the fact that he is unable to be present amongst them does not deter him from representing them in creative character dialogues that projects his concerns.

The playwright-performer contributor writers in *Theatre and AutoBiography*

Part Four of *Theatre and AutoBiography* consists of essays written by autobiographical playwright-performers which explain the authors' understanding of how to write about themselves and perform themselves. Sharon Pollock in her essay "Playwright: Parasite or Symbiont" (2006) says: "[...] in the creation of anything from something (or nothing), criteria emerge that govern choice and reflect the nature of the creator as well [...]" (297). This reinforces the point I make later in chapter three when I analyse parts of Uys' revues; I argue that that even where the author does not name himself in the performance of other characters, his presence is not far from the audience's awareness. The spectators recognise that Uys is often making his own comments rather than characters making their own.

Lastly, the playwright-performer Guillermo Verdecchia, who was the subject of several of the other contributing authors' essays in the anthology, wrote his own essay "Blahblahblahblah Mememememe Theatreschmeatre" (2006: 332), discussing his monological one-man performance of *Fronteras Americanas* (1993). He claims:

I did a lot of research because I wanted to do more than simply articulate my feelings. I wanted to understand them, situate them, give them a context. Before it was a play, *Fronteras* was a condition, an uncertainty, that I wanted to understand.

(2006: 332)

I find this corresponds to Uys' own motivations for his performances, as he also wishes to progress beyond the re-telling of his past in order to understand the context that is influencing the shape of his life-story. Verdecchia also discusses fictions in autobiography, stating, "And when I write a fictitious character, I am always drawing (to some extent) on my own experience" (333).

Like Verdecchia, Uys relied on elements of his background, cultural heritage and family history as sources of inspiration for some of his fictional persona. The relational aspects of autobiography to which Verdecchia draws attention to in *Fronteras Americanas*

corresponds with the presentation of collective identities in South African autobiographies. Meyer says: “[...] weaving our auto/biographical accounts into larger narratives about collectives – such as gender-specific groups, survivors, or citizens of a state – is crucial to our identities” (Meyer, 2006: 5). Uys is no exception to this approach to structure in autobiography.

Discussing the essays of selected theorists and playwrights from *Theatre and AutoBiography* (2006) has helped me to accumulate a pool of knowledge which I can apply to the analyses of Uys’ revues. I have found that many of these authors’ statements and concepts resonate with Uys’ style of performing the self in the revues, and as such I have been able describe *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2009) in terms of performance autobiography with greater accuracy.

Deirdre Heddon: *Autobiography and Performance* (2008)

Heddon claims her interest in autobiographical performance is “driven by its political potential” (Heddon, 2008: 157), which she describes in *Autobiography and Performance* (2008). Heddon does not draw on Grace’s writing; she brings the readers’ attention to what she believes is characteristic of performance autobiography. However, both Heddon and Grace draw similar conclusions about performance autobiography, which reinforces what the chief characteristics of autobiographical performance are, which I will then look for in Uys’ revues.

Heddon says: “Creating a solo autobiographical show means literally creating a part for yourself” (2008: 18). Performing the self is an immediate form of self-representation that can be re-performed in subsequent theatrical productions. Uys recounts earlier life-experiences in the revues, but the time lived during a revue is the performance of his life in the present as well. Heddon claims that she does not wish to promote “good” or “tested” models of autobiographical practice in theatre, since, to use her words, this could “curtail creative exploration” (18). I support this non-prescriptive stance. Like Heddon, I am not trying to raise any expectations that Uys is an ideal model for autobiographical performance; rather, he has attempted some interesting and innovative autobiographical approaches to making theatre that are particular to his own sense of creativity, and my reading of Heddon sharpens my perception of Uys’ revues in this respect.

Heddon claims that a large number of autobiographical playwrights connect the past and memory to the present and current issues. They are interested in consciousness-raising, which means they can share personal stories of abuse, lash out at institutions for their grievances, and voice their desire for social change. She says performance autobiography is connected to early political movements, especially during the “second-wave feminist movement” of the 1970s (2008: 21). Essentially, the feminist performance autobiographies of the 1970s sought to reveal the world of hidden suffering experienced by women in a non-egalitarian society and so as to make personal stories a public reality. Many of these performances were intensely revealing; Heddon gives the examples of Carolee Schneeman’s 1975 piece *Interior Scroll* (where the artist extracted a scroll, containing personal experiences and memories, from her genitalia) and Catherine Elwes’ *Menstruation* (1979), where the artist wore white whilst encased in a glass box so that her menstrual blood would be visible through her clothing. Many of these feminist performers are not dissimilar to the performance artists one finds in South Africa, one such is Steven Cohen, who is described later in this chapter.

The examples of profoundly politicised performance autobiographical texts show that meaning is produced from out of intimate spaces (in other words, the physical body), and demonstrate how audiences are exposed to deeply personal performances. Whilst it may not always be the case that the performer’s body itself is exposed, the author is able to present her body to an audience, and directly assert her opinions and beliefs as intimately as desired. While Uys’ early theatre career does not correspond with the intensity of the personal exposure one can see occurred on international stages during the second-wave feminist movement, in his post-apartheid revues Uys performs monologues that reveal private details about his life that normally would remain a secret out of the public’s reach. The choice to share intimate life stories with the audience is comparable to the feminist performance art of the 1970s: Uys reveals himself in deeply intimate monologues or “speaking parts” while performers such Schneeman and Elwes relied on intimate dramatic action or “body parts”²⁵.

²⁵ I have come up with these terms “speaking parts” and “body parts” in the context of this study myself.

Heddon says that many performance autobiographers come from socially vulnerable groups, and attempt to perform sketches pertaining to that vulnerability. She says autobiographical performers are concerned with their identity and how it has been (and is being) defined by negative forces. The aim of revealing socially-induced trauma in theatre conscientises spectators as to how society and its institutions affect vulnerable groups, even if audiences do not come from such groups.

In Heddon's second chapter "Ethics: The Story of the Other" (124), it becomes apparent that relationality is a common characteristic in the work of many performance autobiographers. Heddon asserts that performance autobiography is unavoidably a process of writing and performing the story of the self's relations with what she calls "close, familial, or proximate others" (124). The roles others play in the life of the author become so important – whether negative or positive or both – that the author perceives them to be integral to the way he understands life. The author does not just perform what he thinks; what he thinks is consequent upon sharing his thoughts with others and vice versa.

It may seem more biographical than autobiographical to perform other characters instead of the self at times in performances when the authorial character seems absent, but these character-sketches are performed in order to shed more light on the nature of the playwright-performer himself. The author adopts the ideas of other people, puts them into writing and adapts them into the performance. The process of writing and performing leads to the telling of the story of how the author grapples with the life lessons he has learnt from living alongside proximate others, coming to conclusions that could never have been conceived had the author not encountered these individuals.

This leads to the "[...] ethical dilemmas in the unavoidable practice of representing others when performing autobiography, or more accurately, when performing auto/biography" (125) that amounts to an act of telling his own story when he portrays the agency of those who have contributed to his life-narrative. By impersonating people who are in some way related to his personal concerns, the playwright-performer implicates them into personal and political discourses. For instance, by discussing and performing individuals that have not received antiretroviral access through the government, Uys is using them on behalf of

his personal agenda to criticise the government. In order for such actions to be acceptable, Uys is morally obligated to make sure he is not misrepresenting others, nor manipulating the facts for his own gain, and that his depiction of these others offer audiences a true and honest representation of those who have genuinely been mistreated by the political forces he is accusing of negligence. In chapter three, I analyse and weigh the ethical considerations of some of these representations that Uys performs as part of two-character dialogues in *Foreign Aids* (2001).

Autobiography and Performance reinforces the idea that theatre can combine personal narratives with performance and socially-relevant themes and concerns. The live performance of plays is fundamental to this form of autobiography, but the scripts are a valuable resource for research in this field. Much of Heddon's analysis has been pivotal to this study and the analysis of the relationship between political and social concerns in *Foreign Aids* (2001) as well as a monologue in the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009) and autobiographical material that appears in these revues.

Section B: South African performance autobiography - Past, present and Pieter-Dirk Uys

So far I have reviewed international studies about performance and autobiography, but nothing in this theoretical framework has as yet been intentionally applied to performance practices in South Africa. I seek to apply this framework to Uys' revues, but in no way would I claim that the autobiographical elements in Uys' revues are an isolated case of autobiographical performance in this country. Having surveyed the variety of performances generated in South Africa, I have come to recognise how autobiographical elements have arisen in numerous productions, and presenting them in this chapter will help to increase our awareness of local autobiographical performance. Considering how important the social and political context of a country has been in influencing international performance autobiography, I think it best to be aware of South Africa's apartheid era and realise its impact on the theatre scene.

Apartheid South Africa: Politics and performance

Between 1948 and 1994, South Africa was run in accordance with a system of racial segregation called apartheid. Apartheid was characterised by white Afrikaner minority

rule and white supremacy, which gave white South Africans preferential access to better state services and resources at the expense of non-white South Africans. This segregation was enforced to the point that black South Africans were deprived of their citizenship during the 1970s, and entire non-white communities were subjected to forced removals to other locations. Racial classification was practised in order to categorise all South Africans so as to allocate them to separate areas. Racial purity policies were also practised, which manifested in laws that prohibited inter-racial cohabitation, marriage and sexual relations. These racist issues of legality and illegality would be responded to in the work including autobiographical narratives of many South African performers, and included.

This system of institutionalised racism sparked resistance from amongst South Africa's different race-groups, who in turn were threatened with detention, imprisonment, police intimidation and, in extreme cases, torture and death. This political atmosphere generated a host of responses in the arts, especially in theatre. The reality of apartheid became the backdrop or focus of a substantial number of South African plays²⁶, where personal tales and anti-apartheid sentiment mingled in the work of playwrights from all race groups across the country. The ties between politics and performance in South Africa are strong and, as a result, the intersection between politics, performance, and autobiography is marked. It is a definitive characteristic of Uys' memoirs and revues.

Inevitably, autobiographical theatre practitioners across race groups would perform the stories of their lives which reflected the duress of living under apartheid. It is worth describing the kinds of theatre that emerged in South Africa during and after apartheid which gave us autobiographical truths, because this study of Uys' particular brand of performance - the revue - in an autobiographical context will not account for the broad range of genres that South African playwright-performers specialise in. Heddon says she keeps her frame of reference open when it comes to the forms of performance used to stage autobiography:

Autobiographical performance, then, is adopted [...] as a broad term which encompasses examples of solo autobiographical work, community and applied drama, oral narrative and oral history

²⁶ There were theatre productions that maintained a lack of awareness of the realities of apartheid, such as pantomimes, children's theatre and stage musicals.

performance, verbatim drama, documentary drama, testimonial performance, performance art, and instances of site-specific and time-based practice.

(Heddon, 2008: 11)

A number of these genres that Heddon mentions have long been in use by many South African playwrights and performers, and considering the lack of South African research that prioritises the autobiographical study of theatre, I provide a set of examples of different playwright-performers and productions which merit further in-depth study in the future.

Collaborative performance autobiography: Worker theatre

Due to apartheid, and the apartheid state's lack of patronage and subsidies to black South Africans, many would-be black actors did not get the opportunity to perform in proper theatres to paying audiences, nor did they receive financial backing or formal theatre training. Black theatre nevertheless survived despite these setbacks; several performance practices arose to counter these circumstances. Especially prevalent in the 1980s of mid-apartheid South Africa, working-class black men and women, many with no theatre experience and without access to a conventional theatre-space, worked in collectives since they came from the same work force and were further united by their political concerns.

South African academic Paul Gready says, in "Political Autobiography in Search of Liberation: Working Class Theatre, Collaboration and the Construction of Identity" (1994), that "worker theatre was a self-consciously collective and ideological form of autobiographical expression" (166), with apartheid grievances being the primary concern. What this means is that rather than a singular autobiographical narrative, there are a series of mini-autobiographical accounts that fit within a larger narrative with a main political concern or theme. Personal stories are shared in order for audiences to identify with the actors because they have had similar experiences and can tell similar stories.

Worker theatre groups such as the Durban Worker's Cultural Local (DWCL) which performed *The Dunlop Play* (1983) presented individual stories woven into a larger narrative as a strategy for illustrating work-related grievances. *The Dunlop Play*, for instance, covers a 25 year period; an individual veteran worker receives a reward for his labours, and as the play progresses events which occurred during the worker's years of

labour are revealed, such as the exposing of an *impimpi*²⁷ and the demand amongst the workers for unionisation. Audience participation is invited, and a song about union recognition is performed as the finale. *The Dunlop Play* combines autobiographical accounts with political motivation, by giving the impression that the safety of the individual lies in the strength of the community. The play is a call for the protection of the working class through unionisation to counter oppressive managerial forces. The personal remains political as these collaborative plays invoke the past to assist in creating motivational stories for dealing with immediate political concerns.

It may seem tangential to discuss collaborative and solo performance autobiography, but both forms are evidently inspired by the same factors. Both are determined to show that personal stories can be performed as narratives to express concern about immediate social and political issues. Individual stories resonate with others because performance autobiographers tell their stories on behalf of other workers who have had similar experiences. Judith Coullie, speaking of black South African autobiographies, says: “[b]y far the majority of anthologised autobiographical sketches, the worker autobiographies, imply that the value of the individual life story lies not in its uniqueness but in the fact of its unexceptionality” (Coullie, 1991: 18). Although this is in regard to print autobiographies, this quality is also evident in black collaborative theatre, since black theatre relies on its audiences being able to identify with events and characters on stage.

This “collaborative personal” style of performance, if I may call it that, is in a sense similar to Uys’ autobiographical endeavours. Uys does not try to project the idea of an exclusive life-narrative in his memoirs; he seeks to showcase the shared experience of ordinary white South Africans. Unlike collaborative theatre where many actors can share life-stories themselves, the revues are one-man shows where Uys must himself perform others’ life-stories in their absence. These are usually what one may call one-man, two persona dialogues, or “monopolylogues” (Dolan, 2006: 2) which depict Uys in conversations with those he met during his life outside theatre, and during the process of earlier performances. He recreates their voices and expressions to evoke a sense of their character to render the sensation of those encounters more vividly to the audience. As a result, these acts are auto/biographical instead of autobiographical, that is, where Uys

²⁷ A black South African collaborating with apartheid police to spy on black political organisations.

performs the story of a moment in time in which he and those with whom he speaks share each other's lives.

Apartheid-era autobiographical elements in playwriting: Athol Fugard and *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982)

One of the most striking theatre practitioners during the apartheid-era is Athol Fugard (born 11 June 1932). Fugard's plays deal with life amongst ordinary South Africans of all race groups living under apartheid, not just in direct opposition to it. Even though in his plays apartheid represented a background force that governed South Africans' freedom of movement, Fugard focused on people's inter-personal relationships, recognising the domestic difficulties of daily life experienced by ordinary South Africans of all races. Fugard has been writing plays since 1956, and his works include *People Are Living There* (1968), *Boesman and Lena* (1969) and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972). Of all his apartheid-era plays, *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982) is most relevant to this study, since it is called "Fugard's most directly autobiographical work" (Walder, 1984: 119).

The action of *Master Harold and the Boys* takes place in the 1950s, and centres on a 17 year-old schoolboy, Hallie (a corruption of the name Harold, Athol Fugard's actual first name) and his relationship with two black servants who work in a tearoom in Port Elizabeth. P.E is a recurring location in many of Fugard's plays, comparable to how Cape Town is the recurring location in Uys' plays. The relationship between the white teenager and the two black men is damaged when Hallie vents his frustrations upon the two men, which creates the sense of apartheid inequality between a younger white "master" and subservient older black men. Hallie's distress is provoked by the news of his crippled father's return from hospital; Hallie sees his father as an oppressor. Fugard's own father, also named Harold, was similarly disabled, which draws further parallels between the author and the principal character. The character Sam, the black servant with whom Hallie is friends, was inspired by the real life Sam Semela, a Basuto waiter who worked for the Fugard family for 15 years, and whilst at a tearoom together (the setting of the play) the pair did in fact have a rare quarrel. The dramatic climax of the play, where Hallie spits in Sam's face, did actually happen, although in life it occurred along a road whilst in the play it happens inside the tearoom. Dennis Walder, writing about the play, declares: "[...] it should be no surprise to realise that it has taken Fugard almost all his

whole career so far to be able to disclose the incident from which his deepest feelings of guilt and remorse derive” (Walder, 1984: 120).

Post-apartheid autobiographical performance: Fugard and *The Captain's Tiger* (1997)

In addition to *Master Harold*, Fugard also penned *The Captain's Tiger: A Memoir for the Stage* (1997). The play covers Fugard's voyages aboard the SS Graigaur, a steamer ship that sailed across East Asia for two years, during which time he first attempted creative writing. Fugard presents himself as two characters, the “author” who corresponds with the contemporary, socially responsible and extra-textual author who addresses the audience, and “Tiger”, who is an incarnation of his past and youthful self who lived aboard the ship during that time. The play also features a female character, “Betty”, who is the imagined living essence of a photograph of his mother in her youth, with whom Tiger speaks. Tiger plans for Betty to be his principal character in a romanticised re-telling of his mother's life, up to where she encounters Fugard's father for the first time. This plan fails when it comes to the point in the narrative where Betty is to meet Fugard's/Tiger's father whom Fugard sees as a tragic figure, since: “I can't make a happy ending for my dad” (Fugard, 1997: 73). Fugard's father strikes a tragic and resented figure in Fugard's work, who was “full of pointless, unthought-out prejudices” (Gussow, 1982: n.p.).

From these two plays, we can gauge Fugard's autobiographical style in performance. Fugard's parents and his early friendships with older African men²⁸ prove to be core themes in his personal work. *The Captain's Tiger's* sub-title, *A Memoir for the Stage*, immediately gives the reader the signal that the play has autobiographical associations. The term “memoir” confirms my impression that the memoir-style of writing autobiography is compatible with plays which playwrights intend to have autobiographical properties. There are discernible stylistic similarities between the way Uys writes prose-narrative in his memoirs and how he has scripted the revues. Both *The Captain's Tiger* and *Foreign Aids* feature an arrangement of dialogues that occurred over a longer period of lived time which the playwright-performer is unable to record fully or

²⁸ In *The Captain's Tiger*, Fugard recalls spending his time aboard the SS Graigaur with a Swahili-speaking black man named “Donkeyman”.

reproduce in prose narrative or performance. With the analysis of Uys' revues, it is apparent that he selects parts of his life-story so that they can be performed within the narrative frame of the revue (instead of being a re-enactment of his past that runs for the entirety of the production), omitting vast amounts of lived and remembered time that he feels are irrelevant or inappropriate to the performance.

Greig Coetzee and *White Men with Weapons* (1998)

Greig Coetzee is an example of a white male South African whose performances reflect on the harsh realities of apartheid South Africa. These performances come much later than the actual events upon which the play and text are based. Originally, Durban-based Coetzee based his play *White Men with Weapons* (1998) on his experiences in the South African Defence Force during the apartheid era. The play is valuable for its depiction of white male South African masculinity, the title itself a suggestion of the danger white men posed to other, non-white South Africans. The military construction of white men found here illustrates the fact that white male identity was strongly connected to authoritarian aggressiveness. Coetzee's portrayal of many white male characters in the play illustrates how he was subjected to a military institution that promoted racism amongst white men. His "testimony" shows the audience how he escaped thinking blindly in the same way, instead showcasing the results of this racist practice in this play so that the rest of South Africa could have insight into this relatively unshared apartheid-era sub-culture. His specific approach to revealing the worst behaviour of army conscripts and personnel reinforces the notion that he has escaped sharing the beliefs of apartheid militarism engendered in white men; *White Men with Weapons* reveals the types of characters who found their niche in the apartheid-era army environment.

Coetzee's sketches expose the vulnerability of white men to their unfair construction into military creatures. For example, the skit of "Kaptein Marais-Social Worker" gives audiences the impression of the harshness of the lifestyle white men came to experience when they entered the army (209). Kaptain Marais states facts and figures regarding injuries, deaths and suicides among white men in the apartheid-era army, and makes clear that many more conscripts and permanent members of staff seek transfer, especially to be with their loved ones again and to escape the army lifestyle. This gives audiences the impression that apartheid expectations of military service from white men did not make

life for them in South Africa (as the supposedly most benefited race group) pleasant, and that white men would rather have lived their own lives than lived to uphold the principles of apartheid through military might.

Coetzee depicts white men in South Africa along with all the negative connotations one category of white men have carried as militaristic oppressors and as pawns in the apartheid war machine. Ironically, this is part of Coetzee's effort to reveal that the process of turning men into oppressors is a form of oppression as well, since white men are expected to join the army as a sign of supporting apartheid, even if they have no desire to fulfill the government's expectations. Uys also confesses in *Elections and Erections* the memoir (2002) and in an autobiographical monologue in *Elections and Erections* the revue (2009) how he felt inadequate when he did not live up to the standards of apartheid and white Afrikaner supremacy when he had sexual desires for coloured men. However, when Uys came to believe that apartheid was intrinsically wrong, he rejected apartheid as the authority of Afrikaner culture, and sought to reclaim his cultural identity outside of apartheid Afrikaner approval²⁹.

The act of revealing flaws in authority figures is not unique to *White Men with Weapons*. Uys' satirical take on politicians typically highlights the shortcomings of similar figures. The similarity between *White Men with Weapons* and Uys' revues is that both reveal how people internalise the ideologies of racist institutions, and become representative agents of them. *White Men with Weapons* gives insight into the mentality of white apartheid-era military men, while Uys' revues satirise the mentality of white apartheid-era politicians³⁰.

White Men with Weapons shows that 'whiteness' is a marker of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Coetzee claims he found the performance "cathartic" for himself and "traumatic" for audiences (Lütge, 2006: 335). He says that:

I was not just an observer, I was involved, so what I have to try to avoid is my emotions at the time

²⁹ The state took action to prosecute Uys for the use of Afrikaans curse-words in several of his plays and scripts. For a detailed narrative on Uys' use of Afrikaans swear-words and the state's attempts to prosecute him, see "Poep, etc." in *Elections and Erections* (2005: 73-82).

³⁰ Although Uys continues to perform impersonations of infamous white politicians, he has had to reform his revues in order to reflect the flaws of the new multi-racial South African government. These include former state president Thabo Mbeki, former first lady Winnie Mandela, former minister of health Manto Tshabalala Msimang, former minister of education Kader Asmal, Zimbabwe's first lady Grace Mugabe and others.

conflicting with the characters' emotions...Being autobiographical, the one possible source of interference is your own emotion as opposed to the emotions of the person you are portraying.
(2001: 337)

Coetzee says he has a personal investment in the characters he performs, which reminds me of the relationality between autobiographical subjects and the people who become agents in playwright-performers' narratives.

Steven Cohen: Performing post-apartheid identity

So far, I have referred to black community theatre, collaborative stage productions (Fugard's *Master Harold and the Boys* and *The Captain's Tiger*) and one-man shows by white male playwright-performers³¹, but I now wish to consider South African performance art, since it is a radical departure from the previous approaches to performing personal narratives. I have identified one particular South African performance artist, Steven Cohen, whose work I have encountered in previous studies during drama and performance studies coursework. It has occurred to me that there are autobiographical aspects to Cohen's performance, since he stages performances inspired by questions of personal identity. Considering that he is a South African white Jewish gay man, which are attributes one relates to Uys, my impressions of Cohen's performances have made me reconsider the autobiographical aspects of Uys' performances in the revues. Although I am suggesting similarities between Uys and Cohen, and between performance art and performance autobiography, it is also necessary to distinguish them.

As the name suggests, performance art is a practice that combines elements of visual performance and visual art. Amelia Jones defines performance art as: "[...] encompassing any kind of theatrical production [...]" (Gammel, 2002: 313). However, the kind of performance art that Cohen performs, which is the kind analysed by Smith and Watson in *Interfaces* (2002) and by Heddon in *Performance and Autobiography* (2008), can be referred to as "body art", "[...] which places the body/self within the realm of the aesthetic as a political domain... Body art takes place through an enactment of the artist's body that it is then documented such that it can be experienced subsequently through

³¹ The significance of these playwright-performers being white is that they have provided representations of white South Africans during the apartheid era, and the complications of belonging to a race that, although is given preferential treatment by the state, is nevertheless aware that this is ethically wrong.

photography, film, video and/or text” (2002: 13).

Performance artists make personal elements of their identities, such as sexuality and sexual orientation, into the theme of their performances. Performance art is a process of taking something internal and externalizing it for spectators, to communicate an idea about his/herself in a performative way. Aside from whatever few props and costumes he may have³², the key instrument in performance art is the performer’s body, and it is this instrument that substitutes for a written text to describe who the author is. While I believe that the written text for performance is important for reading and research purposes, a written text is not always available, but this should not disqualify performance art from being understood in an autobiographical study. Performance contributes to autobiography because it offers an alternative mode for audiences to understand the performer’s life-stories, since the explanatory approach of narrating an identity in a retrospective fashion, which we associate with print prose narrative autobiography, is absent.

Since written text is absent, in performance art is the performer’s body is the primary tool for sharing information about his identity. In a sense the performer “marks” his body for performance – by this I mean the performer dresses and adorns, paints, pierces, scars or damages his/herself so that it is the main focus of the audience’s attention, replacing spoken narrative text in the performance as the primary resource the audience has in order to have ideas about the performer’s identity. Instead of writing, he uses his body as his “text”, which the spectator “reads”.

Although written text, the act of writing on paper, is not eliminated from the process Uys goes through to develop a revue, our lack of access to written scripts for Uys’ revues means the chief reference for Uys’ autobiography in these productions is Uys himself, in the intra-textual capacity of the authorial character. Uys’ body is responsive to his state of mind, and helps to convey the range of emotions he is feeling which the audience witnesses. His body’s movement and posture correspond with what he says about his past, and provide visual cues for how he is feeling or what he is thinking when he is not speaking. The body is a factor in the sensation of immediacy that comes with performing

³² Many performance artists do not rely on theatres to stage their performances, and do not have the motive (or the financial means) to furnish sets. Instead they rely on their bodies and few clothes and props in order to “stage” a performance.

autobiography. The ability of the body to express autobiography relates to Susan Bennett's idea of the body as a visual archive, because it is the primary visual means through which performance autobiographers make their archive of memory accessible for the audience.

Differences between Uys' performance autobiography and Cohen's performance art

At first glance, Cohen's and Uys' approaches to performance and their political agendas are different to each other. Cohen is concerned with the marginalisation of gay men in South Africa, while Uys is concerned with the protection of South African communities vulnerable to HIV-transmission. Cohen is concerned with performing "the minoritarian subject in the majoritarian public sphere" (van der Watt, 1999: 95), while the numbers of South Africans susceptible to HIV-infection form the majority in South Africa and thus would hardly constitute a minoritarian subject. Cohen's use of drag, by comparison to Uys', is deliberately grotesque. Although Cohen dresses in women's clothing, lingerie and wears women's cosmetics, he graphically exhibits his maleness by baring, binding and piercing his genitals in public. Uys' women characters, such as Evita, Nowell Fine, and Bambi Kellerman hide any evidence of Uys' normal masculine appearance; they are completely unlike Uys' personality.

Lessons from Cohen's performance art that contribute to reading Uys' performance autobiography

Although Uys' revues do not constitute performance art, there are aspects to Cohen's performances that are relatable to Uys' autobiographical performances in the revues. Uys and Cohen are both gay, Jewish white South African men, and these aspects of their identity are integral to their respective performances. Like Cohen, Uys has encountered hostility from members of his audiences for performing some aspects of his identity, as with his portrayal of Jewish characters. In *Between the Devil and the Deep* (2005) he says he retaliated against accusations of anti-Semitism, saying "I am a Jew myself, let me shit on my own doorstep!" (2005: 118). Uys first responded to negative audience reactions in the revues, revealing how a spectator who resented his portrayal of Nowell Fine, the "Jewish African princess", in fact displayed the exact traits Fine possessed herself; Uys repeating the spectator's own words: "Oi! Mr. Uys! I don't know why you perform that character, nobody I know talks like that, I swear to God!"³³ (*Dekaffirmated*, 1999).

Both Uys and Cohen have performed in geographical areas where their performances risked hostile reception by the specific audience. For instance, with *Ugly Girl* (1998) Cohen entered the grounds of Loftus Versfeld Stadium during a rugby Currie Cup final in 1998. Cohen chose this site on the basis that it would be inhospitable to him, "far removed from the protection of a queer audience" (van der Watt, 199: 122) – a stronghold of supposed rugged sportsmanship and heterosexual masculinity. Cohen risked venturing where the community would be disgusted and offended by his "anti-masculinity", being hailed and humiliated as a "moffie"³⁴ by Afrikaans men. Uys has in fact performed in front of parliamentary audiences, composed of politicians and affiliates who follow the policies that Uys is opposed to. On Tuesday 20th March 1999 in the House of Assembly in Cape Town, Uys performed his AIDS-awareness show for the South African government. During the show, Uys claimed: "My name is Pieter-Dirk Uys and I am not a medical expert like Thabo Mbeki!" (Uys, 2002: 185). In *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, Uys says that the audience responded with "a terrible silence"

³³ "Oi" and "I swear to God" are expressions Uys has made use of in Fine's typical Jewish speech. Both Fine and the irate spectator allegedly possessed the same figures of speech, and even the same nasal whine stereotypically associated with Jewish women.

³⁴ "Moffie" is derogatory Afrikaans slang for a gay man.

and that “it was a bumpy ride” (185), since he was sarcastically criticising their leader, former state-president Thabo Mbeki. Uys asserts that his performances must be “49% anger vs 51% entertainment” (186) in order to provoke audiences into making a critical response to the content of his shows. This desire to provoke audiences is a trait Uys and Cohen share in performance autobiography; both performers demonstrate the need to actively conscientise audiences as opposed to producing passive, politically apathetic and socially ignorant forms of entertainment.

Performance art appears to lack an accompanying written text, or what we can call “paper-writing” (Griffiths, 2006: 302), that readers can rely on for future reference to the performance. This may seem unusual to traditional readers of autobiography, since the written text is fundamental for prose narrative autobiography. However, it is apparent that many performance autobiographers do not choose autobiography to be encoded onto paper as the primary source of reference for viewers; they rely on their voices, their bodies and for the viewers to be physically present at the moment in which the act of autobiographical “writing” takes place.

Performance autobiographers do not choose to disconnect the narrative of their lives and encode it elsewhere into a written document, but choose to retain the source of autobiographical viewing in the physical body. Just as memory exists in the performance autobiographer’s mind, the arrangement of memories into a narrative emanates from the live voice and bodily movement of the performer. In a sense, the autobiographical text, or *meta-text*, is inscribed onto the body, and the body is the text that viewers “read”. With Uys, it is apparent that it is not the scripts which are the primary autobiographical resource, but the live performances themselves. The appearance of autobiographical monologues and elements in Uys’ revues over a series of performances, on different days and nights, at different venues and even in different countries, substitutes for the act of being able to read and re-read the same arrangement of text as readers are able to do with print prose narrative autobiography.

So far, I have sought to illustrate some of the other important performers in South Africa, in order to illustrate that the appearance of autobiographical content in Uys’ revues is not exclusive to him. Although I believe that Uys and these other performers share some

similar autobiographical tendencies, such as the practice of speaking directly to the audience about personal and shared experience, I seek to provide an elaborate analysis of the autobiographical elements that are unique to Uys' revues, which set him apart from his compatriots. By identifying how Uys interprets and adapts autobiographical narratives in *Foreign Aids* (2001), for instance, I establish that there are characteristics that are unique to his style of performance.

Before *Foreign Aids*: Uys' theatre career before he introduced autobiographical discourse

In the discussion above, I have provided a brief outline of South African performances that employ autobiographical discourse; this provides some context of the theatre world Uys belongs to, and therefore I can now turn to survey Uys' personal theatre history. It is worthwhile for us to consider an overview of Uys' work preceding the 2000s. Uys has been practising theatre since the 1970s and by the 1980s he had established himself as a political satirist. Seeing that he has been practising theatre for over forty years, and the autobiographical analysis of his work is limited to the past decade, it is important to establish why it is only in recent times that he has become a markedly autobiographical playwright-performer and what traces of autobiographical writing and performance appeared in earlier periods of his career in theatre. To begin with, I will start with a survey of some of his revues of the 1980s which established his unique style of performance, into which format the autobiographical elements would begin to fit with greater effect later in his career.

Early Revues *Adapt or Dye* and *Beyond the Rubicon*: The beginnings of the character “Pieter-Dirk Uys”

Uys established himself as a politically-irreverent satirist in the early 1980s, beginning with *Adapt or Dye*³⁵ (1981). He introduced several impersonations which would become staples of his shows, such as Piet Koornhof³⁶, Roelof Frederik "Pik"Botha³⁷ and Pieter Willem (usually abbreviated to P.W.) Botha³⁸, as well as the fictional characters Evita Bezuidenhout and Nowell Fine. During this period in his career Uys performed more of his characters than of himself; Uys' authorial character had yet to emerge as a strong autobiographical presence in the revues. As he clarifies in *Between the Devil and the Deep*:

I stayed on stage throughout and changed into character in front of everyone. With a collection of stacked cardboard boxes filled with props and costumes, one character would be peeled off while another was added. A woman became a man, became an Afrikaner, then a kugel, then a minister, then a leader. The one I carefully hid was me.

(Uys, 2005: 64)

Uys claims he “hid” behind characters during the early revues because he was unprepared to perform as himself. However, by 1986 he sought to incorporate more aspects of his personality into his one-man shows. In the text *No One's Died Laughing* (1986) in which scripts from *Adapt or Dye*, *Total Onslaught* and *Beyond the Rubicon* appear, Uys says: “I had also found the need to create a character called Pieter-Dirk Uys because I found being me on stage a nightmarish experience. I still do, but having structured him now, I find it less embarrassing” (1986: 40). The development of the Uys-persona, the authorial character in his revues, has been a slow and gradual process, although elements of his personality begin to appear in part during his 1980 revues.

One rare and explicit autobiographical occurrence comes from *Total Onslaught* (1986) where he acknowledges that international audiences may be unfamiliar with his work, which necessitates a self-introduction: “My name is Pieter-Dirk Uys. I am over 40. I'm a white South African. I'm an Afrikaner. I'm Jewish. For the last 15 years I've been

³⁵ The title of this revue is inspired by former state president P.W. Botha's announcement about the next general election in 1981. In this speech Botha discussed assisting resistance groups in neighbouring countries by supplying arms and support, and expressed his determination to continue enforcing apartheid in order to diminish black resistance against the apartheid government.

³⁶ Minister of Cooperation and Development between 1978 and 1984.

³⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs 1977 to 1994.

³⁸ Prime Minister of South Africa from 3 September 1984 to 15 August 1989.

writing plays about South Africans: Living under apartheid, living after apartheid” (Uys, 1986: 112). This act of introducing himself on stage marks him as an autobiographical subject. He identifies himself not only as an individual, with an identity possessed of cultural heritage, but defines his public identity as a satirical writer and actor. This association establishes the relationship between his sense of identity and his use of theatre as a vehicle for political comment and sentiment.

Beyond the Rubicon in comparison with Adapt or Dye

Adapt or Dye (1981) can be contrasted with *Beyond the Rubicon* (1986) in order to show the evolution of Uys’ presence in his revues as an authorial narrator and character. In *Adapt or Dye*, the Uys-persona is not particularly retrospective; he does not seek to address the audience to communicate personal anecdotes or his family background. This version of the Uys-persona focuses on making snide remarks about apartheid politicians, making jokes about them that rely on the audience’s recognition of apartheid hypocrisy rather than on how apartheid has affected him personally. On the few occasions where he does speak about himself in *Adapt or Dye*, it is usually in terms of getting into trouble with authority figures, such as his father, who represents an authority figure in the home environment. After performing the Jewish kugel Nowell Fine and undressing, he says of himself: “If my father sees me now, he’ll have a stroke on the spot!” (*Adapt or Dye*, 1981). Although audiences get the impression that Uys’ father would not favour his transvestitism, we do not have a three dimensional understanding of the relationship between Uys and his father. The relationship between Uys and his father is only truly unearthed in *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*³⁹ (2005), and even today Uys’ family background is not a topic in any of his performances.

Uys’ practice of satirising politics has traditionally been his objective in the revues; the appearance of autobiography in them has been relatively limited by comparison, since Uys is not inclined to speak about himself if he cannot relate the story of his life to political subjects. Uys has claimed: “I hold up a true mirror and leave the comedy to the

³⁹ In *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, Uys reflects on his father’s seat on the Censor Board, which made his father realise how stupidly prejudiced the other pro-apartheid members on the Board were, against Uys’ satirical attacks on apartheid politics and politicians. Uys also reflects on his father’s death in chapter 19, “Death and Other Important Bits” (pp.233-242) as well as his mother’s death, which I discuss later in this chapter.

eye of the beholder” (McMurtry, 2000: 347), meaning he invites audiences to make up their own minds about the humorousness of the topics he is concerned with. However, this “true mirror” is a matter of opinion in itself; if one considers how Uys ridicules apartheid politicians, he diminishes the likelihood that the audience will respect the actual politicians.

Although the impersonations were one of the crucial ways in which Uys could ridicule apartheid politicians, the Uys-persona is not self-reflexive enough for *Adapt or Dye* to constitute a performance autobiographical production where the authorial character announces its rejection of apartheid in a personal capacity. However, there are some moments in *Adapt or Dye* which demonstrate the Uys-persona’s attitude towards apartheid. In the performance of *Adapt or Dye* at the Market Theatre in 1981, he asks:

When we eventually get a chance to just think of our beloved South Africa, our beleaguered Suid Afrika, our enigmatic Azania, what is the picture that comes to mind? That glossy picture post-card of the sun setting on Table Mountain, or is the image of South Africa as one of the world’s last great bastions of Christian democracy, as so perpetuated by the SABC, or is it that elusive paradise of braaivleis, rugby, sunny skies and Westgate...And then, to allow ourselves to remember a Biko, and a Luthuli, a Breytenbach and a Smit...

(*Adapt or Dye*, 1981)

Here Uys gives the audiences options on what to think about South Africa, implying that the picturesque depictions of South Africa are deceptions of the apartheid state. This line of thinking leads the audience to follow Uys’ train of thought, although there is no attempt to convince the audience to accept his ideas. Uys’ thoughts are suggested beneath the surface of this façade, since the presentation of the sobering reference to apartheid murders at the conclusion of the comment suggests it is the product of his independent thinking.

Adapt or Dye is a starting point for giving audiences clues about Uys’ attitude to the apartheid dream (or nightmare), and the revues as a series of theatrical milestones become the story of this attitude; Uys’ attitude to South African politics is an important aspect of his personality, and hence the communication of his view marks an autobiographical beginning in his one-man shows. To put it another way, we learn about Uys’ personality even if he does not include obviously self-referential dramatisation in *Adapt or Dye*.

The later revue, *Beyond the Rubicon*⁴⁰, unlike *Adapt or Dye*, features some moments of retrospective narration, where Uys refers to his earlier run of *Adapt or Dye*. He acknowledges the previous revue's role in cementing his reputation as a satirist, musing that "*Adapt or Dye*, whoever thought that would be my bread and Botha?" (*Beyond the Rubicon*, 1986). In the later revue, he worries about his weight gain, recognising how he has physically changed since 1981, an aspect of his physique that he regards in passing in later revues and in the published prose memoirs. Although Uys does not display an elaborate sense of reflection and self-analysis in *Beyond the Rubicon*, he is able to demonstrate slightly more of his authorial persona. As if to compel his own persona to appear onstage, Uys performs sketches in *Beyond the Rubicon* which feature a pre-recorded "Security Man" voice-over that sounds as if it appears over an intercom and which interrogates Uys as himself, rendering him unable to hide behind a disguise.

The FX Security Man: Self-interrogation as a form of revealing the self

The FX Security Man is a voice-over used in both *Adapt or Dye* and *Beyond the Rubicon* (1986) primarily to confront Uys for his mockery of apartheid. The voice-over is a reference to the security police that were on duty in the 1980s, a feature of South Africa's "States of Emergency"⁴¹. The security man reprimands him for undermining apartheid in the performances, telling him to stop with his jabs at politicians and instead speak about the natural beauty of the country. Uys denies the accusations levelled against him, but simultaneously continues to express anti-apartheid sentiments that his accuser is unable to discern.

First "appearing" in *Adapt or Dye*, the security man claims Uys is in trouble for giving a bad impression of Afrikaners and asks him why he has not paid attention to what is positive about the country, such as the weather, surf and braai culture. Accused of not having shown the audience anything of what the country is all about, Uys replies that it is coming, and he then proceeds to perform as P.W. Botha. During this revue, Uys is hardly

⁴⁰ In 1985, P.W. Botha delivered an infamous speech where, instead of announcing much anticipated social reforms which would be less repressive on non-white South Africans, he asserted that the state would not give in to pressure to grant political concessions to black South Africans; this included the refusal of Nelson Mandela's hoped-for release from imprisonment on Robben Island.

⁴¹ Under former Prime Minister PW Botha's government, states of emergency were declared in South Africa from July 1985 to February 1990, in response to increasing civil unrest and township violence opposing apartheid rule.

retrospective and evades self-referentiality; he conceals himself behind the personalities of several impersonations. As a result, Uys seems to be avoiding making any personal claims about his thoughts towards apartheid, which shields the unspoken but real fear Uys possesses of the state and its scrutiny of theatre.

The FX Security Man voice-over reappears in the 1986 revue *Beyond the Rubicon*. At the time *Beyond the Rubicon* was staged, South Africa was undergoing political changes: The state had lifted its ban on mixed audiences in theatres, and in his performances Uys became bolder in stating his position on important matters. In the revue, after describing how the world has seen South Africans murdering black children,⁴² Uys is reprimanded by a voice-over of an Afrikaans-sounding man speaking flawed English. During this dialogue, Uys faces accusations:

FX Security Man: Careful what you say. There is laws against obscenity and blasphemy...
PDU: And 'subversion'?
FX: Very Funny. I see here in your file you did this anti-South African rubbish in London, England?
PDU: *Ja*.
FX: It's easy to go there and be anti-South African.
PDU: There's a big difference between anti-South African and being anti-Apartheid.
FX: Not here, *boetie*, not here. So you're going to tell some nice jokes about us, like those in those video-tapes of yours?
PDU: There are no more jokes, just facts.

(Uys, 1986: 114)

Uys is seen here making claims about his political position, and how he perceives himself as a South African, or, to use Grace's term, he communicates his "personal national identity" (2006: 15). Uys does not believe apartheid is an aspect of his national identity, even though the state propagated apartheid as an aspect of Afrikaner cultural identity. By claiming that his satire is based on facts rather than on fiction, Uys demonstrates defiance, refusing to accept the illusions of a pleasant apartheid South Africa. By retaliating against the voice of authority, Uys situates himself in his personal capacity within the context of apartheid opposition. Such personal revelation notwithstanding, in *Beyond the Rubicon* Uys' self-presentation was limited, and he would still not flesh out his stage persona until after the fall of apartheid. In the late 1980s, Uys resorted to performing as other characters in order to satirise the state, but several of these characters reveal elements of Uys' background, and in some cases these characters refer to him as well. Among these

⁴² A reference to the infamous Soweto Uprising of July 1976, where apartheid riot police fired upon, killed and/or maimed black school children protesting against the use of Afrikaans as the medium of education in black schools.

are the prominent women he performed in drag during the 1990s, particularly Nowell Fine and Evita Bezuidenhout.

Jewish identity: Nowell Fine

Adapt or Dye (1981) introduced Nowell Fine⁴³, one of Uys' stock South African woman-characters. The character is essentially a young South African Jewish housewife, better known as a *kugel*, which was slang in 1970s era for a young materialistic Jewish woman. The *kugel* became a stereotype of the hypocritical white liberal, who nevertheless was prejudiced against non-white South Africans. McMurtry explains: "...Nowell Fine was satirized as a representative of white South African vanities, delusions and dishonesties, the type who hypocritically condemned and supported the system" (1993: 342).

The *kugel* is no longer as recognisable in South Africa as she was in the 1970s and 1980s⁴⁴, but the character has a personal resonance with Uys. The character's creation and continuing appearances in all of Uys' major revues (including *Dekaffirnated* (1999), *Foreign Aids* (2001), *The End is Naai* (2004) and the revue *Elections and Erections* in 2009) are motivated, at least in part, by Uys' discovery of his Jewish heritage. After the death of his mother, Uys discovered his mother was Jewish, which had necessitated her escape from Nazi Germany. Nowell Fine is an appreciation of Jewish South African identity, as Uys claims in his memoir *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*:

When I discovered my Jewish heritage, I was pleased to confirm what I had suspected. I have always loved Jewish humour, Jewish food, and the extraordinary bonds of family and friendship that keep Jewish communities strong and vibrant. Being a Jewish Afrikaner also meant I belonged to both chosen people! So, adding a familiar Jewish character to my chorus line was not a choice, but a necessity.

(Uys, 2005: 167)

Nowell Fine is a character Uys' uses to express Jewish identity in his performances, and is an attempt in part to reclaim his lost heritage. Since he lost direct ties to his Jewish background when his mother died, he recreates and reconstitutes Jewish identity from socially visible norms, of which the *kugel* was an obvious stereotype. It may arouse

⁴³ The character's name is a play on the South African expression "No...Well, Fine."

⁴⁴ The public presence of the *kugel* in South Africa has strangely receded in recent times, possibly due to widespread emigration amongst the South African Jewish community.

curiosity as to why Uys performs Jewish identity as a woman rather than a male, but his choice to perform a Jewish woman is understandable, since it gives him another opportunity to perform in drag. Uys relies on audiences' recognition of the kugel as a Jewish stereotype, which is similar to Verdecchia who performs his alter-ego Wideload, a Latino stereotype character.

Emulating superficial characteristics of kugels, Fine has a distinctive nasal whine when she speaks, and a tendency to complain, particularly about politics and socio-racial dynamics, despite her claims she is a white liberal. As with Evita Bezuidenhout, Uys is careful that Fine's performances do not antagonise the government to the point of retaliation. During her apartheid-era appearances, Fine criticised the state's treatment of black South Africans, but she never offers to help them in the struggle against apartheid; instead she perpetuates "white madam and black servant" relationships. Her appearances in the early revues such as *Adapt or Dye* and *Beyond the Rubicon* demonstrate this hypocrisy; this allowed Uys to show the failure of white liberalism to provide active assistance to the anti-apartheid struggle of black South Africans. Uys and Fine are opposites in a sense, because Uys seeks to be an effective apartheid dissenter (who happens to be white, Jewish (by heritage) and South African, while Fine is not. By performing the white South African who is unhelpful to the anti-apartheid cause, Uys promotes his publicly active anti-apartheid position.

The Alter Ego: Evita Bezuidenhout and othering the self

Uys claims he created Evita out of necessity in order to write and speak about apartheid and politicians with greater critical freedom. He says: "The land was abuzz with rumours of embezzlements, thefts, even murder, but because of the ever-increasing paranoia about press control and censorship, it was not possible to write about these things" (Uys, 1994: n.p.⁴⁵). To Uys' understanding, it was not possible to write about apartheid *as himself*, since he was fearful of the possibility that apartheid-authorized agents would assault or otherwise harass him⁴⁶. Still wanting to satirise and ridicule the state, Uys resolved this

⁴⁵ From the cover of *A Part Hate, a Part Love: The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout* (1994).

⁴⁶ According to Stephen Gray, "He (Uys) had police plants put on him, he had extortionists, he had fake accidents in cars staged for him, he had...falls off mountain-sides for him...that truly endangered his life...he was slim enough, as we say in Afrikaans, to sniff these things out and avoid them" (*Darling!*, 2010). Uys has been threatened in several ways by apartheid-affiliated agents, parties and through messages to quit his ridicule of apartheid and its politicians in his revues during the 1980s. In addition, Uys had several of his plays banned

dilemma by adopting a persona which would become his alter-ego, in the hope that she would be able to speak more freely than he could under the circumstances.

Evita Bezuidenhout first appeared “in person” in *Adapt or Dye* (1981), and has since appeared in stage productions entirely dedicated to her, including the feature film *Skating on Thin Uys* (1987). She has become internationally recognised and in 2000 she was even awarded the Living Legacy 2000 Award in San Diego by the Women’s International Centre. Uys has provided her with her own personal history, an elaborate family tree (many of these characters have been performed as well; her sister Bambi Kellerman is of particular interest to me in chapter three) and she has her own mock biography, entitled *A Part Hate, A Part Love: The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout*, first published in 1990.

In the revue, *Beyond the Rubicon* (1986), Uys reflects briefly on the creation of Evita, claiming she is real in spite of her fictitiousness. He says:

When I did my first *Adapt or Dye* in 1981, I unleashed a monster, by the name of Mrs. Bezuidenhout. This menopausal maniac went from strength to strength...But then, people started saying to me that I had taken it a little bit too far, they thought it was now time to kill off Evita Bezuidenhout and her terrible brood. But I’m sorry to tell you that just because she doesn’t exist, doesn’t mean to say she’s not real.

(*Beyond the Rubicon*, 1986)

Evita grabbed the public imagination with her hypocritical attitude towards control of the separate race groups, which inadvertently illustrated the stupidity and ignorance of the apartheid state. She is a strongly opinionated, traditionalist Afrikaner woman whose appearances entertained audiences whilst satirising the predominantly Afrikaner élite in parliament.

Evita’s ideology, conventionalism, her conservative values and attitudes are unlike Uys’, and as a result, in her he has created a personality so distinct from his own that the public readily dissociates her from him. Uys’ own persona is absent during her performances, but he has found ways in which she can make comments about him, especially where “she” is interviewed and asked about she thinks of him. Evita is very critical of Uys, especially since she claims he impersonates her, and she disapproves of his criticism of the apartheid state and the Afrikaner community. In the “biography” of Evita, *A Part*

during the apartheid era, and was summoned to court for the supposed inappropriate use of vulgar language in Afrikaans in his plays.

Hate, a Part Love: The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout (1994), before proceeding to interview her, Uys is “asked” by Evita whether he is related to “Pieter-Dirk Uys the third-rate comic” who “keeps making fun of her on stage and on TV” (Uys, 1994: 19); Uys lies to her to conceal his identity. He claims that “This is the sort of self-deprecating humour a biography needs” (McMurtry, 2006: 350), but I would say there are autobiographical implications as well.

The attitude that he is a “third-rate comedian” is, one can suppose, shared by politicians who bear the brunt of his satirical attacks. By allowing Bezuidenhout to talk about him in this way, Uys shows the reader that he is aware of how others perceive him. Uys uses Evita as a means to publicly criticise himself. The implication is that when Evita criticises him, she is in fact inadvertently proving she is a hypocritical and ignorant persona, and in this way the reader becomes aware that Uys is making a comparison between Evita and his real life critics. For instance, as Uys recalls in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002), a performance of *For Fact’s Sake* (1999) at Potchefstroom University was cancelled because the university authorities argued that the inclusion of sexual innuendo was undesirable. At the time, Afrikaans press publications, such as *Die Burger* published various letters from members of the community that reproached Uys for the explicit nature of his revues, and his lampooning of apartheid politicians. Instead of arguing back as himself, he chose to let Evita write to *Die Burger*. In a letter published in *Die Burger* on 24 March 2001 (which was included in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*), Evita wrote:

It is time Pieter-Dirk Uys’s wings were clipped! It is not only Mr P.W. Botha and decent Afrikaners who had to suffer Uys’s sick comments! I, too, am still being insulted and humiliated by his foul mouth. Uys and his filth are only tolerated because of the present democracy. If we were still in power, Uys and his derogatory ‘humour’ would have paid.

(2002: 199)

By allowing Evita to side with his critics, it becomes clear that Uys is insulting them. Evita is a personification of the worst Afrikaner Nationalist values, and this gives the impression that Uys criticises Afrikaners for their attitude of racial elitism, since spectators associate Evita’s naiveté and hypocrisy with Uys’ criticism of the racist mentality of the apartheid state.

In *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, Uys says Afrikaners are not a homogenous group who all think alike and agree with apartheid beliefs: “Just because I am one of them doesn’t mean we as Afrikaners have any special resonance” (2002: 199). Uys realises that he cannot gain public acceptance amongst some communities, such as those Afrikaner communities who rejected his HIV/AIDS-awareness educational shows, if they refuse to believe that HIV/AIDS can affect them. Uys finds he is in a stalemate with members of the Afrikaner community who approve of apartheid and disapprove of his satirical treatment of the apartheid state. Autobiographically, Uys has illustrated that he possesses a distinct Afrikaner cultural identity that is different from an apartheid definition of apartheid identity, which is the idea that Afrikaners are a God-chosen élite superior to other races, and who are above the social problems, such as HIV and AIDS, which plague South Africa.

The purpose of this discussion of fictional personae such as Nowell Fine and Evita Bezuidenhout is to prepare the reader for the analysis of Bambi Kellerman in chapter three, which again demonstrates the interrelationship between fiction and life-story elements which are found in Uys’ revues. In doing so, I seek to suggest that Bambi Kellerman’s appearance in *Foreign Aids* (2001) contributes to, rather than detracts from, the autobiographical narrative framework that exists in that revue.

Scholarly works on Pieter-Dirk Uys

Thus far, there have not been many academic writings on Uys’ work. There have been two theses on Uys, by Mervyn McMurtry (1993) and Jacoba Bedford (1988), and these are primary academic works which I have been able to work with during the course of my research. Both theses, which are South African in origin, appeared prior to the establishment of a democratic South Africa, and as such there has not been any post-apartheid extended research on Uys’ revues, let alone the autobiographical potential of this medium. The two scholarly studies by McMurtry and Bedford were conducted within different disciplines: McMurtry’s research is conducted within the field of drama and performance theory, whilst Bedford’s dissertation was researched within the scope of English literary studies. However, although I have produced this study within the disciplinary rubric of English Studies, my research is different from Bedford’s study of the plays, since I focus on the revues. According to Uys, his plays and revues have

different purposes and functions (McMurtry, 1993: 316), which I describe during my review of McMurtry's PhD. Therefore my literary study of Uys' revues is different to both McMurtry's and Bedford's studies. Their differences in approach notwithstanding, I have found these studies to be very important in my research because it was possible to discuss parts of their research in my discussion of Uys' revues and memoirs as self-representational works.

The first academic study of Uys' theatrical work to which I have paid attention is by Jacoba Bedford, whose Masters dissertation (entitled *The Presence of the Past in Selected Works by Pieter-Dirk Uys* (1988)), is primarily a literary analysis of Uys' plays *God's Forgotten* (1978), *Karnaval* (1982) and *Panorama* (1986). These plays were controversial in the eyes of the apartheid state for their anti-apartheid suggestiveness and their use of vulgar language. For these reasons, *Karnaval* in particular was banned, especially since it was in Afrikaans.⁴⁷

Bedford's study focuses on Uys' apartheid-era performance work, or, if I may put it another way, his "pre-autobiographical-era" works. These plays all feature fictional characters in fictional situations (although they are set in the apartheid context), which shows that Uys was seldom an explicitly autobiographical subject during the apartheid period. There are nonetheless elements in these plays that resonate with personal significance and which later became established themes in the revues that showcase self-referential content – themes which are, of course, also evident in his memoirs. Passages from these and other plays are incorporated into his prose memoirs and parallels between the dialogical and monological sentiments from these included passages echo Uys own' statements, which are eventually revealed in post-apartheid performances of his revues and other productions. The plays in Bedford's study all depict South African white women whose lives are governed by apartheid politics and destabilised when they are confronted by the social ills apartheid has created. Uys' depiction of white women appears to illustrate white ignorance of racial inequalities and whites' vulnerability when social change is possible. Many of his characters would be unable to cope with a post-apartheid South Africa.

⁴⁷ The apartheid state banned the performance of stage productions which expressed criticisms of the government, especially where the production was in Afrikaans, since the state sought to maintain a strong Afrikaner identity, and it worried that any efforts to use Afrikaans against it would compromise this identity.

Bedford's study identifies Uys as an English-medium playwright, who nevertheless performs for Afrikaans audiences. Bedford claims, "[H]e leaves no idiosyncrasy in Afrikanerdom unsatirized, and through this he advocates the urgent need for political change before it is too late" (1988:1). Uys' identity as an Afrikaner, as a member of what the apartheid state held to be the superior race or "God's chosen people", is interrogated in his revues and in the memoirs, as he attempts to reconcile himself to his heritage in spite of his people's associations with apartheid injustice. By disavowing the dogma (to use Howarth's term) of apartheid ideology in performance, and belittling himself, Uys makes himself the butt of his own jokes. He criticises himself for his apartheid-influenced social conditioning, and thus simultaneously censures the apartheid state.

Although Bedford's study focuses on Uys' plays and not on the revues, her argument that the past is "an inhibiting factor in the socio-moral development of the protagonists" (1) is applicable also to Uys' appearances as the authorial character in his revues, since, as I have asserted earlier, apartheid was an inhibiting factor which induced him to adopt subversive measures to criticise the state. Bedford's study makes it apparent that Uys' fiction is based in reality, and as a result it is worthwhile to investigate the fictions for autobiographical evidence. Of *Karnaval* (1982), Bedford writes: "[t]hey (the main characters⁴⁸ in the play) all wish to escape from their present yet the future they envisage for themselves is either so unrealistic as never to be realised or tainted irrevocably with their past" (39). When one considers Uys' negative sentiments expressed towards the end of *Foreign Aids* (2001), where he suggests that social conditions and the reality of HIV/AIDS are not going to improve, it is clear that Uys remains dissatisfied with the Mbeki government of the 2000s, and this inspires him to draw comparisons between the ANC-led government and the apartheid state.

Another play which receives detailed attention in Bedford's thesis is *God's Forgotten* (1976). This is a play which centres on three white sisters whose father is the leader of the white South African political state of a then-future 1985. Uys envisions here that white South Africa has become an isolated Christian Nationalist State to which the world

⁴⁸ *Karnaval* features six characters: Letitia, Andrea and Rita are prostitutes; Boytjie, an unsuccessful breadwinner, Phyllis; a battered housewife, and Dora, who is on her way to becoming a prostitute.

no longer pays attention. The sisters represent different aspects of white womanhood: the eldest sister Tosca is in favour of the minority-led state; Sarah, the middle sister, sees the failures in the state; and Aliza, the youngest, has stayed overseas and becomes aware of the global picture in which this state is virtually unnoticed. The play is manifestly a product of Uys' personal struggle with the political and religious entanglements apartheid had engendered in Afrikaans South Africans. In 1976, Uys was unwilling to perform his subjectivity as himself; instead, he found having fictional characters a useful alternative form in which to appeal against the failings of apartheid.

In this play, Sarah represents the character most similar to Uys' own position: both Sarah and Uys are critical of the prevailing political system, but are without the belief that they can take an active role in its dismantling. Bedford claims: "[t]he dramatist's voice is sounded through her vitriolic denunciation of Tosca's politically biased rule" (66). By this she means that Uys employs Sarah to vocalise his own dissent with apartheid ideologies of his time. Sarah makes claims Uys would later make for himself in his post-apartheid revues and the memoirs. A comparison between her utterances in the play and Uys' own quips show considerable similarity, if not in the use of the same words, at least in expressing the same sentiments. Sarah interprets the Scriptures to make a point, when her older sister, a white supremacist, labels Aliza a traitor. As Tosca tells Sarah not to use the scriptures to justify Aliza's actions, she retorts: "we all use the Scriptures to justify our actions" (1976: 18). Uys writes in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*: "Love thy neighbour, but don't get caught!" (2002: 20). Here he is referring to the sexual relations some pro-apartheid Calvinist ministers had with black South African women in spite of prohibitions against interracial sexual relations as both immoral and illegal.

Another aspect of the sisters' family history is the death of their mother and the great sense of loss they felt as a consequence. Several of Uys' plays feature characters that have lost their mothers, which can be seen to echo Uys' own loss of his mother⁴⁹. Uys' mother's death is an absent topic in his revues, and the details of her death, and Uys' bereavement, only became known for the first time in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir*

⁴⁹ Uys' mother, Helga Bassel, suffered from a thyroid disorder and depression, which eventually led her to commit suicide on 26th May 1969.

of Fear and Fun (2002).

Bedford explains that Uys incorporates symbols into his plays that allude to the individual pasts of his characters. As characters see something that reminds them of their pasts, they enter a state of remembering; an example is *Karnaval's* Rita who sees a dress that reminds her of her mother, "symbolising her yearning for parental love" (Bedford, 1988: 58). As with the plays, Uys' revues also have personal symbols, some of which refer to his own background, and which serve to create an archive of autobiographical visual images. For instance, the piano that features on the stage for *Dekaffirmated* (1999) is an example of a familial motif in reference to his parents' careers as pianists.

Describing the elements of cultural identity that occur in Uys' plays will be useful to the analyses in chapter three, since I identify how Uys' Afrikaner background during apartheid and after apartheid forms part of the autobiographical narratives in *Foreign Aids* (2001) and an autobiographical monologue in *Elections and Erections* the revue (2009). Whenever Uys speaks Afrikaans in these revues, he is performing an aspect of his identity, which carries a personal conflict for him, since he is aware that Afrikaans was "the sound" of apartheid (Uys, 1997) which marked him as a member of the privileged and oppressive race group.

Mervyn McMurtry

The Playwright-Performer as Scourge and Benefactor: An Examination of the Political Satire of Pieter-Dirk Uys (1993) by Mervyn McMurtry has been useful for providing this study with essential terminology and understanding of Uys' performance work. It has been beneficial to employ McMurtry's term "playwright-performer", since this reinforces one's sense of the singular control Uys possesses over his revues. McMurtry provides a series of terminological descriptions for Uys' work that are still valuable in an autobiographical study. Although McMurtry's thesis was published almost twenty years ago, his description of Uys as a "scourge" and "benefactor" remains relevant to Uys' subsequent, even his latest works. Uys as a "scourge" and "benefactor" means that Uys has simultaneously criticised the injustices of the apartheid state and shared his criticism of the state through performance for the enjoyment of audiences while, as a white South African, particularly an Afrikaner, being a beneficiary of racially imbalanced policies.

McMurtry's study offers distinctions between Uys' revues and plays (1993: 316) and discusses the performance aspects of the revues (388). McMurtry states that revues are topical; they describe events that occur contemporaneously to the performance, and as a result they can be quite transient. Once the current situations the revues are built on dissipate, the revues become less relevant. In a sense, Uys' revues are like newspapers; they are performances that arise out of the need to report on immediate circumstances. While Uys' plays are premised on fleshed-out characters, realistic settings and their relevance to any time or situation⁵⁰, the revues are a flexible combination of "music, songs, commentary" (McMurtry, 1993: 318) and are meant as a vehicle primarily for satire rather than for character exploration.

McMurtry states: "The revues were, almost exclusively, intended to focus on [Uys] himself as writer, director and performer" (318). In this respect, the revues are closely connected to Uys, illustrating his personal concerns. In addition McMurtry makes a key comment that, in my opinion, facilitates the analysis of autobiographical possibilities in Uys' work: "All his work is personal, arising from the fact that he is white, with an Afrikaans, Christian father and a Jewish mother" (318). These aspects of Uys' father's and mother's identities – Afrikanerdom, Christianity, and Jewishness – become chief attributes of many of Uys' characters, in both the plays and the revues. In many instances, detailed later in chapter four, Uys grapples with Christian Afrikanerdom, since Afrikaner nationalism and Christian dogmatism were fundamental characteristics of the apartheid state, which Uys began to resist and lampoon in his revues.

In discussing the form of humour Uys provides in the revues, McMurtry refers to a fundamental aspect and motivation not only for Uys' performances, but for his development as an autobiographical performer. The crucial feature is fear. McMurtry writes:

Humour in the revues aimed to be cathartic, Uys believes. He purged himself by presenting his fears

⁵⁰ According to McMurtry, "Despite the fact that the plays are concerned with his [Uys'] own country [South Africa], the situation [the plays' plots] (citing Uys); 'could be Chile, it could be Northern Ireland, it could be anywhere'. As such, they can, he hopes, survive, 'not for their politics, but for their totally recognizable human element'" (McMurtry, 1993:316). In other words, Uys wants his plays to have a universal relevance, while his revues are historically anchored in the South African context.

and guilt within the framework of a revue. Those who shared the same fears and guilt, by laughing at their embodiment on stage, were provided with the means to reduce their negative potential.

(1993: 319)

Uys' chief motive in satire was to confront the forms of fear that arose during the rule of the apartheid regime, thereby to make them seem ridiculous and even laughable. Usually this meant finding an appropriate target, most often an apartheid politician, caricaturing him and exaggerating the aspects of his character that audiences would find most laughable, such as P.W. Botha's "vinger en tong"⁵¹ mannerisms. Naturally, this does not hold much scope for something autobiographical, but when Uys recognises that he is the source and agent of his own fear, he realises he can make himself the object of humour.

Since this fear appears in his own lived experience and thus in his own life-story, we have the necessary impetus for Uys to turn memory into narrative, which Uys performs in the revues which I study in chapter three. Given the relative lack of scholarly works on Uys thus far, McMurtry's thesis has been useful, since it has increased my understanding of Uys' revues in terms of an academic study. In chapter three I refer to McMurtry's ideas in tandem with previously discussed autobiographical and performance autobiographical theory to create a specific analysis of Uys' autobiographical performances in the revues.

Revue such as *Adapt or Dye* and *Beyond the Rubicon* would appear to be without autobiographical substance, since, according to McMurtry, it is only from 1992 that "the style and content of Uys' revues had altered to include not only topical political and social comment, but a review of himself as a performer, his craft and his past work in the theatre" (334). This first happens in *An Evening with Pieter-Dirk Uys*⁵² (1992). McMurtry describes the three monologic forms that feature in Uys' revues: The fictional monologues (performances by Evita, Nowell Fine, Bambi Kellerman, and others), self-revelation and opinion, and the impersonation of non-fictional persons⁵³ (336). While I find it worthwhile to discuss how elements of Uys' personal and family history appear in fictional monologues (such as Bambi Kellerman's monologue which I discuss in chapter

⁵¹ P.W. Botha had a tendency to wag his index finger and lick his lips during his speeches, which Uys exploited in his impersonations of Botha, making them standard visual cues whenever he performed the former president.

⁵² This revue does not feature in this study, since it was unavailable in print or video format during the time this study was undertaken.

⁵³ At the time during which McMurtry's study was being conducted, the main "non-fictional persons" would have been "[...] lampoons of national and international political leaders [...]" (McMurtry, 2000: 346) such as the apartheid-era politicians P.W. Botha, Pik Botha and Piet Koornhof.

three), it is in the second category that autobiographical content has most readily appeared. McMurtry points out that in all three of these monologic forms Uys presents “the thoughts or ideas of a single persona, whose discourse was a response to a situation, issue or policy (the headline issue) within a specific context” (336). This reinforces my own point that Uys’ autobiographical initiatives have been motivated by socially relevant topics, which have arisen in the politics of the day.

McMurtry offers some analysis of Uys’ self-revelation and opinion monologues, claiming that Uys has a persona in the revues which figures as an “authorial mask” (1993; 343), which I find has value for an autobiographical reading of Uys. This authorial mask (by which McMurtry means the authorial character) serves as a structural link between the various sketches in the revues, and which “presents itself in a direct, expository form to establish a sense of his own reality” (343). This “authorial mask” persona is the character that most closely resembles the extra-textual Uys, and in performative terms this character’s appearance in the revues constitutes a “parabasis” (343). McMurtry explains that parabasis, which originates in ancient Greek comedy, is a point in the play when all of the actors leave the stage and the chorus is left to address the audience directly.

In other words, the appearances of the autobiographical Uys-persona are parabolic: When the performance of a fictional or impersonated character from Uys’ “chorus” of personae is finished, the audience is left with Uys himself in the capacity of the authorial character. This parabolic Uys-persona appears at various and separate points in the revue, and as the commentator who addresses audiences between sketches and who narrates personal anecdotes. Autobiographically, this parabolic Uys-persona is the equivalent of the co-signatorial *personnage* in Lejeune’s autobiographical pact and Grace’s performance autobiographical pact. Unlike the typical protagonist in prose narrative autobiography, Uys is not a continuously and explicitly present autobiographical subject throughout the duration of the performed narrative, because the authorial character is absent during parts of the performance.

Pieter-Dirk Uys in the late 1990s: *Dekaffirnated*

Although the revues at the core of this case study occur during the 2000s, I wish to consider what autobiographical elements emerged in the period preceding *Foreign Aids*

(2001). *Dekaffirnated* (1999) is the last revue Uys performed before he adopted HIV/AIDS-activism, and before he presented his most obviously autobiographical monologues in *For Fact's Sake* (1999). Much of *For Fact's Sake's* content was reused in *Foreign Aids*. Yet there are some autobiographical features in *Dekaffirnated* that are unique unto themselves and demonstrate another benefit that the genre of autobiography can gain from drama.

*Dekaffirnated*⁵⁴ is thematically linked to post-apartheid racial reconciliation since Uys is aware of racist attitudes amongst white South Africans. Uys refers to his whiteness in several instances of his work, and alludes to the fact that he was raised to be a white racist since he lived in a white racist society. In some instances, Uys expresses awareness of his racist upbringing and explains how he was raised to be a racist, saying in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*: “I am a racist, therefore I will not be a racist” (Uys, 2002: 199) in order to demonstrate that facing the reality of his racist background is a necessary step to begin disavowing it.

Object-based drama in *Dekaffirnated*: Uys’ piano as autopography

Although I find that *Dekaffirnated* comes before the period in Uys’ career when his revues (such as *Foreign Aids*) give more apparent autobiographical content there are some autobiographical stirrings that emerge here that have not been repeated in later revues. At the beginning of Uys’ performance of *Dekaffirnated*, Uys sits at a baby grand piano. As if about to play, instead he stops to address the audience in an African language. He claims that if his African monologue were roughly translated into English, there would be “no Mozart, no Shakespeare, nor any Jane Austen” (1999). In other words, Uys is telling *Dekaffirnated's* audience that the revue is not about celebrating Eurocentric arts and culture. This revue is Uys’ means of confronting post-apartheid racism, since white South Africans, who were privileged and indoctrinated by the apartheid state, had to adjust to a multi-racial society and abandon racist slurs and attitudes that thrived during the apartheid era. In a personal capacity, Uys refuses here to play Western piano music, which he is able to play due to his upbringing by his pianist parents, because he feels that this musical art-form will not resonate with a multi-racial audience. Nevertheless, the piano is

⁵⁴ The title “Dekaffirnated” is a play on the words “decaffeinated” and the racial slur “kaffir” which refers derogatorily to a black person, and is an actionable insult.

constantly onstage, and it has personal associations for him that he does not explain to the audience.

The piano can be said to be an “autotopographical” device. Autotopography, a term coined and described in the article “Autotopographies” by Jennifer A. Gonzáles,⁵⁵ refers to ways that objects and property accumulate personal significance for the autobiographer and become a symbolic and corporeal display of a person’s life-story. To put it another way, an object, with which the autobiographical subject can have a personal attachment, can substitute for the presentation of self-reflexive meaning which is otherwise normally inscribed in written words (in print, prose narrative autobiographies). In the case of *Dekaffirmated*, the piano is a symbol of Uys’ family background. His parents were trained pianists and Uys and his sister Tessa were taught piano, with his sister becoming a concert pianist in the United Kingdom. References to pianos appear elsewhere in Uys’ work: He refers to his piano playing in the memoirs⁵⁶ and he has written a play, *Appassionata: A Play for a Pianist* (1982), about a concert pianist, initially portrayed by Tessa (Uys’ sister) who is herself a professional London-based concert pianist.

However, Uys plays very little on the piano in the revue. Mostly, he uses it as an onstage wardrobe of sorts; pulling props and costumes from it as the revue progresses. We can compare this wardrobe to the wardrobe used in *Adapt or Dye*, in which Uys used an old South African flag⁵⁷ to stand behind when changing costumes. In *Adapt or Dye*, whenever Uys changes costumes, he gets into character when he moves away from the flag. The flag is a symbol of national identity, and Uys is criticising what it means to be “South African”, since the apartheid state is infamous for claiming that it is anti-South African to criticise it. By contrast, the piano in *Dekaffirmated*, unlike the South African flag motif, lacks national associations, since it is a privately known metaphor rather than a publicly understood one. No explanation is given to the audience as to why there is a piano onstage, or how it is meant to have any relevance to the thematic concerns of the

⁵⁵ The article “Autotopographies” by Gonzales first appeared in the journal *Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies* in 1995.

⁵⁶ Uys discusses his early childhood in the chapter “The First Coming” (9-11) in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* where he also discusses his parents as pianists and how he and his sister were taught to play the piano.

⁵⁷ The flag Uys uses in *Adapt or Dye* was the national flag that was adopted by the Union of South Africa in 1928; it was replaced in 1994 by the current national flag of South Africa.

revue. The piano has little significance for the audience, since Uys is not recognised as a pianist. Given the unmentioned personal background the piano is part of, it can be said that this is an instance of subtle, but nonetheless significant, self-reference.

An account of Uys' upbringing can be found in *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting* (2005), where he describes taking piano lessons, playing classical composers' music, and how it means little to him now: "Maybe that's why I don't have any fear when I perform. Because I'm not a pianist. I'm just an entertainer. A stage performer. Mozart, Bach or Schubert didn't write my words. I did" (Uys, 2005: 14). The simple act of having a piano onstage when he has little intention of playing it makes a personal statement. By doing so, and using it as wardrobe, Uys creates a sense of how he has relinquished his piano playing past, and this is done in conjunction with the revue's theme of abandoning a racist attitude. By forsaking the piano, he forsakes an aspect of his personal past, and in its place he prioritises a desire for a non-racist, non-Eurocentric South Africa.

After playing the national anthem on the piano, Uys tells the audience that he has yet to perform an impersonation of Thabo Mbeki. In a sense, this foreshadows the role that the former state president Mbeki plays in Uys' later revues. Mbeki's approach to the HIV/AIDS crisis was influential in informing Uys' attitude towards the ex-president when he (Uys) developed his strong stance on HIV/AIDS and became an activist. Uys' focus on Mbeki becomes a key subject in *Foreign Aids* (2001), since in this revue Uys focuses on the suffering of ordinary South Africans brought about by Mbeki's AIDS-denialist convictions and policies that became evident during his presidency. Mbeki's policies give Uys an impetus to share his personal stories, which amounts to an autobiographical enterprise.

The memoirs

Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun (2002) is Uys' first autobiographical work; Uys says that he was not interested in writing a complete autobiography, and that a memoir would be better suited to his writing tastes. The memoir features episodes of his life spanning from his childhood right up to the 2000s. As the title implies, it covers the development of his sexuality, alongside his development as a politically-motivated

satirical performer and HIV/AIDS activist. The memoir is intriguing because it features a series of Uys' catch-phrases and personal stories that appear in the revues preceding and following its publication. In many ways this memoir is a composition comprising several performance sketches and monologues, combined with content never before seen onstage. It is worth mentioning that several of the passages of text featured in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, which have previously appeared in monological form in *Foreign Aids*, had never before been made available in print form (only in DVD format) so in a sense the memoir is a worthwhile accompaniment in which one may find readable versions of Uys' monologues.

Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun is divided into three parts: "Foreplay" (9-62), "Elections" (63-130) and "Erections" (131-224). The first part discusses his youth and the discovery and development of his sexuality, and includes revealing accounts of his first masturbation and his interracial homosexual encounters during apartheid. The chapters also cover his early home life, giving descriptions of his family. These are the first real instances where we have descriptions of his parents, since Uys had up to that time never gone into detail in any of his revue monologues about his mother and father, particularly the traumatic event of his mother's suicide. He describes what life was like for a white child educated to believe that apartheid is for the benefit of South Africa, as a whole, and that Nationalist politicians are the heroes of the nation. He recalls how he cried when his then-hero and the former president, Hendrik Verwoerd,⁵⁸ was assassinated.

The second part, "Elections", describes his development into an outspoken promoter of the new democratic South Africa, when he began a voter education campaign touring South Africa. He describes his disavowal of the apartheid system and his embrace of the changing face of South African politics, embodied especially for him by former state president Nelson Mandela and the archbishop of the South African Anglican Church, Desmond Tutu. This section also focuses on his major campaign travelling all over South Africa during 1999 in order to promote voter-education before the general elections.

⁵⁸ Often dubbed the "architect of apartheid", Hendrik Verwoerd (1901-1966) was the Prime Minister of South Africa from 1958 until his assassination in 1966. He played a major role in developing and implementing the policy of apartheid during his time in office.

The last section, “Erections”, chronicles Uys’ HIV/AIDS activism, and how he was reminded of his own sexual fears during his youth as he witnessed the culture of fear arising out of the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa. He discusses his contempt for ex-state president Thabo Mbeki’s AIDS-denialism and what he sees as the state’s failure to remedy the devastating impact of HIV on the people of South Africa, particularly on vulnerable groups like children. During this part of the memoir, Uys transcribes many of the conversations he had with children across South Africa whilst conducting AIDS-awareness road-shows and school performances.

“Foreplay” and “Erections” are the parts of the memoir which I have drawn on to formulate a comparative analysis with Uys’ revue, *Foreign Aids* (2001), since it is in these parts that a number of his most autobiographical monologues are recorded. The sexual themes and concerns with HIV/AIDS which appear in these parts of the memoir appeared earlier in *Foreign Aids*; a comparative study between *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* and *Foreign Aids* will be pursued in chapter three.

The second memoir, *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting* (2005), discusses Uys’ theatrical career as its core theme, but there are occasional thematic overlaps between the memoir and the revues. The title is an allusion Uys makes to the apartheid state (the “devil”) and the anti-apartheid forces (the “deep”) (2005: 60). Uys uses this allusion to describe the political separation dividing South African society, and to contextualise his theatrical background.

In some ways the second memoir elaborates on and compensates for gaps in the narratives left by the first memoir, such as the accounts of his mother’s death (2005: 28) and his father’s death (2005: 164-165), giving a fuller account of Uys’ life-story by dealing with issues Uys appears to avoid in performance. Such deeply personal issues include the discussion of his mother’s and father’s deaths in the chapter “Death and Other Important Bits” (233-242). It is clear that insofar as the authorial character is concerned, Uys is convinced that he cannot address his mother’s death in performance:

Ma’s death changed our lives completely. The empty frame in the centre of my vision will always be blank. That is where she used to be. She is gone. I am here. Live with it and celebrate what was good and important. And if memory fails, mythologise and create a better picture.

(Uys, 2005: 234)

It is ironic, since Uys claims that her death was part of the inspiration for him to become a writer: “We all had to start again. Strangely, we all became better people through our [Uys’ family’s] shared loss and her divided energy filling us all [...] And me? I started writing. Something my mother said I would always do” (2002: 28). It appears to me that her death was not only conducive to Uys’ emergence as a playwright, but also that the story of her death is inspirational for his playwriting, as Bedford’s analyses of Uys plays shows in those cases where characters lack mothers.

However, it is clear that Uys retains memories of his mother, and hence *is* in a position to be able to perform her. What he is lacking is a motive for this life-story performance. Usually, as discussed in the previous chapters, Uys is motivated to share personal anecdotes if they will serve the purpose of shedding light on social fears, such as the much discussed sex practices. It is clear that Uys does not have a strategy for incorporating the family story of his mother’s death into a social conscientisation agenda.

The principal reason I refer to *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting* in my analyses of the revues in chapter three is that it possesses a passage that emerged transformed into script-form in the later autobiographical monologue of the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009). The correspondence between this memoir and the revue-script is unusual, because the subject of these portions of text pertain to the topics of sexuality and fear, which had already been explored in great detail in *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*. The recurrent appearance of the subjects of sex and fear in the later texts of the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009) and *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting* indicates that these subjects are fundamental to Uys’ emergence as an autobiographical subject, which I discuss in more detail in the analysis of this monologue in chapter three.

In order to advance my textual analysis of the revues *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (2009) in chapter three, which at present are unavailable in print form⁵⁹, I compare and contrast monologues and sketches from the revues with comparable

⁵⁹ Currently, 23 of Uys’ play-texts are available for downloading from his website, www.pdu.co.za, but exclude his revues. The official statement on the website at present is, “We hope to add further PDU play texts in future” (Uys, 2011).

passages from the memoirs. These passages have also been a referential aid to me while I was transcribing scenes from DVD recordings of the revues. My viewing of these recordings and my reading of the memoirs have shown me that there are differences in the respective narratives, which I distinguish in chapter three.

In chapter three, I will identify the autobiographical protagonist and narrator, the Uys-persona, and discuss the nature of this authorial character's appearances in the revues *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2009). This persona is the one that most closely identifies with the "real" Uys, and is the one who is acting in reaction to socially relevant stimuli. Uys realised that to contribute to social reform in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, he would have to reform his approach to performance in the revues. As a result, he developed his onstage persona further so that the personal stories he shared could have a deeper resonance with the lives of the people in his audiences. Coullie indicates, "[t]he ways in which autobiographical text constructs its truth so that this truth will be acceptable to targeted readers and will be generally recognised as truth in a specific social formation thus become matters for investigation" (1991: 14-5). I will investigate how Uys has constructed autobiographical truth to feature as an integral part of the self-revelation and opinion monologues he performs in the revues *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (2009) so that his personal narrative has relational value to the public concerns he has had (and still has) for South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE: PIETER-DIRK UYS AND PERFORMANCE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I have always been writing about other people's lives, either focusing on the baroque fantasy of the Bezuidenhout family, or the surreal reality of the Bothas and the Bothalezis. This time round I have taken time out to write a memoir of moments in my life that reflect both the fear and fun of being a South African.

(Uys, 2002: 1)

Uys' revues as performance autobiography: A methodology

Having focused on Sherrill Grace's concept of the performance autobiographical pact in chapter two, I need to define Uys' revues in terms of this pact because my perception of Uys' autobiographical performance is based on my reading of Grace. It is my conviction that Uys' style of performance in the revues necessitates a personalised version of the performance autobiographical pact, which hereafter underlines my subsequent analyses of the revues themselves. The diagram below is a visual interpretation of the autobiographical performance pact that Uys practises in his revues:

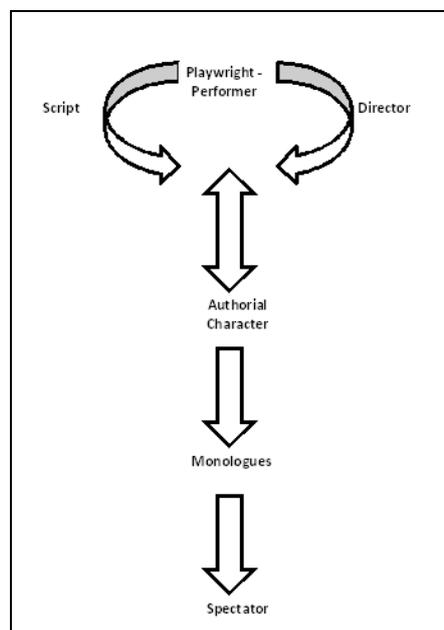


Figure 3.1. The Performance Autobiographical Pact pertaining to the autobiographical elements in Uys' solo revues⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ Credit must go to Sherrill E Grace, since her designs are the basis of this diagram: Grace, S. 2003. Performing the Auto/Biographical Pact: 2 Diagrams. [Online] Available at: http://www.english.ubc.ca/faculty/grace/thtr_fig.htm Accessed: 29 May 2009).

Playwriting vs. directing the revues

As with Grace's model of Lejeune's pact, I propose that there is a cyclic relationship between the playwright, the script and the director. In the revues *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2009) Uys is both the playwright and the director. Despite the playwright's intentions for the script, the playwright's authorial vision is adapted by the director's role in giving the author's intellectual property corporeal properties. The director is a standard figure in contemporary performance practice. Grace says: [T]he director, who is rarely a character on stage, is nevertheless everywhere, and I include under the signature of the director both the physical space and the staging (set design, lighting, sound, costumes) required to mount a play performance" (2003: n.p.).

Therefore, it is Uys in the role of director which allows the play-text to become physically manifest in performance. When Uys takes on the functions of directorship in the revues, he enables his authorial imagination to take shape in the spectator's reality. For whether it is autobiography or fiction being written, the playwright cannot avoid the fact that he must write for the spectator.

The monologues

I felt it necessary to isolate and identify the particular monological form in the revues that consists of autobiographical content. Besides from performing impersonations and the fictional personae for significant portions of the revue, Uys performs "[...] as himself, a stand-up discourse with the audience that engenders rapport and a sense of conspiratorial collaboration" (McMurtry, 2006: 346). An appropriate description of Uys' revues corresponds to Grace's explanation of playwright-performer Lorena Gale's play *Je me souviens* (2001), which she calls "an extended monologue play in which Gale recalls and recreates multiple selves in dramatic, developing relation with each other and the voices of others' whom she impersonates [...]" (Grace, 2003: n.p.).

The revues are performed as an extended monological address to the audience, interspersed with monologues and sketches performed by fictional personae and impersonations. When Uys does not act and speak as either an impersonated or fictional character, he appears as the authorial character, the Uys-persona. The monologues delivered by this intra-textual incarnation of himself are where the most concentrated

autobiographical acts take place in the revues. These monologues are characterised by Uys' recollection of past lived events from his own life and the performance of social interactions within those events represented through one-man, two character dialogues or "monopolylogues" where Uys as "[...] a single performer enacts a number of different characters, knit together in various narratives of experience" (Dolan, 2005: 2).

Uys' authorial character: The Uys-persona

Concerning his role as a performer in the revues, Uys has said: "The Pieter-Dirk Uys performer is very much a structured theatrical character, and it's very important to keep him like that because I've got to speak about him in the third person" (McMurtry, 2000: 349). Throughout the analyses to follow, I discuss the appearances of Uys' authorial character and the Pieter-Dirk Uys performer of which Uys speaks, because it is when this character (and narrator) appears that autobiographical performance most conspicuously takes place in Uys' revues. To reiterate what the authorial character, or the Uys-persona, is, the authorial character is the representative of the author inside the textual world of the performance. It is the construct that most closely resembles Uys' personal history and personality. Although the man who happens to be the actual author is continuously present throughout the production, Uys becomes a staged entity with a consistent personality that can sustain a continuous identity for the revue's duration. Therefore the Uys-persona is not a totally free-thinking agent; it must act in accordance with the thematic focus and narrative discourse of the revue.

The difference between the author and the authorial character is that the author's existence extends beyond the world of the revue-script, and his words and actions are not guided by the script. The authorial character, although it speaks on behalf of Uys about subjects the real historical person Uys is truly interested in, is always nevertheless governed by the script that the authorial actor (Uys again) has memorised and internalised.

The authorial character's (en)actor

"Acting has been variously defined as impersonating, imitating, interpreting, creating, feeling, radiating, being, behaving, or believing" (Mullin, 1961: 122). In other words, acting encompasses a vast range of ideas, and individual actors personalise their

approaches to acting. Since this range of ideas is so broad, I need a narrower definition in order to categorise Uys' revue-acting, and of course Uys himself describes what he thinks acting is. Uys is possessed of a particular approach to theatre-acting; he argues that in theatre a more important practice than acting is "reacting": "[...] theatre is not just an impression of life and not the beginning or end of the world. What happens outside in the reality of daily life was far more important than mouthing words and setting props" (Uys, 2005: 16). Uys believes acting in itself is an artifice that cannot convey real meaning on its own; for a natural physical, aural and mental change to take place onstage, he must be respond to the immediacy of an affective stimulus.

This is relevant to the revues, where performance is inseparable from the vagaries of political current affairs and contemporary social issues. Uys is deeply affected by them and therefore his acts of returning to face them include his audiences as witnesses of how he truly feels. According to Robert Lewis:

The theory is that if, quietly relaxed, you think back over a certain incident in your life which moved you strongly at the time, and if you can remember and recreate in your mind the physical circumstances of that moment (where you were, who was there, what happened, the time of day, the place, surroundings) and start reliving it... it is possible that a feeling similar to that you felt at that time will recur.

(cited in Mullin, 1961: 153-154)

This memory-based approach to acting is not only conducive to performance in a general sense, but also to performing autobiography in the specialised sense we have been using. Given the immediate and proximate presence of the autobiographical subject in live performance, Uys' performance of autobiographical anecdotes is connected to the present, which motivates the palpability of the emotional and mental states conveyed in autobiographical performance. This relationship between content and acting influences the credibility of the autobiographical acts of performance in the revues, because the ability of the autobiographical actor to believe in the truth of the content helps to convince the audience of the sincerity of communicated truth. Performance autobiography thus attains a special, heightened level of authenticity.

Revue audiences as autobiographical audiences

Uys' style of performing one man shows impacts upon the performance of the autobiographical elements analysed in the selected revues. The revues' audiences are

accustomed to the stylistic conventions that Uys has maintained throughout his career, namely the portrayal of impersonated and fictional characters in a monological direct address to them. Even where he has incorporated more autobiographical content into the monologues performed by the Uys-persona, he does not detract from revue-style performance. Knowing that the audience is familiar with his monological delivery (which is characterised by satirical wit and scathing remarks about politicians), Uys takes that fact into consideration, and therefore he ensures that even when he is giving the performance of personal anecdotes, he is still able to include comical elements. These comic elements keep him true to his satirical standards, and add comedic relief into the performance of life-narratives, even though such narratives may have been about frightening scenarios which lacked any appropriate time for humour in the first instance.

Fundamentally, Uys' revue performances always gravitate towards directly addressing the audience. Autobiographically, the impact of breaking the fourth wall maintains the flow of the performance autobiographical pact; the author and character are aware of the "implied reader" (i.e. the audience) which Uys acknowledges throughout the revue. Autobiography in the revues adheres to the primary goal of illustrating the effect of socio-political forces on the lives of South Africans.

If we can compare spectators with the traditional reader of autobiography, I consider Roland Barthes who says: "reading or probing is not a homage to the truth of the past or to the truth of others [e.g. authors] – it is a construction of the intelligibility of our time" (260, cited in Leure, 1994: 4). Uys' obligation to ensure that the audience identifies with him intensifies in a revue-mode of performing autobiography, because the concept of a revue is based on the recognisability for the spectator of present social reality. Uys' responsibility to the spectators of revues must affect autobiography.

Re-authoring the past: Making autobiography on a stage

The parts of Uys' life which he desires to perform in the revues are the product of memories, accumulated and mentally archived from Uys' life thus far, which are facets of information temporally and chronologically distanced from the time the audience is present to watch and listen. However, the enactment of these stories during a life-performance amounts to an immediate autobiographical act. The original memory and the

performance of memory are potentially two different versions; the original memory is the trace; it is the result of Uys encountering external circumstances that are not necessarily under his control. The performance of the memory is the product of an internal mediation, which enables Uys to open the memory to interpretation and creative control. This is characteristic of what Grace calls performance autobiographics, which she explains is “the practice of creating a life-story in a script and on stage that becomes a version of that life” (Grace, 2003: n.p.).

The appearance of autobiographical content in Uys’ revues means it is subject to Uys’ revue style of performance. Uys claims political satire is “tragedy plus time” (Uys, 1986: 41) which means there can be a considerable chronological distance between the past and the performance based on the past. The performances which derive from life-stories do not constitute an exact replica of the original memory, since the performances of his memories, which appear as episodic monologues, are inserted into a longer discourse-themed narrative framework which in its entirety is not a wholly autobiographical venture. *Foreign Aids* features versions of Uys’ life-story that are particular to the revue, and different from the actual life-story, which is possessed of an original continuity which happened in real time. In a sense the narrative marks the appearance of a new, never-before seen Uys, one who has not appeared in the actual (publicly visible) past, nor has existed in any way prior to the actual performance.

Heddon claims that the famous playwright and performer Spalding Gray (who notably relies on his life-story as subject matter for plays) stages aspects of his life to “fight personal demons”, to “re-tell his life” and to “reincarnate himself through the story of his life” (Heddon, 2008: 144). Similarly, Uys addresses and confronts his past through his autobiographical monologues. *Foreign Aids* provides audiences with the most up-to-date records of troublesome episodes from his past. Not only are we provided with a recollection of his past self, we are also provided with an account of his present self. We therefore have an account of the past, and we have a record of that account, which is itself a self-standing autobiographical act. As Uys thinks about his memories, Uys’ thoughts become memories (which the audience can hold to be true because they are watching this event of memory-making happen). To quote James Olney, “...the mind, through memory [...] can recall experiences of the past, but it can also, in the present, recall itself to itself,

‘can be understood by its own thought’ and this too, whereby the mind is ‘present to itself’ , is accomplished through memory” (1998:17).

Foreign Aids, in text-form and through video-recording, provides a version of Uys’ life-story that we hold to be true in its own right. Even if Uys is re-living the past, insofar as an audience is concerned, it is the first time that they are experiencing Uys’ life-story. The moment in time in which the performance takes place itself constitutes a living experience (which will, in turn, become a memory). The significance of these circumstances means that Uys’ revues are personal history in the making, and the fictions that arise in these performances are integral to the life-story that audiences will accept to be true.

The appearance of autobiographical content in the monologues is characteristically fragmented; Uys’ personal monologues are interspersed with auto/biographical one-man dialogues, clever one-liners, and statements of impersonal facts such as national statistics. Fundamentally, the revues must relate to South African current affairs, and the presence of Uys’ own remembered past in his revues appears on the condition that its usage has relevance to the present. If bringing up the past cannot provide a sense of solution to current circumstances, it is not brought into writing for performance. Several deeply personal stories of his life, such as the deaths of his mother and father, for instance, feature in his memoirs, but are never made mention of in any of the revues that I have analysed. Uys has not sought to appropriate these sensitive stories for the social issues he wishes to focus on in the revues, and thus these experiences do not qualify for inclusion in the revues.

Performing autobiography results in a direct line of communication between the author and the spectator; Uys is right in front of his audience. McMurtry says, “Uys’ personae, by acknowledging the presence of the receivers through focus and by demonstrating a desire to reveal their thoughts or promote their ideological beliefs, declared a willingness to establish a relationship” (McMurtry, 1993: 388). This includes the “Uys-persona”, Uys’ authorial character. Despite this direct facing between autobiographical subject and spectator, Uys appears in the capacity of a character specifically designed for theatre performance. Due to this construction, this may compromise the ability of the authorial character to have a close resemblance to the original subject. In other words, neither the

authorial Uys nor the directorial Uys act in the capacity of a free-speaking character. The playwright's and director's responsibilities have been fulfilled because they have prepared the script and the actor for their functions, and it is now a matter for the authorial character to be performed in front of the audience. Uys' authorial character construction is based on his decisions for the character to have enough autobiographical resemblance to his extra-textual self as possible, while still being subject to the narrative organisation and thematic concerns of the performance.

Writing and performing autobiography, and writing it again: The relationship between the revue *Foreign Aids* and the published prose narrative *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*

In *Foreign Aids* Uys felt he needed to share his personal stories with audiences other than the school children whom he had addressed during his road shows. He realised that in order to connect with school-children, he would have to be honest with them. He knew he had to communicate according to their local register, speaking in a way that reflected the reality of their conversational speech, even if it was vulgar and blunt. He also accepted that he could not rely on jokes and clever statements alone in order to make a pertinent point. Uys had to bring himself into the conversation, speaking from personal experience and exposing his own embarrassment:

I realised that if anything was going to work, I would have to be totally honest about me: the mature me, the fat me, the gay me, the bald me, the frightened me. I was then fifty-six years old, probably older than most of the teachers in the hall and most of the parents of the learners. But with kids aged twelve and eighteen, I had to become a teenager!

(Uys, 2002: 142)

Given that *Foreign Aids* preceded *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002), Uys' style of writing in the memoir is similar to the performative arrangement of the content in the revue, which shows that performance-writing contributed to Uys' autobiographical writing style in his first memoir. Many of the monologues Uys performed in *Foreign Aids* (2001) are incorporated into chapters of the longer narrative of the first memoir. Stylistically, the arrangement of content in the memoir was clearly employed in the revue. The performative mode of writing Uys uses for the revues is adopted for the memoir, because Uys adheres to a satirical imperative to criticise. The

revue thus set the standard for how Uys approached prose-narrative autobiography in the memoirs.

Throughout both *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, Uys tells the story of his self-imposed duty to identify and question various forms of authority that dominate South African social conditioning. Recalling Howarth's claims about dramatic autobiographers' presentation of dogma in their work, I am inclined to refer to Uys' attitude towards political ideologies, such as apartheid and AIDS-denialism as "counter-dogmatic"⁶¹. Throughout the revues Uys by means of performances enacts his rejection of the politicians he believes embody these ludicrous yet dangerous ideologies (P.W. Botha and Thabo Mbeki respectively) and the parts of his revues which amount to autobiography are linked to the challenges to authority.

The clearest distinction between *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, is that, as prose narrative memoir, the latter is not governed by the performative prerequisites Uys traditionally follows to create a revue. Yet the memoir does not abandon Uys' activist imperative. Throughout the section "Erections", much of which content correlates with *Foreign Aids*, he continues to criticise Mbeki and his government for the dire consequences of their AIDS-denialist policies, and the memoir allows him to expand on this discourse which traces the unfolding AIDS crisis, while still incorporating personal anecdotes that reveal his personal history and personality.

***Foreign Aids* (2000): A synopsis**

Now that I have deconstructed the autobiographical apparatus that exists in Uys' revues, and having described how Uys creates autobiography in performance, I can next analyse and reveal where these autobiographical elements are in the revues themselves.

The title *Foreign Aids* is meant as a play on the term and concept "foreign aid", the economic assistance offered by one nation to another, but the implication is that the assistance requested is in respect to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa. Considering that the revue toured abroad to Europe, Australia and the United States, there is a

⁶¹ Please refer to Howarth's use of the term "dogma" to which I have proposed the concept of "counter-dogma" in chapter two (pp. 17-18).

suggestion in the title of an appeal for help from international audiences in respect to South Africa's HIV/Aids crisis⁶². Uys' appeal for help from the world is necessitated by the reality that "South Africa's government lets people die"⁶³ (Uys, 2002: 1). Uys toured abroad with this production, looking to acquire worldwide sympathetic and charitable responses to the viral spread afflicting South Africans, especially the impoverished and uneducated. One can infer that there is an appeal for assistance elsewhere in the world when one considers how Uys believes South Africa's own government fails to provide assistance to its people, a topic he consistently brings up during the revue.

This revue begins with Uys standing in plain black clothes, paging through a newspaper on a bare stage, save for an arrangement of pink boxes behind him, saying to his audience: "I just quickly want to check the newspaper to see if we've got a show" (*Foreign Aids* 2001), which gives the audience the impression that the show's content is relevant to current events. *Foreign Aids*, as is the case with all of Uys' revues, hinges on immediate recognition; it is clearly crucial to Uys that the audience is able to see that the revue is socially resonant. He then begins to do his makeup and dress up as the fictional character Bambi Kellerman, speaking all the while about what is wrong and right in the country, until Bambi is ready to take the stage from the authorial character. On occasion Uys will employ blackouts at the end of one monologue and the beginning of another, but, speaking specifically about the revues, he has stated: "Blackouts are very short – only used as punctuation and not to hide anything. Anything that happens on stage must be seen by the audience" (Uys, 1986: 36). Uys will often change costumes without ever leaving the stage, speaking as the authorial character even when he is not completely out of any of the previous characters' costumes.

Speaking in character, Uys as Bambi tells the story of her life abroad in Nazi Germany, thereafter the authorial character returns to raise Uys' concern about HIV/AIDS, stating infection statistics in the country, before donning his apparel for the impersonation of

⁶² At the end of performances of *Foreign Aids* (2001), Uys would ask the audiences to make donations and buy AIDS ribbons in support of the AIDS-support organisation Wola Nani. He made these requests of both international and South African audiences.

former state president Thabo Mbeki, called “Dr. Thaboo Macbeki”.⁶⁴ From this Uys addresses the audience, telling them about his first sexual experience, interwoven with other minor stories and personal anecdotes about his own sex education, and talks with children from his time performing *For Fact’s Sake* (1999-2000).

Foreign Aids ends with Uys impersonating former state president Nelson Mandela. The imitation Mandela similarly advocates safe-sex practices to the audience, warning them of the dangers of HIV and AIDS. While Uys’ mimicry of Mandela’s distinctive voice and wearing of an ethnic African shirt invoke the audience’s laughter, Uys impersonates Mandela on the basis that he is an avid supporter of Mandela, and believes that he is a positive role-model who can motivate others to take precautions in order to curb HI-viral infections.

Performing the self in *Foreign Aids* (2001)

Uys’ authorial character in *Foreign Aids* is the most autobiographical narrator to appear in the revues. The authorial character reveals more about his past and identity than previous incarnations of the Uys persona has done in earlier revues. Grace claims:

When the subject of the play is auto/biographical, then it is identity itself that is being performed. This thing – the self, the subject of auto/biography, the self-play (to coin a term) – only exists in performance and is new each time a performance is mounted.

(Grace, 2003: n.p.)

Uys’ performance of his past is contextualised to fit in with the theme of HIV/AIDS, which means Uys has appropriated parts of his life-story for the performance which is different from the original context of the events when they actually occurred in his life. In other words, performing the past overlays the memory of the past. Heddon wonders whether to dismiss the enactment of an “original or authentic self” which is “truthful to the source”, since the (performed) self is a “historical, cultural and social construct, experienced as multiple, shifting and relational” (Heddon, 2008: 135). The Uys-persona has been constructed by the playwright Uys in *Foreign Aids* to establish connectivity and relevance between HIV/AIDS, sexual behaviour and practices, and his own life-story. Even though the Uys-persona is an autobiographical character whose back-story is larger

⁶⁴ Uys often sarcastically remarks that he is “not a medical expert like Thabo Mbeki” (2001) which is a snide reference to Mbeki accepting AIDS-denialism in spite of the fact that he has no medical background. As such, Uys’ parody of Mbeki in *Foreign Aids* is of him dressed as a surgeon telling the audience not to confuse him “with facts”.

than the topic of HIV/AIDS, it has been appropriated so that the enactment of its self-reflexivity and the performance of memory can have significance for the topic of HIV/AIDS in the revue.

Bambi Kellerman

Due to the style and organisation of performance that is typical of Uys' revues, the Uys-persona does not constantly address the audience or discuss the personal past. Various fictional characters take to the stage during the course of *Foreign Aids*, but I do not believe that this constitutes a complete absence of autobiographical elements. Uys has found ways in which to manipulate aspects of his personal and family background so that the facts of his life can be reused for some of his characters. Bambi Kellerman, Evita's younger sister and an HIV-positive woman, is exemplary of Uys' incorporation of derivative elements from his personal history, which I think is an inventive adaptation of autobiographical material. Although these aspects are not obviously derived from Uys' own personal background, it becomes clear that Bambi owes her biography to Uys' own, and she owes her appearance in *Foreign Aids* (2001) to Uys' HIV/AIDS-related objectives.

Bambi is an Afrikaner woman who in 1957 met and married a German commandant from a Nazi concentration camp. Uys' own family background has German-Afrikaner associations; his mother, Helga Bassel, was German and Jewish, having come to South Africa in 1938. Considering that his mother came to South Africa to escape Nazi persecution, Bambi's narrative reverses the story of his mother's exodus; whereas Uys' mother fled the Nazis, Bambi fled Nazi-hunters. In a sense, Bambi's story becomes a link between Uys' past and the present. German-speaking and HIV-positive, her life-story combines aspects of Uys' German-Jewish heritage and his current HIV/AIDS concerns.

Contrary to any hypothetical worry that an inevitable degree of fiction in the revues limits and compromises the appearance of the Uys-persona, I believe it is necessary in performance to heighten the dramatic impact of autobiographical information so that it can appear in new forms which hold the audience's attention. Bambi's appearance, like that of Nowell Fine - another fictional character who appears in *Foreign Aids* and in previous revues by Uys - constitutes a compromise; Bambi satisfies the audience's

expectation of drag performance and political satire, while providing Uys with an outlet to perform fundamental aspects of his cultural identity. Bambi's performance offers an inventive medium for Uys to explore an aspect of his personal history; it provides an alternative mode of using autobiographical material. Bambi's autobiographical agency works twofold: It enables Uys to use the facts of his mother's heritage as building blocks for a fictional, retrospective monologue, and to reiterate the playwright's exasperation at the lack of antiretroviral provision in South Africa at the time. By incarnating his version of the truth through Bambi, Uys makes his claims seem all the more credible; this "[...] fiction may be closer to a more deeply seated truth than the truth of a collection of facts 'stored in memory', that prompts Uys not only to invent things about his own past, but to invent the biography of fictitious persons to create a 'virtual' truth" (Meyer, 2006: 55).

As in the case of Verdecchia and his alter-ego Wideload described in chapter two, Bambi is a pastiche of Uys' family background, written to be connected to the topicality of HIV/AIDS in order for her to be relevant to the South African public and thematically consistent with the revue in which she appears. After Bambi's monologue Uys as the authorial character reappears, announcing: "Okay, no more disguise. What you see is what you get. A middle-aged man absolutely terrified of dying of love" (*Foreign Aids*, 2001). It is Uys' first autobiographical declaration during the show, and it contains the chief concern that pervades the revue, namely Uys' preoccupation with the hold of fear over his sex-life.



Figure 3.2: "I just love these disguises": Uys as Bambi, and as himself after Bambi⁶⁵ (*Foreign Aids*, 2001).

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all illustrations are screen capture stills, taken while viewing DVD recordings of Uys' revues.

“A First Sexual Experience”: Writing and performing childhood in *Foreign Aids*, compared/contrasted with *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*.

Foreign Aids features one of the few occasions when Uys portrays himself as a child. These moments of childhood recreation demonstrate a breakthrough in the history of his career in performance, since he rarely ever performs moments from his own distant past. In the monologue, entitled “A First Sexual Experience”⁶⁶, Uys reveals he discovered ejaculation unexpectedly through sexual excitement while reading a romance novel entitled *Angelique*. Unprepared and reeling from the outcome, he is terrified that he has done something morally wrong and will get into trouble for it. He prays to God for forgiveness, eventually forgetting his guilt because he enjoys his sexual excitement.

The childhood Uys is a remembered, narrated and performed self, which is the product of what Grace calls “visual memory” (2003, n.p.). Visual memory means Uys remembers (or perhaps one can say “imagines”) what he must have looked like when the incident took place. These are potential illusions, since they are based on the adult Uys’ memory of his younger self as he thinks he appeared at that time. The Uys-persona is the sole authorial character, because it is the character that acknowledges the presence of the audience, and asserts that is from the same social reality as the audience. As Brockmeier and Carbaugh claim: “Yet even in its most basic forms, autobiography always is an account, given by a narrator in the here and now, about a protagonist bearing his name that existed in the here and then” (2001: 250).

Uys mimes reading *Angelique* in fluent English; as he speaks, he conveys the novel’s sensuous mood, emphasising and lingering on certain words and pausing to add effect. This is where Uys speaks in his contemporary voice, which is characterised by a fluent South African English accent. As if realising that adult speech is misrepresentative of his youthful incarnation, he says: “No, I didn’t have a fancy accent like that” and recites the passage again, pronouncing it haltingly in an Afrikaans accent which he would have possessed as a child. Hilarity ensues, as the teenage Uys stumbles over the words in

⁶⁶ The title “A First Sexual Experience” is actually taken from another recording of *Foreign Aids*, this time an audio recording of a performance recorded in April 2002 in Cape Town. There are no titles for each monologue in the DVD recording I have primarily used for my analysis of the revue. However, I find the use of this title makes my references to the scene more convenient, and it is still valid, since the 2002 audio recording is consistent with the 2001 DVD recording. In addition, I have taken the titles “A Free Pill in Hout Bay” and “Among the Wheelchairs” from the audio recording, since they are also appropriate.

English, only to abandon the Anglophone attempt in a panicked outcry in Afrikaans when he sees that his “chameleon has vomited on his tummy” (*Foreign Aids*, 2001).



Figure 3.3: "And lower, and lower...": A "young" Uys is riveted while “reading” an erotic novel (*Foreign Aids*, 2001).

The effectiveness of Uys’ recollection of his first sexual experience comes from his ability to perform his younger self differently from his current, authorial character. Through performing himself in the moment of performance differently from his youthful counterpart, he is able to, “[...] emphasise the time lapse between the time of the narration and the time of the narrative events” (Coullie, 1991:4). Fourteen year-old Uys is performed with what we may call “time-sensitivity” (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001: 247) since Uys adopts a style of speech, an accent and a vocabulary which more accurately represent the youthful Uys. At fourteen years of age, Uys was only capable of an Afrikaans accent. Uys’ transition between his current speaking voice and younger self’s speaking voice demonstrates “linguistic dissonance” (Grace, 2001: n.p.), allowing the audience to distinguish between the two personae. Audiences can see that these characters are chronologically separate from each other through their different vocalisation.

“A First Sexual Experience” versus “The First Coming”: *Foreign Aids* in contrast to *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*

In the revue, the immediacy of performing the contrast between Uys as the authorial character and the teenage Uys gives the scene greater impact, because the facial expressions, words and (non-verbal) sounds Uys makes in “A First Sexual Experience” reinforce the comedy and emotional range the young Uys is experiencing. In *Elections*

and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun, Uys destabilises writing conventions, playing with white space, upper case lettering and wild exclamations to indicate his increasing level of shock:

[...] the door opened and the Comte-Joffrey de Peyrac limped into the room the moonlight shone on his one good eye he put out his hand and with his long tapered fingers touched the Countess Angelique on her naked stomach...allowinghis...his...his...handstogolowerandlowerandloweruntil SUDDENLY...SPLAT! Wet sticky goo shit whatthefuckishappeninghere?!

(Uys, 2002: 14)

The revue's effect is different from that of the memoir; in live performance Uys generates increasing comedic intensity that leads to the younger Uys' ejaculation and the audience's outburst of laughter. The young Uys reads *Angelique* with strong pauses and increasing volume, so that the sensation of these actions heighten the emotional atmosphere until it erupts into the young Uys' unexpected ejaculation: "[...] allowing his hand to go lower...And Lower...And LOWER...Until! Suddenly! – SPLAT! [Uys looks puzzled, then takes fright when he looks down at his nether regions] Wat die fok gaan hier aan?!"⁶⁷ (*Foreign Aids*, 2001). By executing dramatic pauses, increasing his vocal projection and by shouting and swearing in Afrikaans, Uys generates discernable amounts of laughter from his audience, which is noticeable from viewings of the *Foreign Aids* DVD recording of his performance of the revue at the Montecasino Theatre (2001).

Uys attempts to recreate the time-sensitivity that he performed in *Foreign Aids* in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, once again giving an account of his first sexual experience⁶⁸. He first recites a passage from the romance novel *Angelique*, as the authorial character, using his natural speaking voice: "Countess Angelique lay back on her chaise longue. Her negligee parted and exposed her alabaster skin. She was naked. Her golden hair cascaded over her luscious firm breasts..." (Uys, 2002:14). Again, Uys admits he would not have been fluent in English this age, and recites the passage from the novel to suggest how he would have sounded: "Countess Angelique lay back on her...chaysielongie...her...neglagee parted and exposed her...alabuster skin she was

⁶⁷ Please note that this piece of dialogue from *Foreign Aids*, as well as others, were transcribed based on my personal abilities to hear and view a purchased copy of the revue, which was performed at Montecasino Theatre in Johannesburg, in 2001.

⁶⁸ "A first sexual experience" corresponds with passages in the chapter "The First Coming" in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002).

naked her golden hair cascaded over her lussis firm breasts the pyrple nipples angryagainstthewhiteskin” (ibid).

Uys purposefully mispronounces and misspells words in order to convey how he battled to sound the English words. Uys’ particular mispronunciation and misspelling gives the impression of an Afrikaans-speaking youth relatively clumsy with the English language. In addition, Uys plays with the punctuation, adding ellipses before difficult English words and writing other words together without whitespace, demonstrating his inability to pace himself while reading. In essence, this is a script-version of what has already proven to be a performable part.

Appropriating the past for the present: The relevance of “A first sexual experience”/“The first coming” to current concerns

In *Foreign Aids*, “A First Sexual Experience” can be likened to a turning point in the young Uys’ life, as he ignores his own fears that society and God would disapprove of his behaviour and desire. Uys deconstructs the apartheid-encultured Afrikaner background which served as the backdrop to his childhood. Although apartheid is apparently not a factor in the young Uys’ understanding of how or why personal freedoms are limited, his dismissal of divine authority in this scene serves as a template for addressing his shifting points of view in later performances, such as a transracial sexual experience he evokes in his later monologue in *Elections and Erections* (2009), which is discussed later in this chapter. In both the memoir and the revue, Uys’ sexual desire outweighs his fear of God. This is illustrated through a prayer he makes post-ejaculation that ultimately tapers off as his sexual interest renews. In the memoir it appears as such:

“Liewe Jesus, I’m sorry, I won’t do it again. I promise I will never again read such a terrible book. Such a communist book. About that hoer Angelique. Lying naked on her bed. Sies!” But suddenly remorse makes way for interest. “Lying naked on her bed?” Interest bans prayer. “The purple nipples look angry...?” Demurely folded hands become a clenched fist....lower and lower...And the boy’s resolve stiffens once more and adolescent lust leads the way.

(Uys, 2002: 14-15)

The passage constitutes a fundamental and early shift in Uys’ attitude towards Afrikaner Christian fundamentalism, which he perceives as not tolerating his sexual desire.

Ultimately as “the boy’s resolve stiffens”, the resolute hold of Afrikaner Calvinism⁶⁹ over the young Uys begins to crumble, which would not be the last time Uys would disavow a dominant institution. Uys’ wordplay establishes parallels between denying God’s supposed decree, with a denial of the decrees of the apartheid state he would come to reject later in his life. Uys’ evocative writing (“Interest bans prayer”; “Demurely folded hands become a clenched fist”) demonstrates a comparison between sexual and political repression. He makes associations between sexual and political fears in order to depict their similarities, and to introduce his shifting focus from apartheid and post-apartheid politics to sex and HIV/AIDS.

Even though the teenage Uys that Uys the authorial character narrates in the memoir and portrays in the revue is unaware of the deeper political implications of apartheid’s relationship with Afrikaner Christianity, his words reveal that apartheid’s dogma was embedded in Afrikaner Christianity. Uys displays a greater sense of fear of divine retribution in *Foreign Aids*; the moments in which the teenage Uys appears in the revue reveal his prevailing fear of divine authority. In the performance, the teenage Uys’ prayer to God implies that the God he fears is politically prejudiced. This is suggested by how he draws seemingly arbitrary connections between *Angelique* and communism⁷⁰ (“Such a communist book!”) even though there are no apparent connections between *Angelique* and communism. By doing so, Uys draws attention to the relationship between religion and politics that existed in apartheid-era Afrikaner homes. Uys implies here that he would eventually reject the concept of a God who approved of apartheid. His words acknowledge that the God of his youth was an apartheid entity. He says: “The greatest sin was against God – for was he not also Afrikaans and white? – was to break the laws of racial divide” (Uys, 2002: 12).

⁶⁹ Uys was brought up in the Dutch Reformed Church, or as he calls it, the “Much Deformed Church” (Uys, 1994: 11). This denomination became associated with the apartheid state, and consequentially this religious institute has become synonymous with racist religious authority.

⁷⁰ During apartheid, Communism was illegal. In 1950 the state passed The Suppression of Communism Act (No. 44 of 1950) which prohibited any activity by groups or individuals who supposedly sought: “[...] bringing about any political, industrial, social, or economic change within the Union by the promotion of disturbance and disorder”, and which compromised relations between white and non-white South Africans. In other words, the state could declare any person was a communist if such a person was in some way demonstrated anti-apartheid sentiments or opinions in a publicly accessible way. Uys himself was accused of communism during the 1980s for his satirical portrayal of apartheid politicians.

In *Foreign Aids*, Uys bewailingly prays in Afrikaans (as opposed to the version of events which features in the memoir, which is in English): “O Liewe Jesus, ek is jammer, ek sal dit nooit weer doen nie! Ek belowe ek sal nooit weer so 'n walglike boek lees nie! So 'n kommunistiese boek! O, daai hoer Angelique! Lying naked on her bed, sies!” (*Foreign Aids*, 2001). Naturally, this resonates with the discussion in the previous chapter of Bedford’s analysis that Uys’ English-medium plays, where Afrikaans characters, typically speaking English throughout the play, change to Afrikaans when they respond to a personal problem. The young Uys’ act of prayer in Afrikaans illustrates how he seeks protection under an apartheid, Afrikaner God. By doing so, the young Uys thinks that his cultural identity will protect him from the unknown risks of unfamiliar new experiences.

The young Uys submits to his sexual desire, regardless of the imagined affront his “misdeed” poses to his God. Uys’ inner conflict is resolved when he chooses his own free will and desire over the command and scrutiny of distant authority. It provides a model for Uys’ resolution of conflict between living in fear of apartheid, a similarly invisible yet ubiquitous presence, and desiring multi-racial societal freedom of movement. Considering that this scene is part of a longer narrative that compares HIV/AIDS to apartheid, the anecdote relates Uys’ life to the “life” of the nation, where both he and South Africans lived in fear of oppressive and seemingly unstoppable forces.

Performing the other: one-man dialogues and children’s agency in *Foreign Aids*

Monologues where Uys is the sole subject (by which I mean no other characters feature in the monologue) are a rare autobiographical occurrence; his reliance on his ability as a one-man, two-character dialogist is a more common practice in the revues. These dialogues amount to autobiographical performances, since the Uys-persona constantly appears in these dialogues. Uys is a particularly relational autobiographical subject, and treats his social interaction as an existential necessity. Heddon claims that the self is inseparable from others (2008: 124) and Uys’ sense of self appears to adhere to Heddon’s statement. Many of Uys’ dialogues are based on actual conversations and interactions he experienced at earlier periods, and these forms of dialogue appear throughout his revues.

However, given the overlapping appearances of dialogues in *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections* (2002), I am inclined to study these in particular since their re-

appearance in the memoir suggests that these particular personal anecdotes possess personal significance for him. The following sections offer analyses of several one-man dialogues that appear in *Foreign Aids* (2001) which display a series of developments in Uys' character, which in turn develop the personal narrative that emerges in the revue.

The agents who most often appear in *Foreign Aids* (2001) are children; there are four conversations with children Uys recreates, and several references to other encounters with children, all of which reappear in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*. Children formed a substantial constituency of his target audiences during his HIV/AIDS-awareness campaign; they were the target audience of *For Fact's Sake* (1999), which travelled to schools across South Africa. In total he has spoken to over one and a half million school children about the disease.⁷¹ Uys is convinced that children are among the most vulnerable South Africans susceptible to HIV infection, having said in the revues and his memoir: "[...] while the First World buries the lambs, the Third World is burying its babies" (Uys, 2002: 2). Uys believes that the proper education of children is the best preventative measure to curb infection, which has inspired some of the narrative choices he has made in *Foreign Aids*. It is apparent from the recurring performance of dialogues with children that he feels it is his moral responsibility to reproduce these conversations, which links to the responsibility of ethically representing the other in performance.

One of the most effective ways in which an autobiographical performer can show how he is affected by other people is through performing them in their own words. We will be inclined to assume that these one-man many-character dialogues amount to auto/biography as opposed to pure autobiography, and this would be correct. In a sense, *Foreign Aids* shares characteristics with what is known as "verbatim drama",⁷² which gives a "voice to the voiceless, and this seems to be a recurring trope [...] often coupled with an associated duty to listen" (Heddon, 2008: 128). Having fulfilled the role of listener, Uys performs the representation of the other in their absence in order to stress his continuing concern for their social well-being, becoming an autobiographical subject in

⁷¹ Source: Uys, P-D. 2011. Pieter-Dirk Uys in conversation with *Hello Doctor's* Dr Michael Mol. *Pieter-Dirk Uys*, [online] available from <http://pdu.co.za/video-2.html>. [Accessed 8 November 2011].

⁷² In Verbatim theatre, a term coined by Derek Paget in 1987 (Heddon, 2008: 127) is a form of testimonial theatre which places interviews at the heart of performance. It is a form of documentary theatre which highlights the plight of communities and individuals which have suffered in some way, especially where knowledge of their plight normally would not become known to the general public.

the revues, since it provides him with an opportunity to put himself forward as a “representative subject”, which means “a subject that stands for others” (Gilmore, 2001: 4).

In *Foreign Aids* (2001), Uys shares some of the accumulated experiences he gained performing for children during his road-show *For Fact's Sake* (1999). Children appear in both Uys' memoirs, and it is clear their welfare is a focal concern in the activist discourse within his personal narrative. The incorporation of their stories indicates Uys' relational attitude to autobiography, which he appears to treat as a platform to tell the stories of those who cannot tell their stories themselves. Each story has a distinctive impact upon Uys' autobiographical self, and these stories' incorporation into the life-narrative help to tell the development of his life-narrative insofar as activism is concerned. What follows are analyses of some of the scenes with these children, and Uys' approaches to recreating the memory in *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*.

A Free Pill in Hout Bay/50 Rand for a Life

In this one-man dialogue Uys veers off the course of satirical comedy into real and present outrage, which shows how interactive autobiographical performance destabilises Uys' usual approach to revue-performance. It involves a meeting with a young HIV-positive girl only known as “Christine”, whom he met at a school in Hout Bay, Cape Town⁷³. He impersonates her, and recreates the emotional intensity evident in her flaring panic and his shocked response. As the dialogue continues she erupts in a flurry of anxious questions, as it becomes apparent that the pharmaceutical treatment⁷⁴ she receives causes her pain and sickness.

Uys' description of the girl as a “vogue model” with “a long Sophia Loren neck” (*Foreign Aids*, 2001) is compromised when he realises she is so slender due to her HIV infection. By valuing her beauty, only to be then confronted with tragedy, he emphasises the drama of the dialogue. Uys conjures the emotional intensity of Christine's suffering, which is so

⁷³ This scene corresponds with a passage in the chapter “Life at R50 a Month” in *Elections and Erections* (2002: 203-207).

⁷⁴ During the period of the Mbeki Government, which prohibited the provision of antiretrovirals to AIDS victims, pharmaceutical companies provided cheap antiretroviral drugs which had adverse side-effects, such as nausea, dizziness and vomiting.

distressing that despite his attempts to come up with good reasons why Mbeki's government does not offer antiretrovirals, he gives in to his exasperation. His dissatisfaction is explicit:

But surely, president Thabo Mbeki knows what he's doing. Hey? I mean, he's got to know what he's doing. Maybe he's not giving drugs to the women and children to keep them alive because maybe he knows that the drugs are toxic...Oh kak, what rubbish, he gives the drugs to his own cabinet, and they need it!

(*Foreign Aids*, 2001)

As with other monologues that appear in both *Elections and Erections* (2002) and *Foreign Aids*, these aspects of voice and expression suggested in the above quote are not as easily perceived when the text is not heard in performance. Instead they are motivated by Uys immersing himself into the emotional intensity of the memory. These are elements of emotional expression that come to the fore in the immediacy of performance, since the act of remembering stirs up an emotional response which is physically visible, and which spectators of autobiographical performance will construe as truthful. Autobiographical performance allows Uys to re-experience his pity for Christine and to reassert his resentment of Mbeki.

Naturally these circumstances beg the question: "How does the playwright stage personal trauma, clothed in public fact, so that it gathers meaning beyond the narrowly personal?" (Grace, 2006: 23). Uys finds Christine's situation unjustifiable and irresponsible on the part of the state, which prompts him to say: "Swallow your pill Christine, and have a nice day" (*Foreign Aids* 2001), which sub-textually indicates his own frustration with Mbeki and his government. When Uys makes comments motivated by his disdain of the state, he is "acting out" (Heddon, 2008: 73), which is where the performer performs a past event but is unable to accept the loss experienced during that event. Uys cannot condone Christine's suffering, as his re-lived emotional response to her distress shows.

As a result, the Uys-persona exhibits his immediate resentment, as well as how he felt when this dialogue actually happened. Uys' practice of recalling this particular dialogue perpetuates the trauma realised in this interaction, even though the real Christine is absent from the performance of her trauma. This dialogue becomes the story of Uys' emotional investment into the encounter, which does not leave him and remains a lingering memory

in his mind and resurfaces in performance. It becomes what Freud calls a “repetition of trauma” which (as Freud explains) conjures up “a piece of real life” (1953 [1914], cited in Heddon, 2008:73).

Uys’ memory of Christine’s trauma substitutes for Christine’s trauma, so that it is Uys’ emotional response which is the subject of the performance. This one-man dialogue is an example of how the repetition of an act can replace the act of remembering itself. Uys reveals an aspect of his self that is tied to intimate relationships (Eakin, 1999: 102). He connects closely with and feels deeply for children such as Christine in spite of the lack of time spent with them, forming close relationships with them which disclose personal information.



Figure 3.4: “I’ve got a right to life, haven’t I got Pieter?!”/ “But surely president Thabo Mbeki knows what he’s doing?!”: Uys speaking as Christine to Uys, and afterwards as himself to the audience; sharing his frustration about state policies towards HIV/AIDS (*Foreign Aids*, 2001).

P.S: Don’t Forget Your Penis/ A World in One Country/ Among the Wheelchairs

The following duologues which appeared in the revue are based on Uys’ memories which resulted from his interaction with others. A large part of autobiographical content which appears in the revues depends on his ability to create performable characters out of those with whom he shared experiences. These sketches demonstrate the deep empathetic bond he makes with children in a short amount of time, and Uys remembers these bonds in the autobiographical matrices of *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* because he says farewell to them knowing HIV and AIDS remain an ongoing threat in their daily lives. This represents an autobiographical concern with “unfinished business”. Eakin explains: “When the bond is conflicted, however, the motive for memoir is likely to be more intense, and a greater number of relational lives could be

classed under the heading of ‘unfinished business’ (Eakin, 1999: 87). The bonds Uys makes are complicated by the overhanging fears and dangers of HIV, which are prolonged, in Uys’ mind, by the government’s continuing lack of commitment to providing necessary medical aid for those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Uys’ social interaction with children leads him to re-evaluate how he understands the lives and suffering of others, and to adapt his way of thinking so that he is more sensitive to the daily challenges they face in their own lives. With children becoming agents in his autobiographical narrative, Uys becomes aware of the role his educational HIV/AIDS awareness road shows have on the development of children, which in turn has an effect on his outlook that becomes an aspect recorded in the continued writing of the story. Uys remembers in *Foreign Aids* (2001) how a young school-girl approached him to explain her understanding of how HIV/AIDS affected the immune system. He explains to his audience:

And now there’s a virus. HIV leads to AIDS. We’ve all seen the posters. We’re sick of it. Huh, you’re sick of it? You don’t want to hear any more. I don’t blame you. Because you don’t know what it is. It is so bizarre that even I had to be told by a 12 year old kid exactly what HIV is.

(Foreign Aids, 2001)

Uys speaks to the audience in a way which best gives an impression of how the child spoke to him. Uys explains in her words that HIV is a “gust of wind” that blows open the “windows of our houses” (the immune system of the body) that allows a black cat (AIDS) to enter our homes and spoil the carpet (infection)⁷⁵. Uys finds it best to understand something in a manner in which it is best appreciated, from the way a twelve year-old child understands HIV/AIDS. Instead of paraphrasing her explanation to him, he recreates their conversation, and perpetuates the learning experience he gained from his conversation with the child. The child shares her wisdom with Uys, who in turn shares his acquired wisdom with the audience.

This one-man dialogue illustrates one of Uys’ tendencies: to deconstruct elaborate concepts in order to ground it in laymen’s understanding. Part of the fear that the HIV/AIDS epidemic spawns comes from the fact that the prevention and transmission of infection of the virus are largely misunderstood by the communities Uys visits. As a

⁷⁵ This scene corresponds with a passage in the chapter “P.S: Don’t forget your Penis!” in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002: 156 to 164).

result, HIV/AIDS has generated a fearsome mystique that has fostered inappropriate and superstitious sexual practices amongst South Africans⁷⁶, which Uys sought to demystify during *For Fact's Sake* (1999). Part of the performance of Uys educating others about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and unsafe sex was to admit his own misunderstandings, and to assert his preparedness to learn from others. He documents this in *Foreign Aids* (2001) and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002) and incorporates incidents which indicate what one may call learning curves in his own life.

The presentation of facts is a part of personal development that is worthy of autobiographical inclusion. It is apparent that Uys finds it essential to incorporate important facts within an autobiographical narrative. This dissemination of critical information relating to safe sex and HIV/AIDS in *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* is the performance of what Eakin calls “semantic memory”, which is conceptual or factual knowledge which has been archived in the memory of the autobiographical author (1999: 107), but Uys elaborates on the impact of this semantic memory because he also recalls and records the responses of those with whom he shares his knowledge. The role of children in this context is usually as the receivers of his knowledge and in witnessing and responding to this interaction, he learns more about his audience members.

Uys describes how he was in the Northern Cape (having flown in with the Red Cross), where doctors gave medical attention to villagers and he performed educational shows about HIV/AIDS to audiences numbering 800 – 1000 people. Among them was a small child, whom Uys impersonates when he recalls the conversation⁷⁷:

Uys: Hoe oud is jy?
Child: Ek is ses!
Uys: Is jy ses?
Child: Ja!
Uys: Nee, my skat, jy's te klein.

⁷⁶ These superstitions include the belief that sleeping with a virgin will cure a man of HIV, which rapists use as a rationale to commit rape, even if the victims are underage children. Other misguided beliefs include the idea that anal or oral sexual practices do not lead to infection, or that women closing their eyes during the ordeal of rape will avert pregnancy and/or infection. Uys dismisses these beliefs in both *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*.

⁷⁷ This Afrikaans version is the version that appears in *Foreign Aids* (2001), and it corresponds with a passage in English in the chapter “A World in One Country” in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002: 195).

Child: Nee!
Uys: Ja, ek wil praat oor seks, jy's nog te jonk.
Child: Nee! Ek wil leer! Ek is bang!

(Foreign Aids, 2001)

Interactions such as these, that Uys captures in his performances and the memoirs, show a surprising reversal of the autobiographical process, where children are normally the ones who inherit autobiography by watching and listening to the acts and voices of those from whom they learn. Children are “at an age where they do not autonomize autobiography, but inherit it” (Eakin, 1999:17). However, these anecdotes show that Uys is not an autonomous autobiographer, but one who learns and inherits knowledge from children. This inclusive approach to revealing the self is in keeping with Uys’ attitude towards performing the self, that close and proximate others have stakes in building his life-narrative, just as Uys assumes a role in contributing to society’s communal narrative.

Among the Wheelchairs

This one-man dialogue demonstrated Uys’ ability to perceive the flaws in his own character, making himself an example of the social misconceptions South African society has towards the disabled, which is in a similar vein to the alienation experienced by HIV-positive South Africans. He recalls how he is at first apprehensive to approach a particular disabled seventeen year-old youth named Steven. Uys explains that the teacher has to rebuke him, saying that it is okay to approach and talk to the child, assuring him that he is “just a person” (2002: 175) and inducing Uys to feel shame for his reluctance. Uys admits here, although not through exact explanation but through this incriminating dialogue with the teacher, that he is guilty of feeling frightened of stepping out of his comfort zone to engage with people whose appearance may inspire a sense of awkwardness in people of supposedly “normal” appearance. While he does not explain why he is so apprehensive in the revue, he elaborates in the memoir. He asks his reader: “Do handicapped boys have sex? I never thought about it until the head of a school for handicapped children invited me to come to their hall” (175).

Uys openly admits his lack of consideration on the matter: “They’re also scared of getting AIDS! While most of the world sails past them at full speed, giving them a patronising glance and an ‘ag shame’, these remarkable little human beings have to sort out more than just birds and bees” (2002). Here again he describes being rebuked by the

teacher for being apprehensive about approaching the disabled child, writing in his memoir: “Was ‘ag shame’ so clearly etched on my face? The teacher probably wanted to kick me and I wish she had” (2002: 176).

Uys’ use of ‘ag shame’ describes his response to seeing Steven, and he realises that this attitude is a shortcoming and an obstacle to embracing the disabled as members of society. The encounter forces him to realise his reluctance to connect with Steven, and he shares this monologue so that spectators can avoid making the same mistake. This demonstrates several qualities about his character, and how he projects himself in his writing. He recognises flaws in his character and reveals that in his memoirs and revues, which is appropriate in autobiographical writing since it gives us an honest representation of him in the texts.

Uys encounters a paradoxical truth: by looking into the eyes of another, he learns something about himself. He learns that handicapped South Africans should not be dismissed or underestimated, the corollary of which is that he must not be the one who shies away from such social interaction. Uys realises that he still possesses personal barriers which he inherited from the apartheid era; his social conditioning causes him to see difference between himself and Steven and a produces desire to maintain a distance from that which is different. The “ag shame” turns out to be as much of the apartheid linguistic code as “sies” during his youth.

This transition from shame and fear to acceptance is thematically consistent with Uys’ autobiographical concerns, as he tries to dispel fears within himself and amongst others. It is a remedy to social barriers which inhibit personal communication, allowing people openly to discuss HIV/AIDS, which to Uys is a preventative measure against the spread of the disease. As can be seen from this passage in the memoir, he does not wish to dwell on his personal flaw, but focuses on the conversation with Steven in order to illustrate the process of communication that assists talking about and preventing HIV transmission.



Figure 3.5: "Wah, Pieter-Dirk Uys, you're so outrageous man!" "Steven the disabled youth" and a fan, meets his idol Pieter-Dirk Uys (*Foreign Aids*, 2001).

The stories of Uys' encounters with individuals like Steven appear in *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* because they demonstrate his shortcomings and his personal growth out of that shortcoming. His admission of fear of speaking to someone who is disabled ties in with the broad theme of fear surrounding HIV/AIDS; that fear needs to be overcome in order to enable communication so that HIV/AIDS education and discussion can disseminate. The inclusion of this encounter with the disabled youth challenges readers' notions of who is susceptible to HIV/AIDS, since people are disinclined to believe the disabled are engaging in unsafe sex practices, or whether they have any sex practices at all. We "overhear" what the youth named Steven says to Uys⁷⁸:

Steven: You know, you're the very first person who's ever been scared that I may catch AIDS.

Uys: But I am.

Steven: Yeah, but most people think I'll never be able to have sex. But you know, one day, I'm going to have sex, and I promise you, I'll wear a condom!

(Uys, 2002: 176)

These particular one-man many-character dialogues illustrate the impact of Uys' campaign to educate young South Africans, and the impact on his own personal development. Uys demonstrates an open-mindedness that he ultimately wishes to impart to his readers and audiences, since that complements his desire for HIV/AIDS and safe sex to be openly discussed by various kinds of audiences.

⁷⁸ This dialogue corresponds with a passage in the chapter "Beyond the Playgrounds" in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002: 171 – 176).

Foreign Aids in conclusion

Towards the end of *Foreign Aids*, Uys seems to resign himself to the belief that the AIDS crisis is unfixable, but midway his attitude changes:

Well, tomorrow morning you will read your newspapers and I can assure you, the statistics will be worse. Things are not getting better. Forty per cent of the workforce is HIV positive. One out of eight South Africans has got AIDS. Thirty per cent of the first year university students are HIV positive. Sixty per cent of the soldiers are HIV positive...Nee nee, wait. Wait, wait. What are human rights? Human rights are the right to be human. Not a statistic. Which means it is not about numbers, it's about people. It's about us.

(*Foreign Aids*, 2001)

Uys states statistics, seemingly resigning himself to overwhelming odds; he then changes and adopts a positive attitude. He switches from the innumerable facts and implies that the significance of individuals can make a difference in the situation. This is in keeping with Uys' faith that impossible odds can be overcome; he likens apartheid to a virus in order to suggest that HIV/AIDS is the new social evil that needs to be overcome, and given the accomplishment that apartheid was dismantled, having claimed "Apartheid was the terminal illness we have survived" (Redmond, 2006), Uys believes it is possible to overcome the epidemic in similar fashion. Uys still asserts in 2011 that he is a "terminal optimist, suffering from the disease to please which I am trying to cure" (Duguid, 2011).

Grace claims auto/biographies put a "human face on the abstract, impersonal forces of globalization, terrorism and the corporatism of our so-called post-national condition" (Grace, 2006: 15). By performing auto/biography in the South African context, Uys attempts to promote HIV/AIDS activism and to confront the challenges facing the country - the impersonal forces (comparable to what Uys calls "minefields" throughout his revues and his memoirs) have moved from politics to sex (Uys, 2002: 143).

HIV/AIDS inspires Uys to re-conceptualise how he satirises the circumstances surrounding the dilemma. Aside from lampooning and parodying politicians, Uys accepted that he had to become the subject of his own discussions, in order to connect to audiences on more personal matters. *Foreign Aids* (2001) constitutes a break-through for Uys to include memory as narrative, which paved the way for his first memoir. This revue demonstrated the potential of autobiography to be a viable strategy in performance to reach audiences.

Elections and Erections, the revue (2009)

Despite having the same title as Uys' first memoir, *Elections and Erections* (2009) is not a theatrical counterpart to *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002). It is a political revue in the tradition of many of Uys' previous one-man shows. In this revue Uys performs impersonations of ex-US presidential candidate Hilary Clinton (and former US president Bill Clinton), as well as his staple P.W. Botha, and ventriloquist dummy versions of both Thabo Mbeki and current state president Jacob Zuma. It also features previously unseen fictional impersonations as well as familiar faces: Nowell Fine and Evita Bezuidenhout.

Despite the lack of similarity between the revue and memoir of the same name, *Elections and Erections* (2009) features an autobiographical monologue which corresponds to a passage in Uys' second memoir, *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*. This is the single most consolidated retrospective autobiographical monologue subsequent to *Foreign Aids* (2001). In this monologue, Uys describes a sexual encounter with a coloured man of similar age during the apartheid era, and the fears and anxieties surrounding such a rendezvous at that time⁷⁹.

Performing “memoiry”: Converting memoir into performance

I have decided to isolate and discuss this particular monologue, because it is a unique occurrence in Uys' revues. The peculiarity I am aware of in this instance is that the performance of this monologue (2009) comes after its first appearance as a passage⁸⁰ in Uys' second memoir, *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*. Unlike *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* where the content was substantially similar, there are few parallels in the content of *Between the Devil and The Deep* and any of his revues. This time around it is the autobiographical text which Uys must convert into performance and therefore I am

⁷⁹ In 1967, the year in which Uys' monologue's narrative takes place, South Africa was still bound by the Sexual Offences Act (Act No. 32 of 1957; initially known as the Immorality Act) which made sexual relations between white and non-white persons (and homosexual relations) illegal; those found guilty could be sentenced up to seven years' imprisonment.

⁸⁰ This monologue corresponds with a passage in the chapter “The Cancer of Racism” in *Elections and Erections* (2005: 36-37).

obliged to pay attention to the particularities of Uys' autobiographical writing style and to see how it translates into performance.

I have coined the term "memoiry" (a play on the words "memoir" and "memory"), which I define as the reconstructed form of memories that are incorporated into the narrative matrix of a memoir. In no way do I intend for this term to refer to a new concept in memoir-writing; it is merely a description of something that has always been in practice in the genre of memoir-writing, although the basis of my coinage comes from my reading of Uys' memoirs. The original memory is a series of thoughts and mental images resulting from the impression left by an experiential stimulus on the mind. The memories described in Uys' memoirs are reproductions that are given narrative compatibility, where they have been changed, re-interpreted and re-appropriated to fit with the narrative framework. I intend it to be a neat categorisation that describes the anecdotes in the memoir that are re-used in performance.

Obviously the idea that memory is transformed when turned into narrative life-writing is nothing new: Daniel L. Schacter suggests that "[M]emories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves" (1996, cited in Smith and Watson, 2002: 16). Memories, or fragments thereof, become incorporated into "complex constructions that become the lives of our stories" (16). Eakin says: "memory has new uses" (1999: 107), meaning that memories are not only for remembering, but also for appropriating to other purposes. Therefore, memoir-writing revives memories in order to use them to respond to a new experiential stimulus that the author confronts throughout the memoir. It is apparent from the adaptation of a passage from *Between the Devil and the Deep* to a monologue in the revue *Elections and Erections* that Uys advocates using "memoiries", and not only memories, to direct attention to the social issues he is concerned with.

Uys' autobiographical monologue in *Elections and Erections* (2009) illustrates the negative impact of apartheid on personal (and especially interracial) relationships. Fear was also the apparent theme in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002), but unexpectedly this passage (upon which the monologue is based) comes from Uys' second memoir, which supposedly departs from the themes of fear and HIV/AIDS to

focus on Uys' theatre career during apartheid and post-apartheid. The monologue has nothing to do with Uys' theatre, and everything to do with sexuality and fear, common themes found in the first memoir. The appearance of this monologue in the second memoir implies that apartheid's impact on individual lives cannot be disregarded and that its effects on Uys have left a lasting impression that he cannot erase. In a sense, the monologue is a tribute to *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* (2002), which shows that his first memoir and this revue share more than a title. The historical reality of apartheid damaged Uys' personal life to a degree that he still seeks to confront and resolve; its impact upon his past has persisted to this day.

This monologue constitutes a conversion narrative in the autobiographical content in his revues, since Uys explains what was the inspiration for his disavowal of apartheid and his embrace the idea of a multi-racial democracy: he claims that it was “an erection, it was sex” (*Elections and Erections*, 2009), because apartheid outlawed the freedom to have interracial (not to mention homosexual) relationships. Uys recounts his arrangement with a coloured man he meets at a party to have an amorous rendezvous, how he was confronted with class difference (his lover turns out to be a gardener, colloquially called a “garden-boy”, for a white family) and he gets to see the level of panic and fear his partner feels throughout the entire arrangement, since he worries about the risk of being caught by the authorities.

In several ways the monologue in the revue, *Elections and Erections* (2009), picks up where the memoir had stopped. In *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*, his feelings about his encounter with a coloured lover are mixed, with pained feelings of guilt and terror (describing prayers to God) but subsequently giving way to more sexual desire. In the revue, these thoughts are paraphrased in relation to falling in love with the unnamed amour in 1967:

I was in hell. I was breaking the Immorality Act that made sex between the races illegal. I was breaking the Calvinist Afrikaner God's sacred law that made all sex illegal. Not only will I go to jail, I would go to Hell. And yes, let's call it Hell, because it was a turmoil every time I got home. I cried. Of course, at the time of action, you don't think clearly, yes clearly up there but not so clearly down there, you know? That brain takes over...

(*Elections and Erections*, 2009)

Uys is “coming to know something that has always been true” (Heddon, 2008: 35), because he comes to realise the unethical level of fear apartheid causes amongst those against whom it discriminates. The monologue represents a change in Uys’ attitude towards racial inequality and institutionalised racism. A turning point is an episode where “the narrator attributes a crucial change or stance in the protagonist’s story to a belief, a conviction, a thought” (Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001: 31). The monologue does not exhibit as much humour as other monologues, which is due to Uys’ desire to give a credible impression of the fear that had a hold over his lover. Uys seeks to recapture the emotional atmosphere that existed within the context of that memory.

Uys performs a brief prayer in Afrikaans in fear of divine retribution for the sin of sex with a non-white, which partially recalls the performance of prayer seen in “A First Sexual Experience” (*Foreign Aids*, 2001). Although “A First Sexual Experience” and this monologue are performed seven years apart, in both instances Uys explores his sexuality only to deny it, believing in a need to reconcile with God according to Calvinistic, Afrikaner and apartheid conventions. Uys reminds us that his youth was pervaded by institutionalised authority that entrenched itself in Afrikaans linguistic, cultural and religious identity. Watching Uys enact the prayer in Afrikaans allows audiences to watch him remember the emotionality of those times when he prayed; his Afrikaans is a signifier of that childhood identity.

The monologue possesses qualities of what Patrice Pavis calls a “confessional play” (361-362, cited in Leroux, 2006:109), much like the previous “A First Sexual Experience” in *Foreign Aids* (2001), because Uys admits to his lack of sympathy at the time for his non-white lover, who also ran the risk of contravening the Immorality Act and the consequences that come with being caught for such an offence – which were usually worse for the non-white South Africans. It is apparent during the story that there are attitudinal differences between Uys and his lover.

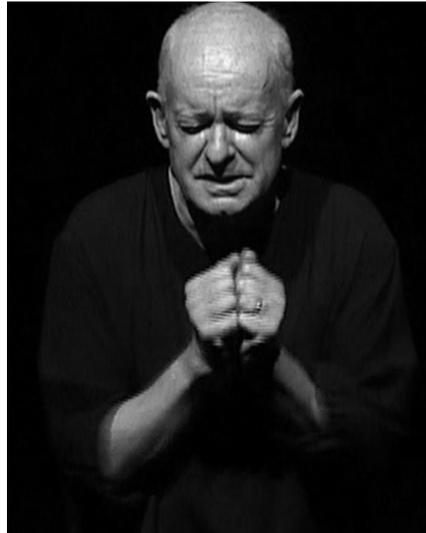


Figure 3.6: "Ek is jammer, ek is jammer..." Uys recalls lines he spoke while momentarily praying, harking back to "A first sexual experience" from *Foreign Aids* (Uys, *Elections and Erections*, 2009).



Figure 3.7. "If you want me to tell you about the fun I had with my new illegal friends in the dark, I can really tell you about fear": Uys performing his autobiographical monologue at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, February 2009 (Uys, 2009).

The narrated Uys is preoccupied with the promise of sex, while his obliging partner is visibly more concerned with potentially getting caught at some point during the rendezvous. The authorial Uys-persona explains: "[b]ut don't ask me about racism, as a white racist, it never affected me" (Uys, 2009) referring to how the penalties for contravening apartheid law were far heavier for non-white South Africans than for white South Africans. Uys' demeanour throughout the scenario was apparently far more trivial and laidback, whilst for Uys' coloured amour it was a source of great anxiety. The youthful Uys described in the monologue fails to acknowledge the harsh reality that breaking apartheid law meant for non-white South Africans.

Uys' description of his coloured sex-partner in the revue is naturally more animated and lively than in the memoir because of the sensation of physically re-immersing himself in the experience. Although Uys does not use a coloured accent to indicate to the audience when he is speaking as his coloured male lover, his voice, face and actions are frantic when he performs this character, which reinforces the level of fear and anxiety the man experienced during this entire situation, in fear of being caught and persecuted for breaking the Immorality Act. The man's fear is made palpable through visual signifiers: Uys recreates his lover's terrified eyes, his prostrating hands begging Uys to leave in the morning before they are discovered, and grovelling pleas for "Master Pieter" to leave before he loses his job, goes to jail and gets killed.

This monologue provides us with a retrospective account of how a young Uys bore witness to the fear apartheid instilled in non-white South Africans, and how it was only at a later time was that he was able to fully comprehend that fear. At this point I find it apt to refer to Evelyn Hinz, who maintained that "[i]n the same way that an actor/actress assumes the role of another, autobiography involves coming to terms with another self...In both cases, a sacrifice of ego is involved, and a degree of pleasure is in proportion to the amount of conflict" (1992, cited in Tompkins, 2006: 126).

Uys' "ego" (that is to say, his easy-going attitude at that time which in part owed its emergence to his apartheid-sanctioned freedom of movement granted to whites) could not allow him properly to comprehend his lover's very different experience of living under apartheid rule. Through the act of narrating and performing this monologue, Uys suggests that his sexual desire compromised his ability to realise the gravity of his lover's dilemma. By revealing the state of mind of his lover, he confronts the emotional conflict that person experienced because of the rendezvous.

Through these acts of self-reflection and confession, Uys attempts to confront the realities of his youth which induced his later rejection of apartheid, aiming to compensate for his lack of participation in the emancipation of South Africans from apartheid by incorporating the stories of those close and proximate others into his own life-narrative. It is apparent that he believes, as a white person, that white experience could not constitute

enough of a personal narrative on its own to provide sufficient perspective on the impact of apartheid upon South Africans. His illicit love affairs with coloured men gave him an avenue to further explore apartheid experience and turn it into a personal narrative that illustrated his evolution as an anti-apartheid sympathiser.

I recall here the playwright Sharon Pollock, who claims: “It is impossible to write or portray a life. It can only be lived” (2006: 297). Uys does not attempt to portray the entirety of his life, nor that of his unnamed liaison (which is in keeping with Pollock’s claim, since Uys never appears to do so) in either the revues or the memoirs. However, while he has not provided us with a story of a life of the other, he has revealed how he has learnt to live, as a consequence of living alongside the other. This milestone which the monologue describes is not just a useful act for performing the presence of apartheid, but reveals a lesson Uys has learnt for all time. He thus makes “[...] use of the facts of a personal story to make us rethink the concept of self and the relationship of self to other” (Grace, 2006: 15).

Chapter Four: Pieter-Dirk Uys in the 2010s

The future is certain; it's the past that is unpredictable.

(Soviet joke often quoted by Pieter-Dirk Uys and Evita Bezuidenhout)

Now sixty-six years-old⁸¹, Uys continues to write and perform in revues and plays which respond to the pressing social realities that affect South Africa. After the revue *Elections and Erections* in 2009, Uys wrote and directed *Macbeki: A Farce to be Reckoned With* (2009), the revues *FE-FA-FO-FUM* (2010) and *Desperate First Ladies* (2011), the cabaret *F.A.K Songs and Other Struggle Anthems* (2011), a fictional biography about Evita's younger sister Bambi Kellerman, *Never Too Naked* (2011), and even a cookbook, *Evita's Kossie Sikelela* (2010). The level of autobiographical performance that appeared in *Foreign Aids* (2001) or his autobiographical monologue in *Elections and Erections* (2009) has not, as yet, been matched in these later texts; Uys has not performed autobiographical monologues in new revues, nor has he turned any other personal life-stories into performances.

Uys has always been primarily a satirist and an autobiographical subject second; his lifetime of playwriting and performance confirms that. Uys' first priority, his greatest motive for any of his writing and performances, factual or fictional, is to conscientise South Africans about social realities. It is apparent that when his life-stories can serve this purpose, he will use them in the revues. It seems Uys has returned to his more satirical roots in recent years. However, one should not assume that Uys is no longer capable or desirous of making autobiographical-cum-political connections in new performances. Having analysed *Foreign Aids* and the monologue in the 2009 revue *Elections and Erections*, it is clear that certain private matters provide him with material and inspiration for revue-performance. Uys has established a style of autobiographical theatre that uses anecdotes from his life-story and incorporates them into satirical political revues.

⁸¹ Uys turned 66 on the 28th of September 2011.

Gaps in Pieter-Dirk Uys' autobiographical performances

Thus far none of Uys' revues constitute a completely autobiographical act; according to Uys he is averse to a totally "I" narrative⁸². He claims he needs multiple perspectives since he believes one view is egocentric and leads to "writer's block" (McMurtry, 2000: 350). He asserts he is not a "self-promoter" (*Darling*, 2010) insisting that his productions are not his attempts at convincing audiences to think what he thinks; Uys claims he would rather make them laugh at the harsh social circumstances afflicting South Africa as a form of "therapy" (McMurtry, 1993: 418) which will help them to cope with such difficulties. Regardless of his unwillingness to become the autobiographical subject of his revues, Uys has found it necessary to become an authorial character in his revues in order to become a real figure with whom audiences can connect and empathise.

It is apparent in the memoirs that Uys has a lot of autobiographical material which is potentially viable for incorporation into future revues or plays. However, a completely autobiographical play has not emerged in Uys' repertoire as yet, because it is not in his nature to make the Uys-persona the focal character of an entire production. He prefers to make other characters speak about him, rather than have himself speak about and as himself. In view of his proclivities towards "one-actor-multi-character performance" in the revues, it will be unlikely that he would create a revue where he does not perform fictional personae and impersonations, and would act solely as the Uys-persona.

It is clear that Uys explores personal issues in his memoirs that he does not pursue in his revues in as much detail. For instance, homosexuality as a topic of autobiographical writing and performance, remains largely absent in his revues. Throughout his career, Uys has not made his own gayness an issue in his performance work, which is unlike many other gay performance autobiographers who make it a key theme in their plays⁸³. It is

⁸² In an interview with Mervyn McMurtry in 2000, Uys claimed: "You know, Penguin commissioned an autobiography, and I finished it, and it stinks. I can't stand it. I can't read paragraph after paragraph of 'I...me.' 'I...me.' Now it's out of my system, it's in a box, and I'm going to start again. Instead, I'm going to write a memoir and illustrate the memoir with characters who talk about me, in a critical way, giving their perspectives" (McMurtry, 2000: 349). Considering Uys' rejection of a consistent first person narrative in print prose writing, Uys' practice of one man, multi-character performances in the revues up to the present day, confirms that he maintains this attitude in theatre as well.

⁸³ Leading international examples of gay performance autobiographers include American performance artist Tim Miller (*Glory Box*, 1999) and the group *Gay Sweatshop* (*Mister X*, 1977). Heddon provides a list of

apparent that Uys has had many same-sex encounters during apartheid, and as can be read in *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, he has struggled with this aspect of his identity in the past, especially when the issue was aggravated by transracial sexual politics during the apartheid era. Instead of addressing his own homosexuality in the revues, Uys has performed fictional characters who are gay, and has written plays which feature gay characters⁸⁴. Given the intimacy with which he discusses some of his personal sexual encounters with other men in the apartheid South Africa context, one can see that homosexual identity in South Africa is a possible subject for later revues. If one recalls Steven Cohen⁸⁵ whose performance art deals with the obstacles to gay acceptance in South Africa, it would be in keeping with Uys' commitment to consciousness-raising objectives in the revues to perform more personal narratives relating to gay identity.

In *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun*, Uys speaks about an interview from 1983 when he was questioned whether he was gay:

So tell me, are you queer?

Being queer in 1983 would have suited everyone. Put Pieter-Dirk Uys in the pink corner and blame that for everything. So I gave a cryptic reply.

I'm queer on Monday and Friday, heterosexual on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Wednesday I'm bi, Saturday I do it myself, and Sunday I rest!

(Uys, 2002: 35)

In 2010, Uys once again refers to this interview in an article he wrote for the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* (Uys, 2010: n.p.) which he has since archived on his website. Aside from evading direct answers about his gayness, Uys' reproduction of this interview is an example which shows us he is willing to recall personal anecdotes repeatedly, and in different media. This article is one of several by Uys that feature in various editions of the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport*, although many other articles written by him also appear in *The Mercury*, *Business Day*, and *Die Burger*. Uys' articles in newspapers give the public increased access to his life-story and personal anecdotes and allow his autobiographical stories to reach a readership that is potentially larger than the readership he gained for his memoirs or the viewership he gained for his revues.

autobiographical performers many of whom "are lesbian, gay and/or black and/or transgender" (Heddon, 2008: 2).

⁸⁴ Gay characters include De Kock Bezuidenhout, Evita Bezuidenhout's flamboyant son, who was a chief character in the plays *Farce About Uys* (1983) and *Same Old Story* (2004), a remake of the earlier play *Selle Ou Storie* (1974), where instead of three middle-aged women the characters are now three gay men.

⁸⁵ Please refer to chapter two for the discussion of Steven Cohen (pp. 44-49).

Newspaper articles

Uys is a professional theatre-practitioner by vocation; his stage productions and written publications are his principal sources of income. Performing one-man shows is a standard practice in Uys' career; it has guaranteed him audiences and motivated tours across the country and abroad. In spite of this, I must reiterate that the performance of autobiographical elements in Uys' revues should not be seen as life-narratives manufactured for profit, but as originating from ideological and creative convictions. Uys was first and foremost motivated to perform personal anecdotes on the basis of his rejection of apartheid during the 1980s and in the present day he is motivated by his sympathies for socially vulnerable South Africans and his commitment to social reform. Much of the written and performed material in *Foreign Aids* (2001) has its origins in *For Fact's Sake* (1999) which was performed in over 400 schools for free (Uys, 2002: 137) and to this day Uys continues to offer free AIDS-awareness educational shows for underprivileged schools and communities⁸⁶. Although many of Uys' personal stories have been repeatedly performed in several media to the point that we may feel this undermines their value, their continued appearance in the public sphere means that they have become part of Uys' personal "canon" of autobiographical information that fuels the "grander" narrative of social reform to which he is dedicated.

In *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography* (1996) Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson claim:

Individualism has been commodified; the personal contents of the personal have been largely evacuated. But owning the stories that shape us as subjects is a different, more political issue, and an act of collective consciousness informing newer notions of what is at stake in autobiography.

(1996: 16)

Smith and Watson imply that access to life-narratives has become so commonplace that this unrelenting public access has stripped individual stories of their capacity to be unique and personal artefacts. Yet autobiographers can still assert that their autobiographical acts are peculiar products of their personalities. As a stalwart voice in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the call for social and political reform, Uys has become a widely represented figure in South African tabloids and magazines. A host of articles, columns

⁸⁶ Uys, 2001. *Pieter-Dirk Uys*. Viewed 14th November 2011 (<http://pdu.co.za/events.html>).

and interviews that have been written by others about Uys, and pieces he has written as well, have been archived, and are currently available on his website⁸⁷ (www.pdu.co.za). This archive of material ranges from 1981 to 2011; many of the articles have been written by international and local journalists, and cover all the important issues that Uys has covered in his own writing and performance career.

Uys has incorporated personal anecdotes into his articles in order to engage with social issues that become part of our personal lives. He has been a public entity, and by sharing his life stories readily as part of his performances he has turned himself into a commodity. The motive for his own commodification is to make himself – and the issues he is concerned with – accessible to the general public. Uys wishes to inform and strengthen South Africa's collective consciousness, aiming to make his stories a part of the process to open channels to topics people generally have difficulty discussing.

Not only do these newspaper and magazine articles communicate Uys' views on the state of the nation, referring to topical issues, but he also reminisces in newspapers about his career in theatre. It is his current way of informing South Africans where he is now, in his life and career. In *The Mercury*, Uys wrote:

So here I am, a 64 year old actor, on a diet for a 74 year old desperately overweight superstar. Why? So that when Evita Bezuidenhout stands on the stage of the Lyric Theatre on Woman's Day weekend, she looks gorgeous!

(Uys, 2010)

Uys' writing appears in newspapers, magazines and online articles, and these are the most recent autobiographical forms of writing about him available to the public. He continues to tell and re-tell personal narratives long after his last memoir *Between the Devil and the Deep* (2005) was written and published. Although it may seem that the height of Uys' autobiographical era has come and gone, the strategies of performing autobiography he has used in the revues will remain a part of his legacy to South African theatre. I therefore provide a brief survey of Uys' contributions to autobiography and performance, in the belief that Uys' methods of performing autobiography are worthy of adoption by

⁸⁷ Go to <http://pdu.co.za/archives.html> for a comprehensive interface for accessing the variety of articles Uys has archived over the course of his career.

future South African autobiographical performers, especially those who will seek to perform one-person shows.

A review of Pieter-Dirk Uys' contribution to performing autobiography

Uys has proved that topical South African social issues and personal stories can form part of the same performative narrative. In desiring to use theatre as a platform to ask questions of state and society, he has demonstrated that discussing his own past can provide an illuminating link to the discussion of the present state of affairs. He has played a major part in proving that the personal is still political in contemporary South Africa, and that autobiographical performance is a versatile vehicle to demonstrate this reality.

Uys was motivated to become a greater autobiographical character in *Foreign Aids* (2001) in response to the growing HIV/AIDS crisis. As a result, deeply personal issues such as sexual preferences, behaviour and experiences found their way into autobiographical narratives. While many would be embarrassed to openly reveal such personal information about themselves, Uys found it necessary to do so himself because discussing sexual acts can expose how vulnerable people are to the sexual transmission of HIV. Such self-exposure constitutes an act of courage that surprises audiences, with the aim of inspiring them to follow suit. Approaching a subject that intimidates people into silence is obviously best dealt with by individuals willing to share their own stories in an open manner. Performance autobiography is a particularly the useful avenue in this sense, since successful theatre draws audiences, and entertaining story-telling combined with a conscientising life-story is a fundamental formula by which this social obstacle can be overcome.

Uys shows that the original aura of fear that pervades grave circumstances in the past can be undermined with a comedic approach in the present. Uys claims that the only weapon he has left in the fight against oppressive social forces and circumstances is laughter (McMurtry, 1993: 20). Laughing and inspiring laughter in others about topics that usually cause confusion, apprehension, shame or secrecy, can dispel the power of fear these topics possess over people. Uys laughs at certain of his sexual experiences, even though they instilled fear in him initially. Uys' confrontation with circumstances that caused him to feel guilt – with the aim of overcoming that guilt – inspires audiences to

believe that they may be absolved of their own guilt if they are willing to share their own experiences with others. Since laughing at fear makes fear “less fearful” (Harper, 1988 cited in McMurtry, 1993: 20), Uys finds that by transcribing personal experiences – where he felt great fear – into autobiographical writing and performance for the sake of comedy, he can entertain and conscientise audiences at the same time.

Uys habitually decentralises himself as an autobiographical subject, in both the memoirs and in the revues. He prefers for characters to speak of him rather than for him to speak for himself. This resists an association between autobiography and egocentric behaviour. Uys feels obligated to speak on behalf of others who have interacted with him, by recreating their voices and actions in performance. The relational nature of autobiographical monologues (such as Uys’) should motivate playwright-performers to incorporate the agency of other characters into their monologues and dialogues.

Uys shows us that performance is beneficial to autobiography because it offers an imagistic and visual element to the audience’s understanding of the autobiographical subject. Although photographs are often included in print autobiographies so as to provide corroborating or additional visual information, the further benefit of a performance is that it is live and immediate. The presence of the autobiographer’s body means audiences can hear the voice, see the expressions, and watch the autobiographical subject’s body in motion; this allows audiences to witness the impact memory-based story telling has on the autobiographer, who is emotionally reconnecting with his past. The ability of the autobiographer to be an actor means we can see several different intra-textual versions of the autobiographer. By making distinctive changes in his speech and movement, Uys can represent historically distanced incarnations of himself across the span of his life-time so far. This has a substantial impact on the spectator when the actor can portray younger versions of himself through speech and movement, as in “A First Sexual Experience” (*Foreign Aids*, 2001).

Through the use of a limited supply of props and costumes, Uys can rely on fewer material possessions to evoke the sensation of re-experiencing moments from his life. He can use a few suggestive and symbolic items to stage autobiographical performance effectively, rather than undertaking an attempt to create a realistic setting, which may not

always be financially and materially possible. This proves that autobiography, when performed, does not have to physically reproduce the actual environment in which the memory was formed, since the site of memory is within the mind and body of the performer himself. Autobiography is not merely a reproduction of the past, but a creative effort to rediscover and reinterpret the past as well, with the focus on the autobiographical subject rather than on the setting in which the autobiography took place.

Uys has proved that memoir is a valuable tool for autobiographical growth for the playwright-performer. Memoir has allowed Uys to publish autobiographical information about himself that had not previously appeared in the revues. Memoir has provided an avenue for him to present his personal claims and to confront issues from his past, such as the “white racist background” that he speaks of in his autobiographical monologue in the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009). The memoirs provide Uys with an opportunity to write and narrate his life-story in greater detail. By comparison the revue-form is a concise mode of autobiography that - due to time constraints - must negotiate between the narrative of the self and the narrative of social reality. The memoir *Elections and Erections: A Memoir of Fear and Fun* shifts between Uys’ early life and the rejection of apartheid to the promotion of democracy and the conscientisation about HIV/AIDS, since the length of a memoir gives Uys the freedom to elaborate on his life-story.

Closing Comments

In summary, I have attempted to prove - through the revues *Foreign Aids* and *Elections and Erections* (2009) - that Uys writes and enacts life-narratives in a fashion peculiar to his own brand of one-man theatre. He revives, re-interprets and re-appropriates anecdotes and elements from his life-story, family history, cultural identity and personality to fit into the structure of the revue-form, so that he may become an autobiographical character in his own productions.

Foreign Aids (2001) combined retrospective narratives with the desire for social reform in order to confront the harsh reality of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, as exemplified by “A First Sexual Experience” (*Foreign Aids*, 2001). By incorporating aspects of his mother’s (and hence his own) heritage into Bambi Kellerman, Uys shows that he has found ways to integrate parts of his past into fictional personae. In *Foreign Aids* Uys performs dialogues

by himself that present the self in relation to the other, proving that individual lives are always linked by social interaction.

In addition I have also analysed the later monologue from the revue *Elections and Erections* (2009) which amounts to a conversion narrative concerning Uys' later ideological refusal of institutionalised racism and his embrace of multi-racial democracy. By revealing a deeply personal sex-story to the audience, Uys makes the audience aware of how apartheid created a culture of fear that denied him the freedom to love men from different race groups. He performs the reasons for his disavowal of apartheid and his longing for freedom of movement, belief and association which are now constitutional rights we take for granted. I chose this monologue for analysis on the basis that it constitutes a concentrated apartheid-themed autobiographical narrative in a revue, something that was never seen during Uys' earlier apartheid-era performances.

I have not sought to define Uys' revues as a better form of autobiographical production, simply as an alternative to conventional prose narrative means; the revue is available to Uys, given his career in theatre. As Heddon says: "[...] to presume that live performance is intrinsically or implicitly 'better than' is to risk overly romanticising this form of mediation" (2008: 166). Autobiographical production in Uys' one-man shows is governed and limited by the purpose of a political revue to relate personal experience to public concern. The revue form is but one option that playwrights and performers can rely on to enable their autobiographical theatre to have socially relevant and relational applications.

As a case study, Uys demonstrates that autobiographical performance is valuable to South Africans in order to produce theatre that is relevant and true, personal and conscientising. As South Africans continue to endure harsh social challenges such the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the role of the autobiographical performer is assured of its significance in this country.

By having such socially conscious concerns in his work, Uys demonstrates that he does not reduce autobiography to a "merely personal act" (Smith and Watson, 2002: 2). Nor is the autobiographical elements in his revues, or his life-narrative in his memoirs for that

matter, an exercise in egocentric indulgence; Uys' prioritisation of the performance of empathetic relationships with vulnerable others defeats the suspicion that autobiography is bound to be "merely narcissistic" (2002: 2). With reference to Smith and Watson, Heddon says: "In my experience, the vast majority of autobiographical performances work hard to challenge the notion that there is anything 'mere' to autobiography" (Heddon, 2008: 5).

There are prospects for South Africa to be an important producer of performance autobiography, as it has the contextual influences which give incentive to performers and writers alike to share life stories previously suppressed by apartheid, and affected by current circumstances. An established performer such as Uys has demonstrated useful approaches to take one's life and put it on a stage; his considerable achievements serve as a model for established and aspiring playwrights and performers alike to bring their own real life dramas to the stage.

Uys' vast body of performance work is still open to further auto/biographical research. In the year 2011, at sixty-six years of age, Uys does not show signs of retiring from theatre and it remains to be seen whether he will incorporate more of the personal history (which we know exists due to the presentation of his life-story in his memoirs) into future revues. Film-maker Julian Shaw, in the 2010 documentary film *Darling!*, says:

Who is Pieter-Dirk Uys? To me, he's a dissenter and a patriot. He's a naughty school-boy, and the conscience of a country. He says he's a loner, but I wonder if he's just lonely. The enigma of Pieter is whilst claiming to need no-one, he's the darling of South Africa.

(*Darling!*, 2010)

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