

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF UYS'S CHIASTIC APPROACH TO SATIRE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO EVITA BEZUIDENHOUT

Chiasmus is 'more than just ... a skeleton upon which to hang thoughts and words'. It is 'a forceful style of speaking and writing' that [through] 'rigorous and abrupt juxtapositions of contrasting forms within a unified literary system ... focuses the receiver's attention on the central concerns'.

John W Welch



The middle-aged man in the shiny black dress with silver inlay sits tensely on the plush back seat of the imported stretch-limo. ... **He glances down at his hands. His hands look feminine. His legs are crossed** and are shaved to just above the knee where no one will see the hairs. **She doesn't wear minis.** The legs look feminine, living up to their reputation as one of the best pairs of ladies' legs in the land.

The man glances into the small mirror ... The face of the most famous white woman in South Africa, Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout, stares out at him. Her eyes are greener than his, her lips fuller, her face longer. ... The man in the dress and the matching hat wets the lips of the woman he is made up to be. Through the heavy false eyelashes circling his eyes like verandahs, he sees the grand pillars of the Houses of Parliament slide by on his right. ...

The man in the dress feels the long car glide to a halt. ... **He takes a deep breath and disappears safely** into the darkness of **the disguise this famous woman offers him.** From all around people appear to witness this extraordinary event. It is not the issue of a man wearing a dress. It is the appearance of a superstar in their midst. She steps out of the long white car. ... Her eyes look up at the forbidding exterior of this most famous building in her land. ... The man inside the dress, behind the lipstick, under the hat, in control but never, ever seen, has to whisper to himself: 'Eat your black heart out, Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd' [my emphases]¹ (Uys, 1995:1).

The above extract from Uys's book *Funigalore – Evita's Real-life Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1995 (also referred to in this thesis as *Funigalore*), takes the reader behind the scenes and onto the set of the M-Net television series entitled *Evita's Funigalore* or *Funigalore I* and *II* (1994c; 1994d) to reveal the subtle chiasmic shift that characterizes the dramatic mode of one of South Africa's leading satirists.²

The central thrust of this thesis is the study of Uys's use of the rhetorical trope of 'chiasmus' (the Greek word for cross-over) in some of his writings, but more specifically in

¹ In this thesis sentences and phrases that appear in bold print in quoted passages serve to foreground issues relevant to the central argument of this thesis, namely Uys's deployment of chiasmus as a satirical tool.

² Abrams (1971:153) defines satire as 'the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation, or scorn [and] derision'. Satire does not 'evoke laughter as an end in itself [but] uses laughter as a weapon [against an outside] butt such as an individual, or a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even the whole race of man.' (Uys's deployment of satire as a literary device is more fully discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.)

his creation and portrayal of Evita Bezuidenhout. Gray (1984:43) defines chiasmus as ‘a figure of speech consisting of inverting the order of similar phrases in a sentence’. However, an examination of examples of Uys’s utilization of this literary device reveals not only the transposition of formal elements of grammar but also of elements of meaning. An example of Uys’s deployment of semantic chiasmus occurs in the title of his book *A Part Hate, A Part Love – The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout* (1994a),³ in which the last word of the first phrase, ‘hate’, is the antithesis of the final word of the second phrase, ‘love’. (The phrase ‘a part hate’ also contains a *double entendre* because, if said quickly, it sounds very similar to ‘apartheid’, the system of government that Uys consistently satirises during the course of his literary and performance works.) In the extract from Uys’s *Funigalore* (1995) quoted above, chiasmus of meaning occurs when Uys juxtaposes the contrasting phrases ‘the man glances’ versus ‘Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout stares’. Chiasmus of syntax takes place when the object of the first sentence ‘he glances down at his hands’ becomes the subject of the second sentence ‘his hands look feminine’. In the penultimate sentence ‘the man in the dress ... wets the lips of the woman’, the subject and object display not only a reversal of syntax – ‘the man in the dress’ versus ‘the lips of the woman’ – but also evidence of semantic chiasmus when the word ‘man’ is replaced with ‘woman’ and ‘dress’ is supplanted by ‘lips’. These examples also illustrate the narrator’s double identity. He constantly crosses over from the role of Pieter-Dirk Uys, stage and television personality (also author, newspaper columnist, playwright, stage manager and director), to that of his ‘alter ego’ (Walker, 1997b:9), Evita Bezuidenhout, the most ‘[in]famous’ of the many characters Uys portrays in his satirical revues. Moreover, Uys persistently employs syntactic and semantic chiasmus as a satirical tool and his preference for a combination of both is discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Thus in these quoted excerpts from Uys’s *Funigalore* (1995) the narrator is engaged in a process that Jacobs (1996:1), in his article ‘Gender-blending and Code-switching in the South African Novel: A Postcolonial Model’, calls ‘gender-blending’. Consider, for

³ Uys’s *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a) is subtitled ‘*The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout*’ and purports to be a biography of Evita’s life from her birth in 1935 until the demise of apartheid in April 1994.

example, 'his legs are crossed' versus 'she doesn't wear minis' and 'he ... disappears safely into' versus 'the disguise [of] this famous woman' (Uys, 1995:1-2). This process of 'chiastic gendering' or cross-dressing is one of the many aspects of what Garber (1992:16) terms 'category crisis' in her book *Vested Interests – Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. Category crisis involves 'a failure of definitional distinction ... that permits of border crossings from one ... category to another: black/white, Jew/Christian, noble/bourgeois, master/servant, master/slave' and 'male/female' (as in the case of Uys's creation/impersonation of Evita Bezuidenhout). Garber sees the principal function of category crisis as 'disrupting and calling attention to cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonance' or, in other words, as satire. Uys likewise uses 'gender-blending' in his texts as well as his performances to further his satirical focus, namely that of drawing attention to the presence of both cultural and social discord in South Africa. (Garber's views on 'category crisis' are explored in greater detail in Chapter Three in relation to Uys's application of 'gender-blending'.)

Uys practises gender-blending by adopting a 'persona' or 'mask' (a type of 'double identity' or 'second-self'). Gray (1984:156) defines a persona as 'a particular kind of narrator' constructed by writers and poets for 'a particular poetic [or literary] purpose'. It is this specific feature that gives impetus to the proposition that Uys's *oeuvre*, both in its textual and performance mode, but particularly in his creation and portrayal of Evita Bezuidenhout, can be read as illustrative of his deployment of chiastic configurations (hence the title of this study). Fowler (1973:141-2) argues that the term 'persona' distinguishes between 'the man who sits down to write and the "author" as we realize him in and through the words on the page'. This 'implied author' represents 'all the author's conscious choices ... as "artist" '. Uys, in an interview with Bishop (1991:193), corroborates his awareness of this artistic choice when he states that he chose to create his persona, Evita Bezuidenhout, as a satirical mouthpiece in his weekly column in the *Sunday Express* at the end of the 1970s, as he 'needed to write about things which couldn't be written about'. During the apartheid era, Uys deliberately adopted a female 'mask' in the belief that his satirical comments, when presented as 'gossip' from the mouth of the wife of

a Nationalist MP, would go unnoticed by the censors (most of his plays were consistently banned during the late 1970s and early 1980s).

Fowler (1973:142) points out that 'in magic ritual "masks" are independent beings who *possess* the man who assumes them'. As is discussed more fully in Chapter Six, the artist's consciously assumed 'mask' may itself become so powerfully integrated in the experience of its creator that it may take over subconsciously as part of the chiasmus. Reference to the proprietary nature of the 'mask' is echoed by Uys (1994a:fly-leaf) when, under the heading 'Pieter-Dirk Uys on Evita Bezuidenhout', he describes the evolution of this persona as follows:

Evita stepped out of the chorus line, and took off into folklore, leaving behind the many other characters I did in my shows [my emphases].

Uys also reiterates this aspect of the Evita persona during his performance of the first half of his revue *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) when he quips: 'I don't do Evita any more, she does herself'. Fowler's elaboration of the notion of persona is relevant in terms of this thesis. Fowler (1973:12) states that this 'second-self' originated in the 'mask' used by actors in Classical theatre and as such 'incorporates the metaphorical roots of the "mask" concept, implying the 'total being' presented to the audience, outside and beyond the actor who assumes it'. Fowler (1973:142) thus contends that the deployment of the 'mask' offers 'a way out of the closed world of the ego into an objective vision communicable to others' that 'permits the artist to objectify his [her] experience and free it from mere subjectivity' (or conversely, to make objective experience subjective). In an interview with Adrian Monteath (1997:3) published in the *Saturday Star* of October 11, Uys says the following about his various personae:

Once you give them the respect of space, these characters start saying things I haven't consciously thought up. In a way, these people have nothing to do with me. I don't know where they come from, but they must be in there somewhere. I'm just the guy driving the truck [my emphases].

Through his use of semantically contrasting ideas such as 'these characters start saying things' versus 'I haven't consciously thought up' and 'these people have nothing to do with

me' versus 'but they must be in there somewhere', Uys confirms that his use of a persona involves an objective rather than a subjective activity. Walker (1997a:8) also confirms this when he states: 'Uys talks about his creation in the third person ... and has enough respect not to meddle in her life.'

As has already been intimated in this chapter, Uys uses the persona of Evita (in both his texts and performances) to express his personal views on cultural and social dissonance in South Africa. Obvious examples of this are the incisively satiric comments that Uys (1997a:flyleaf) expresses, in the guise of Evita, on a wide variety of issues relating to 'South African people, places and things' in *The Essential Evita Bezuidenhout* (1997a). Consider for instance, his open indictment of Mangosutho Gatsha Buthulezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Minister of Home Affairs from 1994 to 1999. Uys (1997a:15) describes Buthulezi as 'someone you're glad to see, while at the same time **wishing he would go away**' [my emphases]. The contradictory expressions 'you're glad to see' and 'wishing he would go away' provide a good example of Uys's use of chiasmic phrases to draw attention to the South African public's love/hate relationship with this particular politician. Uys's Evita also deploys chiasmic forms to express her ambiguous relationship with South Africa's 'First Couple' (supposedly her 'ex-boss' P W Botha, the Prime Minister and State President of South Africa during the closing years of apartheid, and his wife). Evita (Uys, 1997a:13) first belittles P W Botha, whom she describes as '**a bald, bland, unpleasant man with no sense of humour and an imperialist attitude**' [my emphases]. She then counteracts this negative image with a more sympathetic portrayal of Elize Botha when she enthuses: 'I loved Tannie Elize, **a sweet kind woman**, who, as first Lady, would **kick off her shoes and serve jellybabys [sic] to her guests** [my emphases].' The stark contrast between such phrases as 'a bald, bland, unpleasant man' and 'a sweet kind woman', 'no sense of humour' and 'kick off her shoes', and 'an imperialist attitude' and 'serve jellybabys [sic] to her guests' helps to estrange the public from the State President while intensifying their support for his wife. Uys carefully hides his subjective and often sarcastic opinions when he adopts the inimitable style of Evita and speaks from the perspective that the public has come to associate with, and expect from, his most renowned persona. Through this subtle chiasmic conflation of self and *alter ego*, Uys

protects both himself from charges of libel and some of his most biting satire from censorship, allegedly the rationale behind his creation of this persona. (The nature of satire as a literary genre, together with Uys's deployment of this particular device, is more fully discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.)

The passage from Uys's *Funigalore* (1995:1) quoted at the beginning of this introductory chapter focuses attention on the 'interplay [and] dialectics' (Breytenbach, 1985:149) between Pieter-Dirk Uys (narrator/actor) and Evita Bezuidenhout (character/persona) and reveals Uys's deployment of chiasmic configurations. The extract displays a strong correlation with the concept ' "I" create Image; Image makes "I" ' that fellow South African author, Breyten Breytenbach (1985:149), expounds in his book *A Season in Paradise* (1985) in the section entitled 'The self-image in the eye of the I':

The concept I am trying to convey is ... not a visible and tangible representation or imitation, ... but more of a 'mask'. Perhaps *imago* comes closest to it: [the] final and perfect stage after ... metamorphosis.

This statement highlights the utilization of the 'mask' as a literary tool and elucidates the nature of the relationship between 'image' and 'I'. ('Image' can be equated with 'mask' or 'persona' and 'I' with 'self' or 'author/actor'.) The above quotation is, therefore, extremely pertinent in terms of the relationship that exists between Pieter-Dirk Uys ('I') and Evita Bezuidenhout ('image'), and this persona's role in Uys's prose works and revues.

Metamorphosis is 'the process of the changing of form or substance by enchantment or other supernatural means and resulting in a complete transformation in the appearance, condition and character of a person or state of affairs' (Little, Fowler & Coulson, 1973:1315). This term encapsulates the transformation that occurs when Uys (a male performer) becomes Evita Bezuidenhout (a female persona). When video recordings of Uys's early revues such as *Adapt or Dye* (1982), *Farce About Uys* (1983), *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991) (excerpts from which are analysed in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis) are compared with his more recent revues *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) and *Symbols of Sex and State* (2001i), it appears that, for Uys, this gender-blending process

(discussed at length in Chapter Three) is not always a matter of casually slipping on a dress and false eyelashes in full view of the audience. It also involves a complete metamorphosis into the elegantly costumed and bejewelled ‘*imago*’ who is a ‘studied facade of middle-aged glamour’ (Uys, 1995:5). In *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b), Uys waives his usual revue routine and introduces an interval in the course of which he ‘changes’ himself into the character and persona of Evita. Walker (1997b:9), who watched Uys ‘undergo the metamorphosis’, states when Uys ‘dons her frocks he becomes her, right down to getting cheekbones that you can’t distinguish in Uys’s own face’. Although ‘Uys has green-brown eyes’, ‘Evita has bright blue eyes’ because, according to Uys, ‘it’s all part of “her personality” ’ (Haffajee & Jurgens, 1999:5).

During performances of *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) at The Civic Theatre, Johannesburg, in June 1997 and March 1998,⁴ Uys’s transformation was an eagerly awaited event. This was evidenced by the comments of the audience during the interval, together with the enthusiastic welcome Evita received at the commencement of the second half of Uys’s performance. This metamorphosis is so complete that it even spills over into the real world, thus confirming Breytenbach’s (1985:197) concept of ‘*imago*’. For example, Evita (1995:7) in her official capacity as the former Ambassador to the fictitious Republic of Bapetikosweti, was invited to address two pre-election rallies in 1994, one organised by ‘the Democratic Party in the PWV⁵ area’ and the other by ‘the Western Cape Branch of the ANC’.⁶

Breytenbach (1985:197) continues his explication of the transposition that occurs between the ‘I’ (self) and the ‘image’ (mask) when he states:

All of us live behind projections of ourselves. With the writer – because his self-consciousness is intimate material – this probably happens more consciously. ... That projected image ... is an intermediary. ... but to the degree in which others react upon that image, ... that image has a right to existence. Sometimes its creation [the “mask”] takes place over a period of

⁴ The writer attended a performance of this show during both periods.

⁵ Pretoria, the Witwatersrand and the Vaal Triangle (now Gauteng).

⁶ African National Congress Party.

years, ... [it] undergoes the influence of the community, [and] is determined by it.

Breytenbach's claim (1985:197) that 'to the degree in which others react upon that image, ... that image has a right to existence' serves to define the end point in the metamorphosis or '*imago*' – a condition that is obviously determined by the reaction of those who witness the said transfiguration. Robert Allen (1987) likewise pinpoints the crucial role the receiver plays in determining the existence of an image. In his article entitled 'Reader-Oriented Criticism', Allen (1987:78) discusses reception theory and emphasises the audience's role in the transformation process and, in particular, the notion of the reciprocal nature of perception *per se*:

As words on a page [or characters in a performance] the literary text is but one-half of the perception dynamic; it is an object, yet without a perceiving subject. It is the material residue of an absent, intending subject – the author. In the reading [or the perceiving] act, the fictional world represented by the words on the page [or the verbal and non-verbal⁷ signs that constitute the performance] is rendered within the consciousness of the reader.

Both Breytenbach and Allen's ideas are especially applicable to Uys's creation and presentation of Evita, as can be seen from Uys's comments in the introductory section of his book *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a). Uys admits that the creation of Evita as a disembodied voice in the *Sunday Express* and the inception of 'the legend of Evita Bezuidenhout' were concurrent. Uys (1994a:flyleaf) chose 'the wife of a Nationalist MP' as his 'voice', but it was a reader who christened her 'the Evita of Pretoria'. Uys 'gave this creature a physical reality' and a surname in his first revue *Adapt or Dye* (1982), first performed in 1981. Owing to public demand, Evita soon left the anonymity of the 'chorusline' and entered the world of 'folklore' and eventually became the leading lady of both Uys's stage and television shows. Uys's admission that because 'the public wanted more of [Evita] all the time', he 'created more [her family] around her' seems to validate Breytenbach and Allen's claims that the community (reader and audience) has power over the 'mask'. Evita's progress from a satirical 'voice' in a newspaper at the end of the 1970s

⁷ Verbal – words; non-verbal – all signs other than words.

to a woman of considerable public status who, in 1994, interviewed South Africa's first black President in Uys's television series *Evita's Funigalore I* (1994c), supports Breytenbach's (1985:147) proposition that 'the creation of an image ... takes place over a period of years'. Today Uys's most well-known persona has become 'a legend in her own time', an aspect that is explored in Chapter Five of this thesis.

It can, in fact, be argued that so successful is Uys at the art of female-impersonation that Evita has assumed iconic proportions in the eyes of the South African public, subsuming the 'I' (actor) into 'the image' (persona). Perhaps paradoxically, in the present context, this theatrical ploy even subverts (albeit temporarily) the very notion of chiasmic transformation, as 'image' and 'I' seduce each other through audience response – a response that reinforces the state of *imago* (Breytenbach, 1985:197). It is this positive audience response, both in South Africa and abroad, that provides testimony to Evita's continuing public appeal. Her tremendous popularity was evidenced during June 1997 when Uys presented two shows at the Civic Theatre: his revue *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) (Uys devotes the second half entirely to Evita) and his play *No Space on Long Street* (1997c) based on the life and times of The Space Theatre in Cape Town. Both these shows featured Pieter-Dirk Uys,⁸ but, while the main auditorium was packed to capacity for a Saturday performance of *Live from Boerassic Park*, the following evening a mere one hundred and fifty people watched *No Space on Long Street* in which Evita does not appear. That Evita has reached a pinnacle of her career is evident in that she has been accorded similar status to such illustrious personages as President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu in *The Essential Series* (1997a). Such popularity and prominence as Evita enjoys testifies to the dramatic efficacy of chiasmic slippage and the tendency of the 'image' to overshadow the 'I'. However, as Breytenbach (1985:148) notes, this type of adulation imposes restrictions on the creator.

Breytenbach (1985:148), like Fowler (1973:142), touches on the restrictive nature of the image or 'mask' as follows:

⁸ The writer attended a performance of both of these shows.

The image ... is not organic, it cannot extend and grow and relax over the years, it becomes a 'mask', ... [so] little by little you [the author/actor] become a prisoner of that image and run the risk of being smothered by it. A struggle may then ensue between the 'I' and the image. You may become one with the 'mask', until that form is molded.

Notwithstanding the audience's Coleridgean 'willing suspension of disbelief' (Endll & Jackson-Bate, 1983:6), evidence of how the 'mask' dominates its creator is found in Uys's (1994a:flyleaf) observations of the often dictatorial relationship between his mask (Evita) and himself, a concept that is explored at length in Chapter Six:

Even during the two years when **I stopped performing her** – fearing she would swamp me with her forcefulness, the public didn't notice. ... **Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout was alive and living among them**, in spite of **me**. ... People wrote to **her**, promising to support **her** ... legal efforts to control that 'third-rate satirist **Pieter-Dirk Uys**' who was so cruelly making fun of **her** [my emphases].

As well as drawing attention to the interdependence between the 'image' or 'mask' and the 'I' (self), Breytenbach (1985:148) rightly points out that the 'mask' can be used as a shield:

The image may be a substitute for the 'I' or may be used as a kind of shield for the 'I'. (Invariably we accept ... that a 'real person' must be hiding behind the intimation).

This description of the protective role of the 'mask' is applicable to Uys's creation of his Evita persona. As mentioned earlier, during the heyday of apartheid, 'she' shielded Uys or, more specifically, his 'contentious' anti-apartheid ideas, from the wrath of censors and critics alike. When during an interview (referred to earlier in this chapter) he was asked how he coped with censorship, Uys (Bishop, 1991:204) made the following comment:

You mustn't be surprised that they [the censors] don't allow you to say things. You have to find other ways of saying things.

One of Uys's 'other ways of saying things' is (as has already been argued) to make contact with the public through the guise of Evita. However, his deployment of a female persona sparked mixed response from the South African public and thus confirms Breytenbach's

(1985:148) claim that '[t]he image [acts] both as a means of contact and as an isolator'. During the interview mentioned above, Uys (Bishop, 1991:202) describes how his 'drag' role initially resulted in isolation:

South Africa ... has got a tremendous hangup about a man dressing up as a woman. ... It is just part of the fear and prejudice in this country that people are frightened of the idea of trans-sexualism.

Yet when asked later in this same interview how Black South Africans react to this traditionally western theatrical device, Uys (Bishop, 1991:204,202) emphatically replies: 'Oh very well.' Uys thus appears to foresee Evita's role as a mediating force in a post-apartheid multicultural South Africa (a facet of Evita's role that is explored at some length in Chapters Three, Five and Six). In fact, Uys is confident of his future role as both a satirist and a performer (which presumably includes the continued deployment of his popular persona, Evita), because he states:

...I realise that I have a long life as a satirist in the future South Africa. I don't need apartheid to make comments. I mean human nature will never let me down and people love laughing at things that are not to be spoken about.

Consequently, Uys (Van Gelder, 1997:7), having 'honed his wit on the grindstone of oppression' and 'survived the apartheid Government of South Africa', continues to use Evita as his agent as he turns 'his scorn on the shortcomings of democracy [as practised inside and outside South Africa] among other targets'.

The complex relationship that Breytenbach (1985:149) defines as ' "I" create Image; Image makes "I" ' which arises from the 'interplay [and] dialectics between actor and persona' (discussed earlier) is usefully explored at some length by Jacobs (1997) in his article 'Back into Africa: Breyten Breytenbach's Memory of Snow and of Dust. S. Africa'. Jacobs (1997:4) suggests that the 'interactive binarisms' that occur between 'self' and 'alter-ego' are the result of chiasmic⁹ interplay between the 'image' and the 'I'. Jacobs's understanding

⁹ Chiasmus has been used in both sacred and secular literature since antiquity as a persuasive device for the purpose of foregrounding the focal point of the message.

of chiasmus is, in turn, based on Sanford Budick's article (1996), 'Cross-Culture, Chiasmus, and the Manifold of Mind'. Budick (1996) interprets the complex and multifarious nature of chiasmus in a way which is perhaps more pertinent to the central proposition of this thesis than is Gray's (1984:43) more restricted definition (quoted earlier). Here Budick's (1996:227-230) definition is given prominence both below and later in this chapter:

Chiasmus is the movement of two sets of opposed signs or interactive binarisms in which the pattern or *chi* AB: BA is only one interim possibility. ...Each binary term is always poised for a change of its sign (A into B, B into A). ... The inherent doubleness of chiasmus necessarily leads beyond the chiasmus itself: thus the potential reversibility of all signs in any two pairs of binarisms sets the stage for the emergence of chiastic correspondences both within an individual's language and also ... between the chiasma of different individuals. ... Given the interlinguistic and intertextual relations of all signs, these interpersonal chiastic relations are ... frequent occurrences in any complex writing or utterance.

Even a cursory reading of any of Uys's writings reveals numerous examples of how he manipulates the chiastic trope in order to produce works of considerable literary interest. As mentioned earlier, Uys (1997a:22) employs simple changes in syntax as a means of heightening his meaning as, for example, when Evita condenses her view of gender equality into two terse statements '**women behave like men**' and '**men dress up like women**' [my emphases]. Uys frequently deploys a more complex form of semantic chiasmus and, like Budick (1996:227-230), appears to be aware of both the 'inherent doubleness of chiasmus' and the 'interlinguistic and intertextual relatedness of signs'. Through the 'emergence of chiastic correspondences' (the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas) within his own texts and performances, Uys, albeit unconsciously, stimulates 'the emergence of the chiasma of different individuals', namely those of his audience. In this way he ensures that his satirical messages will be interpreted and enjoyed by a wide range of people, and during this process, raises the socio-political awareness of both his readers and viewers. The following extended quotation contains extracts from conversations that purportedly take place between Evita and Greta, her cook, and between Evita and her

husband. These conversations contain examples of Uys's (1994a:94,5) use of a more complex form of socio-political criticism:

[Evita] unwrapped the paper and held up a small bottle filled with soil.

“It is a piece of my heart, Madam” [said Greta]. ... “In that little jar is some earth from my soul. The Master’s big white government is going to steal my soul.” ...

“Greta is concerned about the land she lives on Hasie” [Evita] said calmly. “What does she mean? ... I always thought that the land beyond the sewerage farm belonged to her tribe.”

[Hasie] fumed ... **“That old *kaffirmeid* had been fleecing his family for years ... blacks were no more tribes than families were nations. They just lived wherever their constantly pregnant women dropped the babies, and then expected the land to be regarded as their sacred territory.”**

This dialogue contains examples of how Uys (1994a:94,5) uses this more complex form of semantic chiasmus across both sentences and paragraphs to expose different perceptions of the same topic and, in so doing, he presumably evokes the emergence of other diverse responses from the audience. This particular text deals with what is a very contentious issue throughout Africa, namely that of land ownership. Uys first reveals the reverence that Greta and her people have for ‘their’ land in the phrases ‘a piece of my heart’ and ‘some earth from my soul’, as well as her distrust of the ‘white government’ who will ‘steal [her] soul’. Next, Evita displays her ignorance towards her cook’s aspirations – ‘What does she mean?’ and ‘I always thought ... the land ... belonged to her tribe’. Finally Dr Bezuidenhout exhibits both a callous indifference towards the rights of Greta and her community and his distrust of their activities – ‘that old *kaffirmeid* had been fleecing his family for years’ and they ‘expected the land to be regarded as their sacred territory’.

The following chiastic shifts are typical of those found in the numerous examples of Uys’s literary works and stage performances presented and analysed in the next five chapters of this thesis. Contrasting elements explored in this study include: actor as self versus actor as persona, male actor versus female character (Chapter Three), humour/entertainment versus

criticism/education, satire versus parody¹⁰ (Chapter Two), Evita's political life versus Evita's domestic life and Evita's version of her life history versus Uys's (as character/narrator) version of her life history (Chapter Five), fact versus fiction, impersonation of real people versus characterisation of fictitious people (Chapter Six), and prose works and scripts versus performances.

Before proceeding with the discussion of the rhetorical device of chiasmus *per se*, it is necessary to provide a brief biographical sketch of Uys, the man. Somewhat ironically, in view of the racial policies that Uys frequently challenges, even Uys's heritage appears to display chiasmic traits, as Uys (Bishop, 1991:188) proudly traces his ancestry to the Voortrekker heroes, Pieter and Dirk Uys, and to his great-, great-, great-, greatgrandmother who, Uys (Bishop, 1991:202) claims, was a Coloured prostitute. This anchors him to the reality of [present day] South Africa, prefiguring – quite literally – Nelson Mandela's notion of our rainbow nation! Uys's father was Afrikaans and his mother a German Jew and both were professional musicians. He spoke Afrikaans and German at home and went to an English primary school. In another, perhaps subconscious, reference to the operation of 'chiasmic' conditioning, Uys (Bishop, 1991:195) remarks that 'he attended the Dutch Reformed Church and was brought up a fascist in a Christian home'. However, in the 'post-mortem' to *Funigalore*, Uys (1995:263) claims his mother 'never allowed ethnic supremacy to poison [her] home and family'. Uys spent nine months in the navy, studied drama at the University of Cape Town, attended film school in London and has worked as a stage manager, writer, actor and producer. He has toured South Africa, Europe, America and Australia. When asked to name people whom he admires and who have affected his life, Uys (Bishop, 1991:186,189,199,210) offered such diverse names as Napoleon, Bernard Shaw, Kenneth Tynan, Hendrik Verwoerd, Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, Sophia Loren, Mimi Coertze, Noel Coward, Neil Simon and Alan Ayckbourn. Uys (1995:239) has tremendous respect for Nelson Mandela, whom he refers to as 'the most remarkable politician in the world'. The influence of the very disparate lifestyles and

¹⁰Gray (1984:151) usefully defines parody as 'an imitation of a specific work of literature or style devised so as to ridicule its characteristic features. Exaggeration, or the application of a serious tone to an absurd subject, are typical methods'.

occupations of these people, together with the wide range of experiences gained during his youth in South Africa and in England, plus his adult life both as a writer and as a performer (whose literary work has achieved national and international acclaim) has exposed Uys to a variety of viewpoints. Uys's multicultural, multiracial and multilingual heritage and experiences suggest a similarity between the mind of Uys the man and Uys the writer/actor and Budick's concept of 'manifold of mind' (elaborated upon below).

Chiasmus is used frequently by thinkers who possess 'a complex, divided mind ...of diverse origin' (Budick, 1996:225) because of this trope's 'open, magnetic and unique potentiality'. Such a mind is capable of experiencing other minds or perceptions and, instead of creating dependence (what Budick (1996:224) calls a 'master-slave relationship'), produces a person who can perceive life from various angles (this concept is discussed further later in this chapter). Such a 'manifold of mind' frequently expresses itself through the 'rhetorical figure [of] chiasmus' (Budick, 1996:224-5). Uys's intercultural 'manifold mind' is apparent in his presentation of himself as a 'white, Afrikaans, Jewish, bald, middle-aged, gay man with great legs' with 'as many prejudices as any other normal South African' who 'was born a racist' (Uys, 1995:262). Uys (Bishop, 1991:205) describes himself as 'anti-apartheid' but not 'anti-South Africa' [my emphases]. It is interesting, in terms of the argument of this thesis, that Uys's comment demonstrates how he employs chiasmus during conversation and not merely as a literary device. He presumably uses this tactic here to distinguish between his rejection of South Africa's political ideology of apartheid, on the one hand, and his belief in the inherent morality of the average South African citizen, which he hopes to awaken through his plays and books, on the other.

Uys's wide experience of diverse cultures and influences may have played a pivotal role in his choice of literary forms, for example satire, and his frequent manipulation of chiasmic tropes. Uys (1995:7) refers to himself as a 'political comic'. As a 'political comic' his central message is presumably political criticism and one of the tools he uses to convey his satirical critique is his persona or 'alter-ego', Evita Bezuidenhout. Uys has dubbed Evita 'the grand horizontal of Afrikaner politics', and Uys (1995:5) credits her with the chiasmic

traits of being ‘a former fascist and racist’ who is now ‘a reborn democrat’ [my emphases]. Uys (1995:5) says of Evita:

I created her as a character, built up her familiar alphabet, established her baroque background and dieted on her behalf. It is no secret that inside [her] studied facade of middle-aged glamour is an unglamorous middle-aged man [my emphases].

The above quotation again exhibits the conflationary nature of the chiasmic concept which Breytenbach (1985:149) refers to as ‘“I” create Image; Image makes “I” ’ (mentioned above) and reveals the constant slippage that occurs between Uys as writer (creator) and Uys as persona (character portrayal). While Uys (1995:5) establishes the writer’s dominance in the statement ‘I created her as a character’, the phrase ‘[I] dieted on her behalf’ displays the persona’s insidious control over ‘her’ creator. The wording of the final sentence exhibits a typical chiasmic movement as Uys (1995:5) attempts to explain the relationship between the ‘image’ (the dazzling and glitzy Evita character) and the ‘I’ (the unprepossessing bald actor, Pieter-Dirk Uys who ‘is generous ... genial but somewhat remote’ (Greig, 1999:10).

Breytenbach’s explication of the concept of the persona as ‘mask’ that was discussed earlier in this chapter presents ideas that are of considerable import to this particular thesis. Breytenbach concludes his discussion of the persona or ‘image’ with a rhetorical question; moreover, in a similar vein to Allen’s (1987:227-230) previously mentioned arguments, Breytenbach (1985:149) seems to ground his answer in reception theory.

Does image determine the nature of the self [‘I’]? ... The perception of the self [by both the ‘I’ and audience/readers] creates the self. For every observer there will be a unique image. The mouth utters a single word, but every ear hears something different. But because I can never put myself entirely in their [audience/readers] place, I am unable to identify that ‘I’ objectively.

Breytenbach pertinently states that each observer will ‘read’ the image in terms of his/her own perceptions and that these ‘readings’ may differ from the creator’s understanding of

the image. When he focuses attention on the disparate ways in which the 'mask' is perceived by its creator and its numerous observers, it appears that Breytenbach is alluding to the 'semiotic richness of signs'¹¹ (both verbal and non-verbal).¹² The question of a sign's 'semiotic richness' is extensively explored by Keir Elam in his book *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (1980) (with specific reference to stage sign-vehicles) and is further articulated by Sanford Budick (1996:227) in his previously mentioned article 'Cross-Culture, Chiasmus, and the Manifold of Mind', when he argues as follows:

Because of the multiple meaning of all signs, any one reading (at a given junction of possible combinations) of any sign ... is always to some extent an arbitrary decision.

Uys deploys a wide range of verbal and non-verbal signs in his messages (newspaper columns, novels, plays, revues, films, videos, television programmes and compact discs or CDs). At any 'one reading' both verbal and non-verbal 'signs' can be given 'multiple meanings'. Thus in the analyses of Uys's work undertaken in this thesis, cognizance is taken of both the multifaceted nature of verbal and non-verbal signs and the wide range of meanings that different individuals will attribute to these signs. Within the context of a dramatic performance, the non-verbal signifiers are as important a message-carrying device as the verbal or spoken message. It is for this reason that the vital role of non-verbal signs in Uys's dramatic performances and, in particular, in his metamorphoses from author/actor to character/performer in terms of the Evita image (and other personae) that he presents to his reader/audience, is examined more fully in Chapter Four of this thesis.

In his exploration of chiasmus, Budick (1996:224) also examines interpersonal relationships and intercultural relationships. These aspects are germane to this assessment of Uys's use of chiasmus as a sardonic tool to prod the public's conscience in multicultural South Africa where, until 1994, the government was in the hands of a white minority who denied the majority of citizens such basic human rights as enfranchisement. During the

¹¹ Semiotics or semiology is defined by Saussure (in Barthes, 1967:9) as 'a general science of signs' while Eco (1984:10) describes semiology as 'the philosophy of signs'.

¹² The two major elements of semiology.

course of his deliberations on the nature of chiasmus, Budick (1996:224) poses and answers a series of challenging questions such as the following:

Can we picture an activity ... of thinking together? ... [An activity] in which the individual participant knows only part of what is being thought? ... Assuming that knowing another ... is a significant part of what is called thinking, can we retrieve a picture of the joining together of our attempts to know and be known by another? These cannot be idle questions for an enquiry into the terms of a partnership of cultures. If we once assign primacy ... of thought to any one agent in an alleged mutuality of cultures, we [must] theorize such mutuality as ... a master-slave relation.

In the above extract, which has been edited to draw attention to salient aspects, Budick (1996:224) refers to 'a master-slave relation[ship]' and, in so doing, draws attention to a fundamental human dilemma, namely that it is often difficult for one human being to access another's experience or understanding of any particular aspect of life. Uys (1994a:82) draws attention to this lack of 'partnership' of minds and cultures in the following passage:

... [Evita] had refused to see a doctor as it would only cause the family unnecessary worry on this day, when **everyone's concern should be with the nation rather than with a young woman on the verge of a miscarriage.**

She watched her husband take phone-call after phone-call and issue orders to his sisters. The result of the Referendum was a resounding "Yes". **Fifty-two per cent of the white nation wanted to become a Republic!**

The household erupted in celebration. Eva went into the kitchen [and spoke to] her **faithful cook**

"Greta?"

"Ja Madam?"

"How do you feel about the Republic?"

"It's very nice, Madam," she said, stirring gently.

"No, what I mean is, **how do you feel?"**

"Does it matter, Madam?" Greta asked, and moved off.

"I don't suppose it does," Eva thought. "No, I don't suppose it does" [my emphases].

Instead of the desired ‘partnership of cultures’ (Budick, 1996:224), Uys’s text points to a lack of understanding and empathy between people of different cultures and backgrounds, namely Evita and ‘her faithful black cook, Greta’. This problem was exacerbated in South Africa during the apartheid era when people of different races and cultures lived and ‘played’ separately.¹³ In this passage Uys also exposes what is, perhaps, an even sadder omission, namely a lack of empathy between people within a supposedly closely knit family and/or social group such as Evita and her husband and sisters-in-law. Jacobs (1997), drawing upon Budick, offers the utilization of chiasmic configurations as a means of achieving the desired ‘partnership of cultures’ (Budick, 1996:224). This superior form of relationship occurs because, according to Jacobs (1997:5),

[c]hiasmic configurations are both oppositional and reciprocal and, in their continual creation of potentialities of relation, are premised on co-subjectivity [involving] ... reciprocity and potentiality between subject and subject.

It is the ‘reciprocity and potentiality’ of chiasmus that makes it ‘an ideal tool’ for eliminating the ‘master-slave relation[ships]’ (Budick, 1996:224) that prevent not only the sharing of ideas between different groups of people, but also causes the stagnation of intellectual growth. In the following extract from his detailed exposition, Budick (1996:228, 226,224) focuses on the infinitely circular nature of chiasmic configurations that enable literary works to become catalysts for producing an ‘affiliation with other minds’ and, consequently, a ‘mutuality of cultures’:

Within the complex form of chiasmus often found in literary works ... we experience a continuous circulation of relations both direct and inverse: namely AB’, BA’, A’B’, B’A, AA’, BB’ ... each of which may be encountered separately and in combinations, forward and reverse. [Due to] this illimitable circulation [and] through the cross-reading which it sets in motion, chiasmus uncovers endless changes in its component antitheses.

The popularity of ‘Evita’ with South Africans of all races (already referred to in this chapter) appears to confirm that through his deployment of such chiasmic confluences as

¹³ The Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950, which enforced residential segregation, and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act No 49 of 1953 (Cameron & Spies, 1986).

man/woman, fact/fiction and gossip/political comment, Uys succeeds in bringing about a 'mutuality of cultures' (Budick 1996:224). Consequently, the explanation Budick (1996:225) gives of the relationship between the deployment of chiasmus and a "manifold" mind', with its potential for coming together with 'other minds' (Budick, 1996:226) is pivotal to this study of Uys's satirical work. Abrams (1971:153) claims that satire 'uses laughter as a weapon' against social and political dissonance (see Chapter One, Footnote 2). It is through his constant slippage between entertainment and education that Uys (albeit consciously or subconsciously) applies a wide range of chiasmic configurations as a tool for titillating the political, social and moral sentience of his readers and audience in an attempt to ensure the production of different perceptions or 'ways of seeing'. Here it is argued that Uys uses comedy to demonstrate how the perceptions of one particular group of people or a nation (usually those of South African 'whites') of both their own and other cultures are the result of political propaganda and a policy of hegemony.¹⁴ Evita's (Uys, 1997a:5) definition of apartheid appears to provide a good example of the above claim:

Apartheid was most definitely not 'a pigment of the imagination'¹⁵ as someone once wrote on the wall of the men's toilet in Parliament. (Pik told me!) It is difficult to recall its attraction in this time of instant democracy. Officially now apartheid is dead but the memory lingers on like a dead rat under the cathedral floorboards. It was for most of my life **not so much a policy, more a way of existence**. Liberals see it as a sly political game of ethnic scrabble, in which the **whites won everything without trying**, and the **blacks cleaned up afterwards without choice** [my emphases].

Uys's Evita begins her definition with an amusing play on words when in place of the usual 'figment' she substitutes 'pigment' with its connotations of skin colour, one of the crucial elements of apartheid. Uys adds to the humour when he locates the graffiti in the men's toilet – after all Evita is supposed to be a woman – but then quickly explains how 'she' obtained this knowledge with the aside 'Pik told me'. Uys/Evita then reflects on apartheid from the safety of the post-apartheid era in two sentences that offer contrasting perspectives of apartheid. The first sentence begins with the rather ambiguous phrase 'it is difficult to

¹⁴ A society's promotion of one perspective as the legitimate viewpoint.

¹⁵ This phrase appears in a number of Uys's works (see Chapter Two).

recall its attraction’, which is an allusion to the fact that many South Africans have chosen to forget the realities of apartheid. It is also a reminder that there was nothing attractive about a policy based on racial discrimination. This statement is counteracted by the second half of the second sentence because the phrase ‘memory lingers on’ is in direct contrast to ‘it is difficult to recall’, while the phrase ‘like a dead rat’ negates the words ‘its attraction’ in the first statement. While the words ‘democracy’ and ‘apartheid’ suggest disparate societies, the addition of the adjective ‘instant’, with its connotations of the immediate gratification demanded by today’s consumer society rather than long-standing quality subvert the benefits of democracy. Likewise the use of the word ‘officially’ reminds the reader that although apartheid has been outlawed in the statute books, it will take more than laws to rid South Africa of racist practices. The two statements ‘not so much a policy’ and ‘more a way of existence’ reinforce the concept of hegemony. The final sentence contains semantically different terms, namely ‘whites’ versus ‘blacks’, ‘won everything’ versus ‘cleaned up afterwards’ and ‘trying’ versus ‘choice’ that offer a humorous and exaggerated description of apartheid. However, on reflection, these statements do not seem such an unrealistic definition of the apartheid policies that placed numerous restrictions on South Africans, and, in particular, limited their choices with regard to employment, place of residence and sexual or marriage partner. In addition, given the vastly different economic circumstances of the majority of black and white citizens, it is quite possible that to many less affluent black people it appeared that ‘whites won everything without trying’.

Another author who discussed the deployment of chiasmic configurations prior to the above articles written by Budick and Jacobs is John W. Welch. In his book *Chiasmus in Antiquity – Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, Welch (1981:1,12 & 259) explains how, in Classical Greek literature, chiasmus served a number of distinct stylistic purposes, some of which appear to be commensurate with Uys’s use of this device. Welch (1981:11) notes that chiasmus was developed in accordance with the needs of Classical oral traditions (Uys writes drama for performance as well as prose) and its effective deployment has didactic and moral implications (Uys seeks to educate as well as entertain). Welch (1981:11) presents the notion that when chiasmus structures ‘the flow of thoughts and sounds within a sustained ... artistic verbal expression, ... the form merges with both the message and the

meaning of the passage'. Welch (1981:12) therefore argues that chiasmus is 'more than just ... a skeleton upon which to hang thoughts and words'. An attempt is made throughout this study to show how Uys, in his role of political satirist, exploits the chiasmic form in a way that is both aesthetically pleasing and morally challenging. Uys engages in what Welch (1981:12) calls 'a forceful style of speaking and writing' by continually coordinating 'rigorous and abrupt juxtapositions of contrasting forms within a unified literary system ... that focus the receiver's attention on the central concerns' and, presumably, raise the political consciousness of both readers and audience.

In the (already mentioned) blurb in which Uys (1994a:flyleaf) describes Evita's 'birth' and metamorphosis, he also uses chiasmus as an integral part of the text to foreground his satirical intent. Uys again combines the dual aspects of satire, as he entertains in order to attract prospective readers/audiences and educates in order to arouse their consciousness of the insidious mores of apartheid. The following extract is quoted at length to illustrate how, by continually juxtaposing ideas with opposing meanings, Uys (1994a:flyleaf) constantly reinforces his satirical thrust:

Towards the end of the 1970s, **I was writing** a weekly column for the *Sunday Express* in Johannesburg. ... 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.**

So **I** created a character in my column out of whose mouth these rumours/facts dripped like warm honey. **She** was the wife of a Nationalist MP, someone on the **fringes of power** but elbow-deep in the catering, so she **knew all the ins and outs**. For 3 years she appeared about once a month, informing the nation of the **stench** under the **cloak of respectability**, and no one stopped her/me. ...

Right from the start, **Tannie Evita** stepped out of the chorusline, and took off into folklore, leaving behind the many other characters I did in my shows. ... The public wanted more of her all the time, so I created more around her – her husband **Hasie**, and her 3 children. ...

The absurdity of the homeland system cried out for attention, and so she became its **most famous ambassador**. ... Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout ... became as confident on **foreign soil** as she was in her **own backyard**. People wrote to her, ... Minister Pik Botha faxed her, Archbishop Desmond Tutu kissed her on the cheek. ...

Originally the idea for this book centred round a **few recipes and funny pictures**, but once five years of research into the fascinating details of South African politics had passed, I realized that Evita's biography was not just the story of a woman, or the **story of a nation**. It was in many cases the **story of our lives** [my emphases].

This introduction is written in an informal register, as can be seen in Uys's use of phrases such as 'abuzz with rumours', 'elbow-deep in the catering' and 'Tannie Evita', that attract and hold the readers' attention by engaging them in a dialogue with the text. As a 'political comic' Uys alerts his readers to the duplicity of politicians. He succeeds in doing this by creating a character who, as 'the wife of a Nationalist MP' and later as 'a famous ambassador' of an imaginary 'black homeland', 'knew all the ins and outs' and was thus obviously party to 'the stench under the cloak of respectability'. Uys displays his preference for deploying chiasmic configurations that involve a transposition of meaning rather than word order (mentioned earlier) through his juxtaposing of the following subtly satiric phrases: 'someone on the fringes of power' with 'she knew all the ins and outs', 'foreign soil' with 'own backyard' and 'Tannie Evita' with 'most famous ambassador'. The final paragraph reveals an important aspect of Uys's work, namely that of showing his readers how they had/have been duped by the Nationalist government. He does this through such ambiguously sarcastic phrases as 'the fascinating details of South African politics', and his use of repetition and transformative contrast, for example: 'story of a woman, story of a nation and story of our lives'. In this last sentence he combines the use of chiasmus with the rhetorical device of *gradatio* as his argument moves from the individual through the general to the communal perspective. Uys uses these literary ploys as a means of exposing the public to the dangers of prejudice in general and apartheid in particular, and also to show how these practices affect the lives of ordinary people.

Slippage between the parallel, yet different, aspects of sardonic and parodic satire – another manifestation of chiasmic configurations – is also constantly in evidence in Uys's works. (As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, the finer nuances of the various modes of satire are discussed in Chapter Two.) Through his portrayal of actual personalities such as Roelof F Botha (nicknamed 'Pik') and Desmond Tutu in his prose works and revues, Uys

frequently parodies the actions of South African politicians and public figures and exposes them to closer scrutiny by the general public. The success of Uys's application of this technique as a means of denigrating the apartheid ideology – and, latterly, the present dispensation – is evidenced by Dr Dikgang Makwetu Banda's prediction on the back cover of *A Part Hate, A Part Love* that 'this [book] will soon be the first prescribed book on South African history for schools in the New South Africa'. Surely this statement offers affirmation of the credibility and effectiveness of Uys's particular blend of satire, which involves 'forty nine percent [*sic*] anger, fifty one percent [*sic*] entertainment' (Bishop, 1991:199).

As mentioned in Footnote Two, satire uses ridicule to diminish individuals, classes, institutions or even nations. Such a process is rooted in a belief that human beings share a set of universally accepted social and moral norms and values based upon a definable reality. However, Fletcher (1987:ix-x) quite rightly problematizes both the nature of reality and the role of political satire in contemporary society, as can be seen from the following extracts taken from the introduction to *Contemporary Political Satire*.

In contemporary, quantum (non-atomistic) physics it is accepted that observation influences the object, and that theories of reality are useful 'as ifs' rather than 'true' descriptions. ... Without certain knowledge about the nature of reality, there can be no basis for demonstrating the ... absolute priority of one set of moral values over another [and consequently ... no possibility of] ... aesthetically ordering reality [or] formulating an interpretative frame of reference which can decode the bizarre realities of today.

Clearly, then, the assumptions informing post-modern literature conflict with those that underlie satire, specifically satire's proximity to historical reality and its reliance on establishing shared comprehension and evaluation between satirist and audience. ...

If reality has no verifiable ultimate meaning in human terms, no categorical 'ought', then there can be no acceptable basis for demonstrating a 'best' political system, and the reasons for preferring one set of political arrangements over another cannot be universally self-evident.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Uys acknowledged the changing face of satire during his interview with Bishop. In his customary fashion, Uys (Bishop, 1991:198) expresses his ideas through chiasmic configurations:

... playing an Afrikaans lady [Evita] is an immensely satisfying theatrical trick because she works, as a clown.¹⁶ In the old days when the world **was normal** the clown had to have purple hair and a green nose. The **world is now totally crazy** so the **clown** has to be **totally real**. ... What is happening is **not original**, it is **absurd**¹⁷ [my emphases].

Uys subsequently voices his views on satire in another interview, published in *The Star* of 30 April 1997 (Walker, 1997b:8-9). However, this time Uys discusses his experiences as a satirist in South Africa, both during and after the apartheid era and, in so doing, indicates that his approach to satire since the 1970s has, in some aspects, been mutable and, in others, immutable (Walker, 1997b:8-9):

In the seventies, **we had to create absurdity** to look at **life**. **Life** is now so **absurd** that you have to be **terribly realistic** on stage. ... You're **not speaking on behalf of anybody** because **everybody's got his voice**. You have **freedom of speech** but **no speech**. ... **That was the culture of death**. **This is the culture of life** [my emphases].

Once again Uys's propensity for punctuating his conversation with chiasmic figures can be seen clearly in the above extract as he engages in both syntactical and semantic chiasmus. However, this passage offers evidence of the more complex form of chiasmus that Uys deploys and that Budick (1996:229) defines as follows:

¹⁶ Little *et al.* (1973:353) define a clown as 'a fool or jester; ... one who professionally counterfeits folly for the entertainment of others' [through] mimicry or buffoon ... ridicule [or] burlesque'.

¹⁷ Camus (in Fowler 1973:1) defines 'absurd' as 'the tension which emerges from man's determination to discover purpose and order in a world which steadfastly refuses to evidence either' [that produces] 'a world which sanction[s] Nazi brutality as easily as individual acts of violence'. Camus then 'move[s] towards liberal humanism' and argues that: 'The end of the movement of absurdity, of rebellion, etc. is compassion [and] love'. However, writers of Theatre of the Absurd, such as Ionesco and Beckett, regard 'man's actions, aspirations and emotions as merely ironical' [because] 'man lives in an entropic world in which communication is impossible and illusion preferred to reality'. [Thus] 'the individual has no genuine scope for action, he is the victim of his metaphysical situation'. Absurd drama abandons 'linear plot, plausible character development and rational language'. Esslin (in Fowler (1973:2) defines 'absurd' as 'the unbridgeable gulf between aspiration and fulfilment, the impossibility of communication, or the futility of human relationships'.

Chiasmus creates a species of absences between its binary terms [that] are not simply the antitheses or negation of the binary terms themselves. ... This ... de-spatialization of relations ... facilitates 'the metamorphosis of A into B, B into A' that results in 'sameness (AB:BA; AA=BB) interchanging with difference (AB:AB; AB=AB) [so] each binary term is charged with the potential of its opposite'.

When describing his approach to satire quoted above, Uys's use of 'chiasmus creates a species of absences between its binary terms ('absurdity/absurd' and 'life') [that] are not simply the antitheses ... of the binary terms themselves'. Instead Uys adds a third statement ('be terribly realistic on stage') that, in addition to being the opposite of the words 'create absurdity' in the first statement, explains what it is 'that [satirists] have to do'. The third and fourth sentences offer further examples of Uys's customary habit of conflating syntactic and semantic chiasmus (referred to above). A similar process is undertaken with the clause at the end of the first sentence, namely 'on behalf of anybody'. This clause is exchanged for the ambiguous clause 'everyone's got', that can be interpreted as being either similar or opposite in meaning to 'on behalf of anybody', and then placed at the beginning of the second statement, thus producing a complex cross-over that draws attention to itself. In the final two statements of his description, Uys retains the same structure by keeping the word 'culture' in its central position but replaces the words 'that was' with 'this is' and 'death' with 'life'. Through this combination of both complex and simple forms of chiasmus, Uys's satirical message is 'charged with the potential of its opposite', to use Budick's (1996:229) phrase. In this way Uys draws attention to the gulf that exists between the ideal and the actual socio-political reality found in South Africa, both before and after the demise of apartheid, concepts that he encapsulates in the statements 'the culture of death' and 'the culture of life'. It can be argued that it was/is this anomaly that both formed the embryo and sustains the momentum of Uys's satirical revues and, in particular, the birth and continued success of Evita Bezuidenhout, Uys's 'clown creature' turned 'designer democrat' (Accone, 1999:1).

The role of contemporary political satirists such as Uys has become problematic because, according to Uys (Walker, 1997b:8-9), the 'so-called' normal world has been replaced by

one in which ‘life is now so absurd that you have to be terribly realistic on stage’. The nature of this ‘absurd’ world offers support for post-modern thinking that considers reality to be non-quantifiable and, consequently, questions the feasibility of promoting one set of ‘political arrangements’ (Fletcher, 1987:x) as being more morally acceptable than another. These concepts are explored in some detail in Chapter Two of this thesis with particular reference to Uys’s work. An attempt is made to assess how Uys both subsumes various personae and utilizes chiasmus in his satirical writings and performances in order to find an ‘interpretative frame of reference’ (Fletcher, 1987:ix) that can make sense of the often seemingly pointless and contradictory happenings that jointly comprise the contemporary South African socio-political reality.

Chapter Three of this thesis concentrates on one such frame of reference – that is Uys’s adoption of female personae through the process of ‘cross-dressing’ or drag.¹⁸ Uys has successfully invented a variety of women, including Nowell Fine, Billie-Jeanne Makoeloeli, Ossewania Poggenpoel and, of course, his most celebrated persona, who is axiomatic to this study, namely the illustrious Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout. As has already been noted earlier in this introduction, Evita first surfaced in *The Sunday Express* at the end of the 1970s and then made a brief appearance in Uys’s first revue ‘*Adapt or Dye*’ (1982). This ‘drag queen’ (Uys, 1995:3) was so successful that before long she became synonymous with ‘the king of South African satirists’ (Accone, 1999:3). Chapter Three examines both Uys’s creation of female characters in his plays and his impersonation of women in his revues, and in particular, Evita Bezuidenhout. When asked why he frequently appropriates female personae, Uys (Bishop, 1991:189) responded as follows:

I find actresses more interesting than actors. Actresses use the alphabet of the theatre. The actors get stuck with their masculine ego and don’t take chances. ...I find in my revues, using women in my chorus line gives me such a wonderful extra limb. I find my women more interesting than my men on stage [my emphases].

¹⁸ Baker (1994:17) says that the term drag originally referred to ‘the petticoat or skirt used by actors when playing female parts’ but today is used to denote ‘women’s clothing when worn by men’.

At a later stage during the same interview Uys (Bishop, 1991:198) admits that he finds

... playing different **sexes** is as effective as playing different **political persuasions** [my emphases].

As usual the 'highlighted' sections in the above extracts provide further examples of how, even during normal conversation, Uys frequently embraces semantic chiasmus.

As the majority of characters in Uys's early plays are women, Chapter Three presents an overview of the main female characters in *Paradise is Closing Down* (1978), *God's Forgotten* (1981) and *Panorama* (1989b) in an attempt to show how they serve as precursors for Evita and members of her family and entourage. Reference is also made to Uys's use of the chiasmic milieu within the characters' dialogue.

Chapter Three also looks at the phenomenon of a male actor portraying a woman. This is neither a new nor an unusual event in the world of theatre. Men or boys have played/play female roles for a variety of reasons. Firstly, when social conventions forbade/forbid women to perform in public, men portrayed/portray the female characters as is the case with the *tan* of China, the *onnagata* of Japan and the 'boy' actresses of European Renaissance theatre who, at times, even played women pretending to be men. Secondly, certain theatrical genres demand that men play female roles such as the *katoi* of Thailand and the western pantomime dame. Thirdly, men can choose to play female roles as, for example, the drag queens or female-impersonators who portray both real and fictional women. This chapter takes cognizance of the theories of Garber (1992), Baker (1994) and Tewksbury (1994), all of whom have written at some length on male to female cross-dressers (drag queens) and, in particular, the transvestite's dual role as both inventor and intervener. Analyses of a few of Uys's written works, performance texts and videos of stage and television shows focus attention on his deployment of the chiasmic traits of inventor (one who creates) and intervener (one who disrupts, breaks down) through the guise of his most well-known female persona, Evita. The 'ritual' involved in the metamorphosis of a male actor into a physically and socially acceptable 'woman' is probed; as well as the importance of this ceremony both as an aid to transvestism and as a

tool for socio-political intervention. The social implications of clothes and manners are examined, and particular attention is paid to the 'cosmetic and social adjustments' that female impersonators undergo in order to achieve an acceptable metamorphosis. Evita's appearance and mannerisms are scrutinized in an attempt to ascertain the validity of the adage 'clothes maketh the man' or, in this particular instance, 'clothes maketh the man into a woman'. Chapter Three also looks at what Garber (1992:16) regards as the transvestite persona's most important cultural function, namely his/her ability to blur gender boundaries and, in so doing, draw the public's attention to other possible areas of 'category crisis', whether 'cultural, social and/or aesthetic'. As mentioned previously, the transvestite figure also has a third role to play, namely that of an interventor (someone who acts as an intermediary or enabler) and thus Chapter Three looks at how Uys's Evita 'mask' functions as the middleman or, in current politically correct speech, the 'middlewoman' between South Africa's past and future. A number of Uys's works in which Evita plays this type of role are studied, namely Uys's book *Funigalore – Evita's Real-life Adventures in Wonderland* (1995), as well as the popular television series *Funigalore I* and *II* (1994c; 1994d), *Evita's People's Party incorporating The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999b) and *Evita – Live and Dangerous* (1999e). When, during an interview, he was asked to account for Evita's popularity, Uys (Bishop, 1991:193) replied:

Women like her because I don't make fun of women. And men like her because I actually make fun of men's preconceptions of women [my emphases].

By suggesting a conflict of ideas on the part of those who receive his messages, Uys would appear to offer evidence of how this particular theatrical contrivance generates what Budick (1996:227) terms 'multiple meaning' (referred to earlier in this chapter). Uys's above comment suggests that women readers/theatre-goers perceive Evita as a 'real' rather than as a satirical figure, while men view her as a comic device who sends up the stereotypical role that society allocates women. However, despite their different perceptions, this persona is popular with both men and women and thus, by implication, she will be equally liked by people of different racial and political backgrounds. Evita thus appears to be an ideal tool for mediating the change from South Africa's apartheid past to a more racially

representational ideology, a role that she played to perfection in Uys's *Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d). (Possible connections between Uys's Evita and current feminist issues are discussed in Chapter Five.)

Chapter Four of this thesis goes on to examine how Uys exploits the 'multiple meaning' (Budick, 1996:227) of signs in his performance texts and, in particular, his utilization of non-verbal 'sign-systems' (Elam, 1980:3) is scrutinized. As mentioned earlier, the current interchangeable terms, semiology or semiotics, are used to describe the scientific study of both verbal and non-verbal signs – a discipline that comprises both 'a general science of signs' (Saussure in Barthes, 1967:9) and 'the philosophy of signs' (Eco, 1984:10). Elam (1980:1) adds to this ontology as follows:

Semiology is a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. ... It is concerned with ... signification and ... communication ... whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are ... the different sign-systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby.

Elam (1980:3) offers the following warning to researchers who engage in a semiotic analysis of dramatic performances:

The researcher in theatre and drama is faced with two quite dissimilar – although intimately correlated – types of textual material: that produced in the theatre (the theatrical or performance text) and that composed for the theatre (the written or dramatic text).

In his performance texts (whether live or on film, video or compact disc) Uys expresses his ideas through two types of sign-systems or codes, namely verbal language codes (mainly English and Afrikaans) and a wide variety of non-verbal codes (such as colour, kinesics, facial expressions, vocal intonations, appearance and proxemics). While Uys's deployment of both verbal and non-verbal codes are equally essential to the audience's interpretation and understanding of his theatrical performances, the locus of attention in Chapter Four is on non-verbal signs, as Uys's utilization of verbal signs is closely examined in the other chapters of this thesis.

When discussing the use of sign-systems in the theatre, Elam (1980:7) cites the following pertinent quotation from a translation of Petr Bogatyrev's (1938:35-6) work:

On the stage things that play the part of theatrical signs ... acquire special features, qualities and attributes that they do not have in real life.

Consequently, Elam (1980:7) argues that when the sender of a sign is a performer and the receiver is the audience, the formulation (encoding), transmission and interpretation (decoding) of both verbal and non-verbal signs differs from the exchange of messages between a sender and a receiver in real life situations.

Thus, in the light of the differences between stage performances and real-life experiences, mentioned above, semiotic analyses presented in Chapter Four attempt to examine how Uys's use of non-verbal signs enables his audience to ' "bracket off" what is presented to them from normal social praxis' and so perceive his performance as 'a network of meanings' (Elam, 1980:12). These analyses, therefore, involve a detailed study of such semiological concepts as 'connotation and the transformability of the [theatrical] sign' (Elam, 1980:10-12), as well as 'the relationship between cultural codes and theatrical and dramatic subcodes' (Elam, 1980:57). The theatrical performance texts studied include photographs and videos of a selection of Uys's revues and television programmes in which he impersonates Evita, members of her 'family' and other fictitious and realistic characters. Extracts of the following performance texts are subject to semiotic analysis: videos of *Adapt or Dye* (1982), *Farce About Uys* (1983), *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985), *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), and *Evita's Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d), *Evita's People's Party incorporating The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999b) and a CD entitled *Truth Omissions* (1997e) based on Uys's review of the same name. Throughout these semiotic analyses, an attempt is made to show how, in his selection and presentation of non-verbal signs, Uys utilizes various nuances of semiology in order to reinforce his deployment of chiasmus as a satirical ploy for raising the socio-political consciousness of his audiences (the main focus of this thesis).

As previously stated in this introductory chapter, and discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, the interpretation of any sign 'is always to some extent an arbitrary decision' (Budick, 1996:227) on the part of the receiver. Obviously, if the sender and receiver are in direct contact, the sender may obtain feedback from the receiver. If s/he finds that the message has been 'misinterpreted', s/he can then adjust the message and thus avoid further 'arbitrary' decoding. Uys seems to be well aware of the arbitrary nature of signs and the fact that the sender cannot always control how signs are interpreted, because Uys (Walker, 1997b:8) says of his revues: 'I **structure the show carefully** but my **script is very adaptable**. I rewrite it every day in my mind.' Uys adapted specific sketches in both *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b), performed in Johannesburg in 1997 and 1998, and *Dekaffirmated* (1999c), presented in Johannesburg both prior to and after South Africa's general election in June 1999. In the first instance, certain topical references to the actions of a prominent political personality made during the June 1997 performances were replaced with more topical comments on other politicians during the March 1998 run. In the second revue, once the outcome of the 2 June 1999 elections had been made public, Uys adapted Evita's political repartee accordingly.

When asked if the public responded positively to his voter education programme, *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a), Uys (Haffajee & Jurgens 1999:5) replied 'mostly, anyway'. However, when in Komatipoort 'the small, hostile audience [gave] a single reluctant laugh; Evita, practised trouper that she is, [cut] the show to a functional half-hour'. When asked to account for his flexible style of performance that reflects not only the socio-political situation in which he finds himself, but also the audiences' responses, Uys (Walker, 1997b:8) says of his performances: '**It's not acting, it's reacting**' [my emphases]. Uys's reference to the subtle distinction between 'acting' or the 'putting forth of energy' (Little *et al.*, 1973:20) and 'reacting' or 'displaying some form of energy in response to a stimulus' (Little *et al.*, 1973:1754) is further evidence of the presence of verbal chiasmus in both his written and performance texts.

Chapter Five of this thesis extends the discussion of the interpretation of theatrical codes in terms of Uys's establishing and perpetuating of the Evita myth as/or legend/living legend

as a satirical tool. Firstly, it delineates those qualities of myth and legend that appear relevant in terms of the Evita myth as/or legend. Secondly, it follows the stages of this persona's development from the satirical 'voice' in a newspaper at the end of the 1970s, to a character in a revue in the early 1980s, to the protagonist in a book, to a surreal/'factional' personality in the 1990s who interacts with prominent public figures both on and off stage, to the recipient of an international award in 2000 for her service to humanity. Thirdly, it looks at the ways in which Uys extends the Evita myth as/or legend/living legend through his creation of the Bezuidenhout family and his presentation of the two opposing versions of Evita's youth – this investigation focuses on *A Part Hate, A Part Love – The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout* (1994a) and selected photographs from the *Evita Bezuidenhout Calendar 2002* (1997d) in which Uys portrays the entire Bezuidenhout family. Uys (1995:5,80) labels Evita 'a fashion plate, a baker of cakes and handmaiden to her husband', but he also refers to her as someone who 'champions ... women's rights in a male dominated area' – politics. Thus Chapter Five briefly explores how Uys allows his famous *alter ego* to evolve from her role as subservient wife to a notable political figurehead. It also examines how Uys uses Evita's supposed political experiences as a tool for satirising the policies of apartheid and the Nationalist-led Government. In allowing Evita to achieve success in the traditionally male domain of politics, Uys appears to align himself loosely with current feminist issues.

Chapter Six looks at how Uys uses Evita as the perfect counterfoil for his burlesque of real-life characters (politicians and public figures) through a study of his chiasmic blending of fact and fiction into what Uys regards as 'faction'. Works included in this study are extracts from selected revues and television programmes in which Evita appears as well as Evita's 'biography' – *A Part Hate, A Part Love – The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout* (1994a). Chapter Six then considers a number of other issues. Firstly, it explores whether it is Uys, the author and actor, who controls Evita, or whether Evita, as persona, controls Uys, the author and actor. Secondly, it looks at Evita's role in post-apartheid South Africa during the last decade of the twentieth century in which she acts as an intermediary between past and future. Evita's new conciliatory and promotional duties are examined through analyses of Evita's televised '*tête-à-têtes*' with many 'famous' (and 'infamous')

characters in *Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d) and *Funigalore – Evita’s Real Life Adventures in Wonderland* (1995) that show how the ex-Ambassador to Bapetikosweti has, in the words of Uys (1994a:380), ‘moved from her static position of relic-in-opposition to one of involvement with the government of the day’.

Evita’s function during the run-up to the second democratic election in South Africa in June 1999 is also investigated through a study of her televised voter-education programme *Evita’s People’s Party incorporating The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999b). One of the reasons for Evita’s continuing public presence could be Uys’s (Bishop, 1991:202) belief that prejudice is not the sole prerogative of racial discrimination or apartheid, but also involves discrimination ‘against AIDS victims ... women, ... cripple[s and] ... blind people’. Uys claims that prejudice in any form is absurd and believes (Wiesner, 1999:4) that ‘absurdity can kill when it loses its label and becomes a way of life. Laughter controls the madness of men and makes them men again’. Chapter Six thus looks at Evita’s position as a ‘public figurehead’ who continues to play a crucial role in galvanizing people out of their complacency and indifference towards political and social issues (especially the AIDS pandemic currently threatening Africa and many other countries worldwide).

These issues are examined through a study of Uys’s television magazine programme *Evita – Live and Dangerous* (1999e), Uys’s ‘*For Fact’s Sake, a schools-tour with entertainment about AIDS/Safe Sex/Taboos and Urban Legends* (2000c) and articles and letters published through the electronic media on the ‘world wide web’ sites that Uys has established for himself and Evita, namely *millenia.co.za* and *evita.co.za*. In keeping with the central focus of this thesis, and by way of synoptic comment, cognizance is taken during these analyses of how Uys enhances the satirical thrust of his work through a combination of syntactic and semantic chiasmus.

The final chapter offers a brief synopsis of the thesis and looks at the limitations of this study. It also suggests possible topics for future research.

Currently there are three completed Master's dissertations and an incomplete one on the work of Pieter-Dirk Uys and his persona Evita Bezuidenhout. Bedford's (1987) work entitled 'The Presence of the Past in Selected Works by Pieter-Dirk Uys' contains an analysis of Uys's three plays *Karnaval* (1975), *God's Forgotten* (1981) and *Panorama* (1989b) in which 'the past is discussed as an inhibiting factor in the socio-moral development of the protagonists' (Bedford, 1987:1). L. De Villiers's (1993) work (written in Afrikaans) entitled 'Evita Bezuidenhout: die "Koning" se nar?' compares Evita to a court jester and/or clown. C. G. De Villiers's (1994) unfinished work (as far as can be ascertained) is entitled 'Cabaret as New Journalism: a Content Analysis with Specific Reference to the Work of Pieter-Dirk Uys'.

There is one doctoral thesis by Mervyn McMurtry (1993) entitled 'The Playwright-Performer as Scourge and Benefactor: an examination of Political Satire and Lampoon in South African Theatre, with Particular Reference to Pieter-Dirk Uys'. McMurtry's (1993) thesis covers a very broad field of investigation into the works and performances of various South African satirists. It provides a survey that covers an 'overview of the characteristic features and purposes of satire', 'the origins of lampoon and the theatrical presentation of actual persons' and 'a selective survey of the diversity, style and censorship of satire in South Africa' (McMurtry, 1993:i) and is less focused than the present study. McMurtry has also undertaken specific research into 'the principal themes of Uys's plays and revues', as well as the strategies Uys employs during his satiric performances when depicting both fictional personae (specifically Evita Bezuidenhout) and non-fictional characters (P W Botha and 'Pik' Botha). McMurtry's study focuses on Uys's use of preparatory and visual signifiers, his concern with proxemics and his mastery of kinesics, paralanguage and chronemics. While the three completed works discuss Uys's texts and performances in detail, they do not cover the more specialized field of interest dealt with in the present thesis, nor do they focus on its propositional thrust: namely an analysis of Uys's frequent creation of chiasmic configurations through his exploitation of the rich interpretive potential of verbal and non-verbal signs. The current study investigates Uys's utilization of these signs when he creates the fictional 'personae' of Evita and her family, as a medium for

entertaining both readers and audiences, while simultaneously attempting to incite their political and moral consciousness through his satirical comments.

McMurtry (1994) does, however, come closer to the present project in his article entitled ‘The Rise of the First Ambassador Bezuidenhout: Pieter-Dirk Uys’s creation of Evita Bezuidenhout, her fictional actuality and his approach to female impersonation’, published in *The South African Theatre Journal*. This article traces Evita’s development, from a fictional character in Uys’s column in the *Sunday Express* in the late 1970s to Uys’s larger than life alter-ego in the 1980s and early 1990s. Through Evita, ‘Uys could assume an ironic mask that enabled him to subversively ridicule those in authority and expose the hypocritical discourse of apartheid and the reforms of the early 1980s’ (McMurtry, 1994:79). While this article certainly describes Evita’s rise to fame in detail and discusses Uys’s role as both a satirist and female impersonator (issues explored in this thesis), it does so, once again, from a general perspective. The parameters of the current study are more narrowly defined in that the thesis looks carefully at Uys’s use of chiastic configurations as a satirical device, while simultaneously engaging in a close analysis – as integral to chiasmus – of a selection of Uys’s work, and in particular, of material written and performed after 1993, going beyond the scope of McMurtry’s publications.

* * * * *

For the purposes of notation, an annotated Harvard system has been adopted.



CHAPTER TWO

THE CHIASTIC PLEASURE/PAIN PRINCIPLE AS A SATIRIC MODE

A type of play ... in which the latest gossip of the city was intermixed with material of the most imaginative sort; in which serious political and philosophical purpose jostled with buffoonery of the lowest kind. ... Yet underneath all the slapstick costuming, underneath the unbridled hilarity, there was always the sense of significant purpose

Arthur Nicoll, on Aristophanes and Old Comedy

As was briefly indicated in Chapter One, the second chapter focuses closely on both Pieter-Dirk Uys's particular blend of satire, which turns on the slippage between entertainment and anger: the pleasure/pain principle. Chapter Two examines various descriptions of satirical criticism. It also attempts to identify and delineate 'some of the forms and stylistic devices' (Abrams, 1971:156) that Uys uses (in common with other writers of note, both past and present) in order to show how these are an integral component of his chiasmically constructed satirical messages that foreground entertainment above condemnation. The chapter starts with a brief historical overview of the development of satire to highlight its chiasmic nature. Various definitions of satire are given to identify its specific components together with the writing styles and literary genres in which it customarily occurs. Uys's role as an arch-satirist and his utilization of satire's multifarious elements and writing techniques are then explored within a range of his literary works. Cognizance is taken of Uys's manipulation of various chiasmic devices, both as an author and a performer and, in particular, his creation of specific personae, as a tool for enhancing his sardonic thrust. The argument then proceeds to problems associated with the notion of political satire in contemporary society. An attempt is made to show how Uys copes with what Fletcher (1987:ix) describes as the arduous task of 'aesthetically ordering reality [or] formulating an interpretative frame of reference [that] can decode the bizarre realities of today'.

Cuddon (1977:600) argues that satire began with 'the early Greek poets' who used 'invective,¹ ridicule and abuse to excellent effect'. Abrams (1971:155) states that the satire of both Aristophanes and Juvenal contained 'contempt [and] moral indignation'. He regards Ancient Greece as the birthplace of Menippean or indirect satire, which involves 'a narrative in which the objects of the satire are characters who make both themselves and their opinions ridiculous by what they think, say and do'. According to Cuddon (1977:600), as Roman satire evolved, Juvenal deployed a mode of satire like that of the Greeks, to which was added a contrasting Horatian form. Gray (1984:84) describes Juvenalian satire as 'a self-conscious and seriously moral device that adopts a dignified public stance and scourges mankind for its

¹ Cuddon (1977:333) defines invective as 'speech or writing which is denunciatory, abusive or vituperative [that is] used to express dislike, disgust, contempt and even hatred'.

errors' and Horatian satire as 'an urbane, witty, informal mechanism that, instead of despising human follies, appears to relish them'. Cuddon (1977:600) elaborates on this notion, pointing out that 'there appears to be little satire of any note' in European literature until the late twelfth century. However, satirical elements became more plentiful during and after the middle ages (Chaucer, Langland and Sir Thomas More). In the later overt satire of Dunbar and Skelton, it took the form of a 'rough and swingeing' denunciation. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, satire reverted to a poetic form, similar to that of both Horace and Juvenal, in the works of English writers such as Donne and Jonson. As Cuddon (1977:602,601) notes, satire became 'one of the major preferred modes of expression, in prose and verse'. Exponents of satire during the 'golden age of satire' (the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries) include writers such as Marvell, Dryden, Pope, Swift and Dr Johnson (England) and Molière and Voltaire (France), who sought to be 'the cleansers and guardians of civilization – such as it was'.² This somewhat caustic type of satire involves 'a sublimation and refinement of anger and indignation' (Cuddon, 1977:599) and thus qualifies for the epithet 'protest become art'. This chiasmatically charged description suggests a form similar to Juvenalian satire as this style of writing accentuates the didactic aspects of satire (protest) and subverts the more entertaining elements found in Horatian satire (art), although it does not entirely efface them. Although Uys utilizes the 'protest become art' variety, claiming to have fought throughout his adult life to achieve democracy, he maintains that bigotry can be out-manoeuvred more effectively through laughter than with scathing sermons.³

Although Cuddon (1977:603) states that quality satire has become a 'rare' commodity in twentieth century English literature, often relegated to 'caricatures and cartoons', there appears to be no dearth of satirists during this same period in South Africa. As McMurtry (1993) notes, writer/performers such as Adam Leslie, Ian Fraser, Christopher Hope, Robert Kirby and Pieter-Dirk Uys kept the flame of satire burning throughout the years of apartheid in their newspaper columns and revues. Uys (Whitehouse, 2001:71) is arguably still one of

² Cuddon (1977:602) qualifies this statement by stating that 'the 18th c. (like any other century) was for the majority ... an era of poverty, misery and pain', a statement that is equally applicable to the twentieth century.

³ As was pointed out in Chapter One, Uys's satire contains slightly more humour than anger.

South Africa's most prominent satirists and, with his usual flair for seemingly contradictory witticisms, describes his 'pleasure/pain' approach to satire as follows:

I love offending people. It's very healthy because it means they're listening. Equal opportunity offence is what I hope for.

In this statement Uys uses a proliferation of positive words and phrases, for example, 'love', 'very healthy', 'equal opportunity' and 'hope for'. He contrasts these with only two negative words, the verb 'offending' and the noun 'offence', both of which connote some form of provocation. Uys thus appears to confirm that his satire is closer to 'art become protest' than *vice versa*. Uys (1994b:7) claims that 'the weapon of humour is as mighty as the gun' and, while accepting that his exposure of narrow-mindedness and intolerance might annoy some people, he continues to practise his pleasure/pain mode of satire because he maintains that 'no one has ever died laughing'. The popularity of Uys's revues and television shows indicates that audiences enjoy the chiasmic tensions in Uys's satirical works. Uys's expressed desire for 'equal opportunity offence' implies that, instead of dictating to the South African public, he seeks not only to amuse them but also welcomes their response to his 'offending' satirical criticism.

As pointed out above, early Greek satire emphasised this literary mode's scurrilous features. However, its more pleasurable aspects are revealed when Gray (1984:182) and Cuddon (1977:598) point to satire's Latin roots – the word '*satura*' signifying 'medley, a dish of various fruits'. Braund (1989:1) regards satire as an ideal medium for 'socio-political commentary' and focuses on its Juvenalian aspects when she describes it as a literary form in which the writer

distorts [the] subject-matter ... by [the] selective exaggeration [of] deplorable, disgusting facets of human behaviour ...

In Johnson's ([1755] 1990) *A Dictionary of the English Language* satire is defined as a literary work (prose, poetry and drama) in which wickedness and/or stupidity is condemned. Thus Johnson ([1755] 1990), Abrams (1971), Cuddon (1977) and Braund (1989) all regard

satire as a mode of censure. As mentioned in Chapter One, Abrams (1971:153) both delimits and extends the nature of this censure as follows:

[Unlike comedy] that evokes laughter as an end in itself; satire ‘derides’; it uses laughter as a weapon... against a butt existing outside the work itself such as an individual, or a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even the whole race of man.

Here Abrams reinforces the essentially chiasmic nature of satire that involves the conflation of laughter (pleasure) and derision (pain), thus recalling Sir Philip Sidney’s blueprint for literature, ‘to teach and delight’ (Feuillerat, 1923:9). Uys’s satirical performances also espouse similar tenets to those set out in Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* (1581-1583) because they involve the ‘art of imitation’ and take the form of ‘a speaking picture’⁴ that necessitates Uys’s use of a combination of verbal and non-verbal (audio and visual) signs. (These last two aspects are discussed in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis.)

Uys combines both pleasure and pain when he deploys ‘selective exaggeration’ (Braund, 1989:1) during his burlesque of both the then Prime Minister P W Botha⁵ (using an over-accentuated wagging finger and snake-like tongue movements) and Piet Koornhof, Minister of Plural Development in the Nationalist Government (excessively large ears and spectacles). Through his ridicule of these prominent politicians, Uys strove to focus the public’s attention on the Nationalist Government’s implementation of apartheid. This political ideology resulted in various human rights abuses against a large number of South Africans through the legalisation of a wide variety of ‘disgusting facets’⁶ (Braund, 1989:1) and thus provided Uys with ample material for his satiric commentary. However, as mentioned in Chapter One, Uys (Bishop, 1991:202) is rightly convinced that prejudice and corruption are ‘not the sole

⁴ Here it appears that in his *The Defence of Poesie* (1581-1583) Sidney uses ‘Poesie’ as a generic term that covers not only poetry but also includes drama (the ‘art of imitation’ and ‘a speaking picture’) and, presumably, prose as well. ‘Poesie’ is further subdivided into a number of ‘special denominations’ including the ‘comic and satiric’ (Feuillerat, 1923:10).

⁵ Prime Minister and later President of South Africa during the 1980s.

⁶ Cameron and Spies (1986:278-280) list the following abuses of human rights: the prohibition of ‘marriages between Whites and people of other colours’ (Act No 55 of 1949) (see also Chapter 5, Footnote 19) and the ‘often forcible removal of Coloureds and Asians from their homes’ in order to ensure ‘physical separation between the various races’, although ‘few Whites were affected by this measure’ (Act No 41 of 1950).

prerogative of apartheid'. Consequently, for Uys, there are no 'holy cows' and he is equally scathing in his derogation of today's politicians such as Mangosutho Gatsha Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Minister of Home Affairs from 1994 to 1999, and the Reverend Alan Boesak, 'formerly African National Congress leader of the liberation movement in the Western Cape' (Uys, 1997a:12).

Another aspect of satire pertinent to Uys is the use of a 'mask'. Instead of speaking for himself, a satirist sometimes uses *personae* [or] 'masks' for the purpose of creating a character (Braund, 1989:2). Through a combination of both monologues and dialogues, Uys (wearing the mask of a variety of *personae*) addresses the audience and, from time to time, engages them in conversation. One such persona is the main character in Uys's revue *Going Down Gorgeous* (1998b), namely Nowell Fine, whom Uys (1986:148) earlier describes as a 'Jewish ... comrade madam'. This name is another example of how Uys playfully inverts South African colloquialisms such as '*Ja* [yes] well, no fine'. An even more popular and pertinent persona (in terms of this thesis) is the frequently discussed Evita Bezuidenhout, who appears in the majority of Uys's revues and is arguably the best example of chiasmic slippage between actor and persona as well as between male and female.

From the brief overview of the development of satire given above, is it clear that this term does indeed refer to continued illustrations of its derivation from the latin word '*satura*' (Cuddon, 1977:598). Elliott (1986:182) claims that satire is not precisely definable because it signifies both

a kind of literature [and] a mocking spirit or tone that manifests itself in many literary genres [and] almost any kind of human communication'.

McMurtry (1993:1) likewise affirms satire's multifarious nature when he suggests that satire is 'a protean term and species' that is comprised of a mixture of the following modes, techniques and genres:

parody, burlesque, travesty, caricature, grotesque, allegory and fantasy. ... A satirist ... can employ wit, sarcasm, invective, ridicule and irony within ... a monologue, epic, narrative poem, ballad, sonnet, novel [or] play’.

McMurtry’s (1993) definition of satire is especially appropriate for a discussion of Uys’s satirical works because this explication harnesses the derivation of satire and the expositions offered by Sidney, Johnson, Abrams, Cuddon, Gray and Braund. It also depicts satire as a generic term comprising various modes and stylistic devices that can be deployed in a number of literary genres.

The ‘satiric modes’ that Uys deploys in both his prose works and dramatic performances, namely burlesque, parody, travesty, caricature and fantasy, are now defined and briefly examined. Uys’s adoption of different ‘stylistic devices’ is also explored, for example, invective, sarcasm, ridicule,⁷ irony and wit. Attention is given to how Uys enhances his sardonic impact through the chiasmic coalition of both seemingly incompatible linguistic elements (discussed in Chapter One of this thesis) and physiological factors such as male actor versus female persona. His creation of fictional personae and characters based on ‘real’ people, as well as what Uys terms ‘factional’ personae such as Evita, a process that involves an admix of ‘fact and fiction’ (Bishop, 1991:211), is also explored here (and in greater depth in Chapter Six). Uys couches his satire within a wide range of literary forms (plays, newspaper columns, poems, prose works, revues and monologues). Selected examples from these genres are scrutinized in order to establish whether Uys merely provokes laughter or proffers censure or combines the two in order to correct via entertainment.

Even a cursory study of Uys’s literary texts and performances reveals his deployment of parody, burlesque and travesty in his bid both to please and to teach. Kustow (1998:1) calls Uys’s Evita ‘South Africa’s brazen parody and political advisor to the powerful’. Presumably this is because Uys portrays Evita as a politician’s wife who interacts closely with the ruling élite, whether Nationalists or members of the African National Congress, a

⁷ Although in the *Oxford Talking Dictionary* (1998) ridicule is given as a synonym for sarcasm and *vice versa*, for the purposes of this thesis these concepts are discussed separately with regard to their use in Uys’s works.

role that provides Uys with an opportunity for criticising the actions of government in general. During his performances Uys frequently burlesques well-known national and international political figures, such as former Foreign Minister R F Botha (usually called Pik Botha), former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain and former President Bill Clinton of America. In *Adapt or Dye* (1982) Uys engages in a travesty of such allegedly 'lofty subjects' (Abrams, 1971:19) as South Africa's then Prime Minister P W Botha and Minister Piet Koornhof, when, as indicated before, he exaggerated some of their physical characteristics and mannerisms. During the above revue, Uys (1986:125-126) claims to have also presented a travesty of these politicians' speeches in his satirical monologues. Uys (1994b:3) openly admits to 'quoting from and alluding to' original speeches and jokingly comments:

The South African Government wrote my scripts and that is why I have never resented paying taxes; I call it royalties!

This statement suggests that through the imitation and distortion of politicians' utterances, Uys produces his own particular brand of the kind of 'stylized comic invective' that Petro (1982:12) alludes to, as a means of encouraging his audience to reconsider the actions of certain prominent Nationalists during the apartheid era. In his article 'From Bothacracy to Democracy – Long Live South African Satire', Uys (1994b:3) confirms his satirical intentions when he quips:

It became my ambition to make ... all [the Nationalist Members of Government] so angry at the laughter from the people that they would have strokes and retire into the political wilderness. I have had some success, for that is where P W Botha now lives in a seaside town called The Wilderness!

In the same article, Uys (1994b:3) offers evidence of his 'habitual exploitation of [the] incongruous juxtapositions' that Fowler (1973:138) considers essential to parody. Uys's (1994b:3) satirical utilization of this chiasmic device is evidenced when he labels South Africa during the apartheid era 'a white Christian society killing children and destroying a gagged majority with cruelty and greed'. In this instance, Uys denounces a society that professes to

be ‘Christian’⁸ and yet supposedly ‘kill[s] children’ and cruelly and greedily suppresses (‘destroys’) the masses. Uys (1994b:3) proffers pairs of semantically conflicting phrases (both within and across sentences) when he describes his deployment of satire prior to 1994 in this same article.

This alphabet of humour [satire] was always anchored in the negative. ... In the past it was the restriction of protest politics that kept one concentrated on the obvious: Free Mandela! Down with apartheid! ... We knew the answers. We’d forgotten the question, like ‘What do we in a new South Africa do with this new toy called democracy?’ We must rediscover questions and force each one to answer from our own experiences.

Now is the time to move away from the negative and reflect positive hopes for a desperate future. Optimism is a very relative convenience. It could mean blinding oneself to reality and living in a fool’s paradise. Or it could mean not allowing oneself to be surprised by the brutality of an unchartered future. Maybe this new New NEW South Africa’s definition of optimism should be: ‘expecting the worst, but hoping that the worst won’t be as bad as one imagines’.

In the first paragraph, Uys depicts ‘humour’ during the apartheid era as merely a tool for ‘protest politics’; thus it appears that Uys’s earlier satire could be described as what Cuddon (1977:60) calls ‘protest become art’ (mentioned above). However, the restrictive nature of ‘protest politics’, as a result of its subject matter, together with the effect of the censorship that Uys’s work was frequently subjected to (as noted in Chapter One), meant that Uys’s satire was ‘always anchored in the negative’. Hence it appears that at this time Uys’s work fitted the already mentioned depiction of a literary mode that censures both stupidity and wickedness. This description focuses on satire’s painful aspects while down-playing the more pleasurable ones. Yet, this pessimistic image is soon dispelled by the positive but chiasmically charged statements ‘free Mandela’ and ‘down with apartheid’, both injunctions frequently voiced by anti-apartheid campaigners such as Uys (the author and actor). Uys follows these statements with a challenge to his audience to ‘rediscover questions’ and to ‘answer’ these from personal ‘experience’.

⁸ A principal tenet of the Christian faith is Christ’s injunction to his followers to ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matthew, 21: 39, Authorised King James Version).

In the second paragraph of the quoted text, Uys encourages his readers to approach the future with optimism when he urges them, in his typically chiasmic style, to ‘move away from the negative’ and ‘reflect positive hopes’. However, he immediately undermines the hoped-for euphoria of the ‘new’ South Africa with the phrase ‘desperate future’. He then counteracts this sombre image when he presents contrasting visions of this future that are based upon the relative nature of optimism. With his tongue firmly in his cheek, Uys offers two different approaches to life in post-apartheid South Africa, one based upon positive idealism (‘blinding oneself to reality and living in a fool’s paradise’) and the other on uncertain realism (‘not allowing oneself to be surprised by the brutality of an unchartered future’). In the closing sentence, the word ‘new’ appears in triplicate. While this repetition could be read as a positive indication of Uys’s optimistic affirmation of this ‘unchartered future’, the actual meaning of Uys’s statement remains ambivalent as he subsequently counteracts it with the negative phrase ‘expecting the worst’. The use of visual variety (small and capital letters separated by a combination of both) alerts the reader to the problematic nature of this ‘new state’ and thus reinforces Uys’s earlier prophecy of a ‘desperate future’. This tactic is possibly a veiled warning to the public not to allow their earlier elation over the establishment of a ‘democratic’ South Africa to dissipate into fear and apathy.⁹

In the final paragraph of the article under discussion, Uys, in a typically chiasmic trope, alerts South Africans to the inconsistencies of ‘this transitional period’ when they stand poised with ‘one foot on the bank of the future and one heel on the shore of the past’. In line with his statement that ‘humour is a great philosophy’ and ‘laughter [our] last democratic right’ (Bishop, 1991:210,208), Uys jokingly concludes his article by reminding the public that ‘this River Rubicon ... we are crossing is still full of hungry crocodiles whose sharp teeth could do a job on your “traditional cultural weapon”¹⁰ that Mrs Bobbitt¹¹ would envy’.

⁹ Uys dealt with the issue of apathy during the run up to South Africa’s second democratic election in *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) when, in the guise of Evita, he attempted to alert all South Africans to the importance of voting to ensure that the ‘new ... democracy’ became a reality.

¹⁰ The right of South Africans to carry ‘cultural weapons’ in public during official cultural ceremonies, gatherings or marches is a contentious issue in South Africa.

¹¹ An American woman who, at the time that Uys wrote this article, was the centre of media attention when she purportedly severed her allegedly abusive husband’s penis.

Petro (1982:12) labels satire a ‘metalinguistic tool’ that ‘is directed both toward the object of speech’ [its referent] and ‘toward another word [or] another person’s speech’, a definition which appears applicable to Uys’s work. Petro warns that if an audience is unaware of the context of the parodied speech, they might not grasp the subtleties of the satirical text and so could perceive parody as ‘an inferior literary form’. Uys sometimes roots his satire in literary texts, for example when he portrayed ‘Pik’ Botha in the role of Shakespeare’s Hamlet in *Adapt or Dye* (1982). Uys (1986:13-14) based the text of the ‘*Hamlet of Westdene*’ sketch on Shakespeare’s well-known ‘to be or not to be’ soliloquy.¹² Consequently, the merit of Uys’s travesty does not lie purely in the referent itself (his Pik Botha persona’s speech) but rather in the audience’s comparison of this monologue with the original text. Unless the audience has some knowledge of Hamlet’s speech, they will not fully value the deflationary thrust of Uys’s parody. The following extract from Uys’s flippant version of this speech contains specific references to the South African political situation during apartheid. Uys’s replacement of Shakespeare’s words with comments pertinent to the local situation is indicated in italics in the extract printed below.

To be or not to be *in Namibia* – that is the question

... To die, to sleep?

Perchance to dream *of a white homeland?*

Ja, [Yes] there’s the rub;

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,

There’s the aspect

That makes a mockery of so long a career;

Who hey?

P W Botha, with his adapt or die?

Nelson Mandela in his room without a view?

The following three paragraphs attempt to explain some of the more germane of Uys’s changes. Through his introduction of the phrase ‘of a white homeland’ and the South African expression ‘*Ja*’ instead of ‘yes’, Uys reminds the audience of the Nationalist Government’s

¹² Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 1 (Hodek, 1958:960).

policy of separate development. Under this system, a number of ‘homelands’¹³ were created within South Africa for various black ‘ethnic’ groups, during the 1970s and early 1980s. During the 1970s ‘the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*, an Afrikaner Resistance Movement’, attracted attention when it advocated the formation of ‘a [white] Boer State [*Boerestaat* or Afrikaner homeland] based on the old Afrikaner republics’ (Oakes, 1988:486) that would be free of all other races. (Although Pik Botha was a member of the Nationalist Government during the apartheid era, it cannot be assumed that he was a supporter of the homelands policy and he is unlikely to have supported the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*.) After the demise of apartheid in 1994, all the ‘black homelands’ were re-incorporated into South Africa. Despite continued lobbying by ultra-right wing Afrikaner movements such as the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*, the ‘white homeland’ remained only a dream and perhaps this is the reason for Uys’s inclusion of the statement ‘perchance to dream of a white homeland’. (At the beginning of the twenty-first century the establishment of a *Boerestaat* appears no nearer fruition.)

Namibia, formerly known as South West Africa, was ‘administered by South Africa’ in terms of the South West Africa Act of 1969 that gave ‘Pretoria greater administrative control’

¹³ Oakes (1988:424,430,426), in the *Reader’s Digest Illustrated History of Southern Africa – The Real Story*, reports on the formation of ‘black homelands’ as follows: ‘The decolonisation of Africa in the early 1960s led apartheid theoreticians to seek a way to harness the cry for independence to the preservation of white power in southern Africa. The result was a plan to transform the country’s existing African areas into states in which Africans would exercise full political rights – a massive example of social engineering that seemed to bring the ultimate dream of apartheid within reach at last: an Afrikaner-run republic with, in the words of one-time Cabinet Minister Connie Mulder, “no more black (African) South Africans”. ... Fortunately for the planners, the groundwork had been laid down long before the days of the National Party – by the two Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, the Pass laws and the Black Urban Areas Act of 1945 (as amended). Under this latter Act, the government was able to decide which Africans could legally stay in “white” South Africa, and which could not’. Three further Acts were promulgated during the early 1960s, namely ‘the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, which empowered officials to demolish structures without prior notice to the occupants or owners, the National States Constitution Act in terms of which Bantustan (black homelands) borders could be adjusted to include or excise land at will, in order to accommodate the removals; and the Black Prohibition of Interdicts Act, which prevented the victims of [often forced] removals from petitioning the courts, even if it could be shown that the government had acted beyond its powers in authorising or effecting a removal. Courts were forbidden to issue orders restraining the government from carrying out its intentions. Should the community begin political action to resist, officials were able to call on the full policing and security apparatus of the state; activists could be detained, meetings banned, and removals enforced at gunpoint’. These last three laws led to the formation of ‘six self-governing states (Lebowa, 1972, Gazankulu, 1973, Qwaqwa, 1974, Kwazulu, 1977, KaNgwane, 1977 and KwaNdebele, 1981) [and] four independent states (Transkei, 1976, Bophuthatswana, 1977, Venda, 1976 and Ciskei, 1981)’.

(Oakes, 1988:461) over the territory and the mines. The phrase ‘so long a career’ alludes to Pik Botha’s position as South Africa’s longest serving Foreign Minister during the Nationalists’ term of office. ‘Pik’ played a prominent role in the negotiations that resulted in South Africa’s granting Namibia independence in 1988. While some South Africans would have lauded Botha’s role in this process, others probably considered it detrimental to South Africa and not an appropriate action for an experienced Foreign Minister. It is thus possible that the phrase ‘makes a mockery of’ alludes to the fact that, while long service is normally associated with promotion and financial gain, what was probably viewed in diplomatic circles as the culmination of a long and successful career as Foreign Minister, ironically resulted in a loss of territory for South Africa, with its subsequent reduction of power and revenue.

The injunction ‘adapt or die’ that Uys (1986:22) adopted and adapted as the title of his first ‘*konsert*’, was an ultimatum P W Botha gave white South Africans when he announced the general election in 1981. Uys (1986:1) observed that, thanks to Botha, ‘South African politics was becoming a one-man show’ and his immediate response was to create his own ‘one man show’ named *Adapt or Dye* (1982). By replacing Botha’s ‘die’, a verb matching the noun ‘death’, with the word ‘dye’, implying colour-changing or colour-blending, Uys offers his audience an alternative to ‘bloody’ revolution, namely racial tolerance and harmony. Another advocate of unqualified tolerance is Nelson Mandela, leader of the African National Congress until 1998. During the Nationalists’ term of office Mandela served twenty-seven years as a political prisoner on Robben Island (a maximum security prison) – the setting for Uys’s *Panorama* (1989b). The phrase ‘room without a view’ is a further play on words as *Room With a View* is, of course, the title of a 1908 E M Forster novel,¹⁴ which recounts a young Englishwoman’s experiences when she leaves her family and visits Italy and, in so doing, escapes the social restrictions of her class-determined existence. In direct contrast, Mandela’s personal, social and political freedom is confined

¹⁴ In his novels, Forster draws attention to ‘the habitual conformity of people to unexamined social standards and conventions, and [how] this conformity blinds the individual to recognition of what is true’ (Gillie, 1972:524). Uys appears to have had a similar objective when he uses his plays and revues to express his satirical critique of apartheid.

within the limits of his prison cell, dubbed ‘a room without a view’ in bitterly parodic mode.

In addition to parody, Uys utilizes the less subtle satirical modes of caricature and lampoon in his work. Caricature evokes congenial laughter by magnifying the less attractive features and/or habits of a person, institution or phenomenon. (This particular mode thus appears similar to Braund’s [1989:2] earlier cited depiction of satire as a device that engages in the ‘selective exaggeration of disgusting facets of human behaviour’.) Cuddon (1977:354,189), however, offers a more ‘virulent or scurrilous’ form of satire, namely ‘lampoon’, that uses ‘vitriolic language’ to create elements of ‘excess, coarseness [and] crudity’. An example of Uys’s use of caricature is his relatively ‘harmless’ impersonation of the then Bishop of the Diocese of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, later the Archbishop of the (Anglican) Church of the Province of South Africa. During the apartheid era, Tutu constantly campaigned for Mandela’s release from political detention. For his portrayal of this popular but controversial cleric, Uys (1986:123) wore a black ‘afro’ wig, dark glasses and a ‘dog-collar’ and hung a placard around his neck bearing the slogan ‘Free Pik Botha’, instead of Tutu’s customary petition of ‘Free Mandela’ .

Thank you very much, my friends, thank you
my dears! I have seen so much writing on the walls
of white South Africa, I remember reading:
Love your enemy, it will ruin his reputation. ...
Apartheid is a pigment of the imagination.
If pigs could fly John Vorster Square would be an international airport. ...
It takes Tutu-Tambo!

Uys’s Tutu persona’s monologue is ‘short and sweet’ with the focus on humorous wordplay rather than denunciation. It appropriately begins with a biblical reference – the phrase ‘so much writing on the walls’ recalls the threat of death and destruction reputedly given to King Belshazzar of Babylon. According to the biblical text, ‘a human hand ... began writing on the ... wall of [Belshazzar’s] palace’ warning him to stop oppressing the Israelites. Tutu’s statement also connotes images of the graffiti found on public buildings, toilets and places of interest that often contains negative personal and sexual allusions. However, Uys’s jovial intentions are quickly brought to the fore through his play on words and clichés. Uys’s use

of ‘pigment’ instead of ‘figment of the imagination’ alerts the audience to the role skin pigmentation played in determining the lifestyle of South Africans during apartheid. The use of ‘Tutu-Tambo’ instead of ‘two-to-tango’, an expression often employed to apportion equal responsibility to each partner for the break-up of a relationship, serves to accentuate the more genial side of caricature in its conflation of the names of Archbishop Tutu and the late Oliver Tambo, leader of the then banned African National Congress. While Tutu and Tambo could be regarded as formidable but equal partners in the execution of an intricate ‘dance’ that sought to overthrow apartheid, the image of these two mature gentlemen, engaging in what is often regarded as the most erotic of all ballroom dances, underlines Uys’s comic intent.

Uys also makes effective use of clichés such as ‘love your enemy’ which could possibly be viewed as an ironic statement in South Africa where it was often difficult to ‘love your fellow citizen’. Due to a policy of separate development¹⁵ implemented by the Nationalist government, residential areas were racially and ethnically zoned, thus leaving little opportunity for interracial and intercultural friendships to develop. The second cliché, ‘if pigs could fly’, is often used as a prefix to a desirable but usually unattainable goal. It is also an amusing reminder that while a number of South African airports had been named after other Prime Ministers, for example, Hans Strydom (Durban) and Jan Smuts (Johannesburg), John Vorster’s name had been given to a police station. However, through his use of the word ‘pigs’, Uys offers a more harsh criticism of the policemen who occupy John Vorster Square. This ‘sketch’ does not appear to be aimed at Tutu personally as much as at the Nationalist-led Government via Tutu, and thus it contains very little of the malicious commentary Uys employs when lampooning Andries Treurnicht, who later became leader of the Conservative Party,¹⁶ during another sketch from *Adapt or Dye* (1982), discussed below.

¹⁵ Act No 41 of 1950 (the Group Areas Act) was passed in 1950 as ‘Nationalists regarded “mixed” suburbs as “the deathbeds of the European race” ’ while Act No 49 of 1953 (the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act) ‘regulated public amenities on the basis of racial separation’ in order to ‘prevent racial mixing and to ensure that the Whites continued to maintain their political domination’ (Cameron & Spies, 1986:278-280). These acts encouraged the ‘establishment of separate (but not necessarily equal) facilities for whites and “non-whites” ’ (Oakes, 1988:376).

¹⁶ An ‘ultra-right wing white political party formed after the split in the Nationalist Party in 1982’ (Oakes, 1988:486). The Conservative Party opposed both ‘the adoption of the new constitution’ and the introduction of such ‘reforms’ as the so-called ‘power-sharing between white, coloured and Indian nominated members’ implemented by the Nationalist Party as a result of the 1983 referendum (Cameron & Spies, 1986:487,469).

In what Uys (1986:57) terms a 'simple' but 'blasphemous lampoon on religious fundamentalism as advocated and practised by leading political figures', the dramatist, in the persona of Andries Treurnicht, utilises vitriolic language as follows:

Thus come to me with chains and prayers
Send your cash and help to fight
We shall stand like burning torches
In P W Botha's pitch black night

Like right-wing maggots from a carcass
See them ooze from near and far

Joining AP in the KP
The Future Leaders of RSA

In the name of Separatism and Conservatism
And the Boere Spirit.

Here Uys deploys a number of semantically opposite images when he mockingly parodies the 'strident rhetoric of ... religious-nationalism' (Oakes, 1988:456) often adopted by politicians and, in particular, by members of South Africa's Conservative Party. He does this firstly within a single line – 'chains' versus 'prayers' and 'send your cash' versus 'help to fight'; secondly within two lines – 'burning torches' versus 'pitch black night' and, finally, within the first line of one stanza and the last line of another – 'like right-wing maggots from a carcass' versus 'the Future Leaders of RSA'. Through his continual juxtaposition of semantically opposed phrases and ideas, Uys arouses his audience's awareness of the difference between an ideal South Africa (a country guided by a morally sound government) and the actual South Africa (a country shackled by apartheid).

In the first stanza quoted above, the speaker welcomes the listeners' 'prayers', thus inferring an ideal South Africa in which supplications are regularly offered by a caring society whose members obey the already alluded to Biblical commandment 'love thy neighbour as thyself' (Matthew, 22:39). However, in Uys's text, the word 'prayers' is preceded by the word 'chains'. In this way Uys suggests that in the actual South Africa, although people are living under the rule of a government that openly supports the Christian doctrine, most people are

controlled by the symbolic ‘chains’ of apartheid. This state of affairs is a direct consequence of the promulgation of laws that denied many South Africans certain basic human rights. Through the phrase ‘pitch black night’, Uys alerts the audience to the fact that, as a result of racial discrimination (evoked by the phrase ‘burning torches’) South Africans live in a state of socio-political isolation. Through his use of the adjective ‘pitch’, Uys suggests a situation that is completely without light. Many members of Uys’s audience would have been either Christians or, as children, exposed to Christian doctrine at school. They would thus have known that in the Holy Bible (authorised King James version) Christ is described as ‘the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ (John, 1:9). They would also have been familiar with the Christian belief that it is only through this ‘Light’ that man achieves redemption. It appears, therefore, that Uys is using the already referred to satirical phrase (‘pitch black night’) to express his belief that, owing to a dearth of ‘Light’ within the government, South Africa was, at that time, experiencing a period of extreme political malaise. Ironically, the only hope of illumination comes from ‘the burning torches’ of the Conservative Party. This reference, however, does not convey enlightenment. Although, if Treurnicht himself had used the phrase, it might have suggested Christian martyrdom, when Uys places the phrase in his persona’s mouth he conjures up a darker picture, namely that of the Ku-Klux Klan.¹⁷ Through his inclusion of this phrase, Uys may imply a similarity between this organisation and the implementation of apartheid ideology in South Africa.

In the second stanza of Treurnicht’s supposed monologue quoted above, Uys presents his audience with a surrealistic¹⁸ image of South Africa and, in so doing, offers support (albeit unintentionally) for Braund’s (1989:1) theory that satire involves the ‘presentation of extremes, both ideals and hells’. Uys’s ‘ideals’ are ‘the Future Leaders of RSA’ and his ‘hells’ the ‘right-wing maggots [oozing] from a carcass’. The words ‘right-wing’ suggest one of the more conservative political parties – as mentioned above, Andries Treurnicht was

¹⁷ ‘A secret society in the southern United States ... aiming to prevent negro ascendancy [through] the arbitrary regulation of life by white Protestants’ (Marckwardt *et al.*, 1965:709).

¹⁸ ‘A movement in 20th century literature and art ... characterized by the incongruous and startling arrangement and presentation of subject matter’ (Marckwardt. *et al.*, 1965:1263).

a member, and later the leader, of the Conservative Party. Through the second half of the statement, 'from a carcass', Uys infers the existence of bleak 'norms' in South African society during the apartheid era. Citizens are surrounded ('near and far') by the corrupt system that Uys insinuates through the phrase 'maggots [oozing] from a carcass'. The word 'carcass' implies that death was caused by flesh-eating predators while the word 'maggots' conjures up a picture of rotting flesh overrun with the 'larvae ... of blow-flies' that 'ooze' 'putrescent ... matter' (*Oxford Talking Dictionary*, 1998). Consequently, this picture subverts the more positive connotations of Uys's 'future leaders of RSA'. The 'future' is usually something that fills people with optimism, while a 'leader' is hopefully a person of integrity whom the public reveres. However, leaders can be corrupt and self-serving, a situation that can cause the gloomy future that Uys's satirical text implies.

The last 'component' in Uys's satirical 'dish of mixed fruits' to be discussed in this chapter is the less vituperative, but equally effective technique of 'fantasy'. Allen (1984:266) defines fantasy as 'an extravagant mental image or daydream' but concedes that this term is currently applied to any 'fanciful invention, composition, book or film'. However, a 'fantasy world may be an entirely consistent parallel with the ordinary world' (Gray, 1984:84). This definition draws attention (albeit unintentionally) to the inherently chiasmic nature of fantasy, namely its ability to depict a fantastic world as a 'mirror image' of the real world.

Evita, one of Uys's most fantastic inventions, can be described as 'an extravagant, mental image' and 'a fanciful invention' (Allen, 1984:266) (both aspects that are examined in greater detail in Chapter Three). The success of this particular mouthpiece necessitated Uys's engaging in another flight of fantasy that culminated in his creating an imaginary family and life-story for Evita that includes marriage and a political career (issues that are discussed at length in Chapter Five). In keeping with the scenario offered above, Evita's fantasy world runs 'parallel with the ordinary world' (Gray, 1984:84), because Uys depicts her interacting with real people and realistic situations in both his prose works and revues (discussed further in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis). For example, when the 'black' homelands were re-incorporated into South Africa in 1994, Evita's creator 'retired' her from

her ambassadorial post and appointed her to various equally prominent fictitious positions within the African National Congress-led South Africa, such as ‘honorary member of the African National Congress’s Women’s League’ (Uys, 1997a:3). So successful was his creation of Evita’s fantasy world that, in the role of Evita, Uys has also interacted with eminent political figures and graced various political meetings and events. It is Uys’s ability to engage in a chiastic slippage between fantasy and realism that makes his Evita persona such an effective satirical tool.

Another ability that Uys affords Evita is the capacity to suppress what Braund (1989:1) regards as ‘the boring [and] commonplace elements of life’. Although Uys (1994a:164) describes Evita as ‘just a wife and mother’, he repeatedly involves her in exciting events that cannot be described as either boring or mundane. For example, when, in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a), Uys depicts Evita as ‘chatting’ to Golda Meir in her kitchen in Israel, they do not merely swap recipes (Evita’s engagement in such typically female activities is discussed further in Chapter Five). Instead Uys’s ‘fanciful invention [engages in] an extravagant ... daydream’ (Allen, 1984:266) and exchanges conventional dull domesticity for political intrigue. Evita reputedly trades official secrets with Golda and gives her the advice that supposedly resulted in the now infamous ‘six-day war’. Uys (1994a:166), in his typically chiastic style, describes this war as follows:

A handful of brave Jews [were pitted] against millions of barbaric Arabs, protecting the Land of God against the Mohammedan invaders.

Through his juxtaposition of incompatible overstatements such as ‘a handful of brave Jews’ and ‘millions of barbaric Arabs’, Uys cast doubts on the validity of the subsequent statements. He undermines the legitimacy of the Israeli’s claim that the Jews are the sole ‘protectors’ of ‘the Land of God’ (Israel). He also questions the credibility of their presenting the Arab nations as ‘Mohammedan invaders’, a phrase that evokes memories of the occupation of ‘the Holy Land’ during the medieval era by so-called ‘infidels’ or ‘unbelievers’. This situation resulted in the Crusades, ‘a [prolonged] military expedition undertaken by the Christians of Europe ... to recover the Holy Land from the Moslems’

(Little *et al.*, 1973:465), in which the legitimacy of the two warring sides was equally questionable.

In Uys's satirical works the promotion of both political and social norms often tends 'to be implicit [rather than] explicit' (Braund, 1989:1). In many cultures one such socially accepted norm is the belief that a secure family life provides the basis of a sound society. While Uys's Evita does not always overtly promote this particular social standard, she often implies support for a secure family life through her words and actions. When speaking of the offspring Uys created for her, Evita (Uys, 1994a:134; 1997a:35) says: "my children came first ... I loved being a mother" and "my [grandchildren] are my pride and joy." It appears from media coverage exposing the poor standard of living and education of many South African children that, despite the protection offered children under the Bill of Rights,¹⁹ the new Constitution has not been fully implemented. Perhaps this is why, during a performance of *tannie evita praat kaktus* (1998a), Uys's Evita became more explicit in her support of a stable family unit. She challenged the audience to vote in South Africa's second democratic election in order to ensure the continuance of democracy 'for the sake of the children' who were watching the show and presumably, by implication, for the benefit of all South Africa's children, especially street children, AIDS orphans and those who are abused. However, in his typically chiasitic style, Uys does not only depict Evita as the 'perfect' mother, but instead reveals her lack of basic maternal qualities. Although Evita professes that her priority was to look after her children, it was her domestic helper who really fulfilled the role of mother to her children. Evita (Uys, 1997a:61) freely admits to abdicating her maternal functions to her helper who 'would bath the children, feed them, put them to bed, wash up and walk the dogs'.

It also appears from her remarks that Uys's Evita equates motherhood with domestic chores

¹⁹ According to the Bill of Rights enshrined in the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, South African children have a right to 'family care ... or appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment; basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care ... and social services; protect[ion] from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation; basic education and [eventually] further education' (Republic of South Africa, 1996:13,14).

(‘wash up’) and pet care (‘walk the dogs’). In this way, Uys exposes the double standards practised by some mothers or parents and, in particular, by those white South African families who employ black domestic workers to act as surrogate mothers – an issue that is discussed more fully in Chapter Four of this thesis and also explored by Uys (2001j:2) in his novel *Trekking to Teema*. Despite his persona’s professed inability to ‘understand women who want children and then divert their energies into a career’, Uys ironically records Evita’s pursuit of a political career in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a) (explored in greater detail in Chapter Five, and to a lesser degree in Chapter Six).

Subsequent to the above analyses of Uys’s use of some of the satiric modes that McMurtry (1993:1) lists when he defines satire as a protean term (mentioned above), this chapter now focuses on the ‘fruit salad’ of stylistic techniques that South Africa’s leading political jester uses to convey his pleasure/pain impulse. Uys uses invective (defined in Footnote 1 of this chapter) when, having adopted the outward form of Evita, s/he discusses the inquest into the ‘accidental’ death of the black activist Stephen Biko that Evita and her son, De Kock, reputedly attended. In the following extract Uys (1994a:254) presumably deploys this harsh style as a means of expressing his contempt for a trial that, during the subsequent hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was shown to have made a mockery of justice.²⁰

De Kock ... wanted to see a real professional trial, so I took him with me ... to attend the Biko Inquest. ... When the final verdict was given that no one in the Police Force was guilty of Biko’s death ... poor De Kock was very disappointed. He thought a real trial would be so exciting, like in ... the American courtroom-dramas he saw on our SATV. ... I explained to De Kock ... that this Biko’s death was an obvious suicide. He had done it just to embarrass the government. There was no crime involved when prisoners slipped on the soap in the shower or fell from the 5th floor of John Vorster Square ... or fatally banged their heads against the wall. That was an accident. I promised him a nice trial one day, where someone was really murdered and we could hear all the terrible details.

²⁰The actual circumstances surrounding Black Consciousness leader Stephen Biko’s death in detention in September 1977 were made public during one of the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, held after the 1994 elections under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Five Port Elizabeth security policemen admitted their responsibility in Biko’s death but, despite their plea that this was a politically motivated crime, they were not granted amnesty. During various hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it was revealed that Biko and other political prisoners had been murdered and their deaths ‘explained’ in ways similar to those quoted in the above extract, for example ‘slipped on the soap in the shower, or fell from the 5th floor of John Vorster Square’ (Uys, 1994a:254).

In this extract, Uys contrasts the harsh reality of political detention with popular fiction through his juxtaposition of such words and phrases as ‘real trial’ versus ‘courtroom-dramas’, ‘no crime’ versus ‘an accident’, ‘obvious suicide’ versus ‘really murdered’ and ‘nice trial’ versus ‘terrible details’. In this way Uys (1994a:254) pinpoints the enormity of an ideology under which an inquest into the death in detention of ‘liberals and blacks’ was regarded by a mother and a leading political figure (albeit a fantasy character in a book) as innocuous and unexciting entertainment for her ‘bright 16-year old son’. Uys calls into question both the integrity and intelligence of this supposedly ‘senior diplomat’ by depicting her willingness to accept the string of far-fetched accounts offered by the state²¹ as legitimate reasons for the death of political prisoners such as Biko.

Another literary technique that Uys uses is ‘ridicule’, a method that involves ‘derisive mirth or light mockery’ (Little *et al.*, 1973:1830). ‘Derisive’ and ‘mockery’ suggest censure while ‘mirth’ and ‘light’ implies enjoyment. Consequently Uys’s utilisation of this obviously chiasitic device as a tool for raising the public’s socio-political consciousness is relevant to this study of his deployment of the chiasitic pleasure/pain mode. The following extract from Uys’s (1997a: 14) description of Pik Botha provides examples of his use of this double-edged tool:

What an attractive man: imagine him six foot tall (he still is, but mainly horizontal); pitch black hair, shining with Brylcream ... , combed flat against his head as if licked by a mad cow. ... That sexy little moustache with a life of its own. Today it looks like a drowned mouse, but then the moustache gave him the look of the Errol Flynn of the National Party. ... President Mandela allowed Pik the Ministry for Minerals and Energy Affairs in the Government of National Unity. This was not a success. Pik never mixes minerals with anything.

The above extract contains further evidence of Uys’s characteristic use of chiasmus. He

²¹ Mafika Gwala, another South Africa writer who uses his art as a form of protest, also makes reference to the implausible explanations that were given for the deaths of political prisoners whilst in police detention during the apartheid era. However, Gwala adopts a more serious tone than Uys in his poem *Afrika at a Piece*, published in his anthology *No More Lullabies* (1982). Gwala (1982:44-46) alerts his readers to the fact that ‘our history is being written with indelible blood stains [and] with sweeping black souls in the streets of John Vorster where Timol “dived” thru [sic] the window, ... at Sanlam Building where Biko “knocked his head against walls” [and] at Caledon Square where Iman Haroon “slipped on a bar of soap” ’.

repeatedly presents a positive image of Evita's 'ageing Romeo and friend' (Uys, 1997a:2) and then, almost immediately, undermines each statement with a less flattering picture. For example, Uys contrasts 'six foot tall' with 'mainly horizontal', 'pitch' with 'shining', 'combed flat' with 'licked by a mad cow' and 'sexy' with 'drowned mouse'. Uys's descriptions are closely linked to either topical statements or well-known phrases or clichés, for example, the expression 'mainly horizontal' is a humorous expression often used to describe someone who frequently over-imbibes and is thus unable to maintain a vertical position. (Pik Botha is reputed to enjoy consuming alcohol on social occasions. This is reinforced by Evita's comment that 'Pik never mixes minerals with anything'.) However, this portrayal is a light-hearted attack on the man whom Evita claims is her favourite politician (their supposed relationship is explored further in Chapter Six). It therefore lacks the viciousness of Uys's (1997a:13) scurrilous attack on P W Botha, whom Uys describes as

the last emperor of the 1000 Bylaw Boer Reich ... a bald, bland, unpleasant man with no sense of humour and an imperialist attitude to his position as a civil servant.

Here, Uys's use of the adjective 'last' immediately deflates the authority normally associated with the noun 'emperor'. Furthermore, the power of 'Reich' (a term that conjures up two contrasting images – namely the glory of imperialist Germany under Bismarck and the ruthlessness of Nazi Germany under Hitler) is reduced to the level of petty details through the aggrandized phrase '1000 Bylaw' with its connotations of cumbersome bureaucracy. The negative image that Uys creates of this 'emperor' in the next sentence is the result of an accumulation of offensive images in the phrases 'bald, bland, unpleasant' and 'no sense of humour'. In the final half of the sentence Uys again juxtaposes the contrasting phrases 'an imperialist attitude' and 'a civil servant'. Through this chiasmic grouping, Uys initially focuses on Botha's dictatorial role ('imperialist attitude') and then immediately deflates Botha's aspirations of political grandeur when he reminds the reader of P W Botha's subservient position. Botha is a politician and thus first and foremost a servant of civil society – and the civil service is a profession that has lost much of its stature during the latter half of the twentieth century. Thus Uys succeeds in presenting P W Botha as no more than a dreary autocrat with ideas above his station.

A less vindictive example of Uys's (1997a:93) manifestation of satire's protean character, is Evita's amusing but nonetheless sarcastic description of Dr Nkosasana Zuma, the Minister of Health during Nelson Mandela's presidency:

Dr Nkososana [*sic*] Zuma has made her mark ... by commissioning *Sarafina 2*²² and inviting 250 Cuban doctors to South Africa. ... I wonder sometimes if she is a real doctor, or if she got her doctorate like most of the *Broeders* [Afrikaner leaders] did, by sending a R150 cheque to a PO Box in Potchefstroom? ... And she can dance the toyi-toyi.²³

Here, Uys's sarcasm functions as a form of euphemistic 'double speak' that demeans its victim through hyperbolic flattery, a blend of wit and praise. Uys/Evita flatters the Minister of Health ('Dr Zuma has made her mark') and then instantly deflates this praise when s/he alludes to two 'real-life' situations. Firstly, Uys questions the Minister of Health's integrity through his/Evita's reference to her involvement in the unsuccessful AIDS musical *Sarafina 2*. Secondly, Uys casts doubts on her professional judgement when he/Evita refers to Zuma's involvement in the controversial appointment of '250 Cuban doctors', the majority of whom spoke only Spanish, to South African hospitals and clinics where, presumably, many of them had difficulty conversing with their patients. Thirdly, Uys's Evita degrades Dr Zuma's medical qualifications when s/he suggests that 'she bought her doctorate' while, simultaneously, undermining the legitimacy of the academic qualifications of many leading Afrikaners through the use of the word '*Broeders*'. However, this description is not without its share of wit because Uys compliments Dr Zuma, a well-built woman, on her expertise in performing the 'toyi-toyi'. This is a popular and fairly vigorous ethnic 'dance' that Evita (Uys, 1997a:82) casually and arrogantly dismisses as something that is performed 'wherever blacks decide not to work, because they're lazy, overfed, or just drunk'.

Uys sometimes engages in a more venomous form of disparagement than that meted out to Dr Zuma (presumably when he feels the need to debase his target) in which hostility

²² A musical written to promote AIDS awareness in South Africa that subsequently caused considerable controversy due to the exorbitant costs involved and its lack of effectiveness.

²³ 'A silly dance that is reputed to be the war dance of true liberation ... that looks like elementary Zulu aerobics' (Uys, 1997a:82).

outweighs wit and praise. Uys's condemnation of certain ultra-right wing South African political parties is very strong. One such example is Evita's (Uys, 1997a:7) description of the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*:

AWB stands for the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*, or Afrikaner Resistance Movement, where there is little resistance and absolutely no movement. A small minor grouping of eccentric overweight old-fashioned former Nats, who have found an easy way to free publicity on overseas TV by wearing funny hats, growing dirty beards, falling drunk off their horses while waving sloppy Nazi salutes. They ... have as their members a dozen senile ex-policemen fined for molesting sheep and drunken driving: a few ex-Rhodesians who aren't very good at keeping countries and a few disappointed Brits who migrated to South Africa to share in the glories of apartheid, but got here too late for cheap maids and garden boys.²⁴ Led by a fat man called Eugene Terreblanche who has holes in his green Y-fronts and cries on the witness stand.

Uys/Evita's opinion reveals a harsh commentary in which Uys, as usual, collates semantically dissimilar statements. Uys mocks both the authenticity of this 'group' ('little resistance', 'no movement' and 'small minor grouping'), the mental acumen of its leaders ('eccentric', 'old-fashioned' and 'senile') and their integrity ('found an easy way to free publicity' and 'drunken driving'). Uys also insinuates an element of racial bigotry and despotic cruelty through the phrases 'Nazi salutes' and 'ex-policemen'.²⁵ Uys does not confine his criticism to Afrikaners but also condemns English-speaking immigrants through his reference to 'ex-Rhodesians' and 'disappointed Brits'. He also accuses these two groups of abusing what Uys somewhat ironically describes as 'the glories of apartheid', namely 'cheap maids and garden boys', resulting from such questionable policies as job reservation and unequal pay.²⁶

²⁴ Many unskilled black people in South Africa earn their living by performing menial tasks in either the house or the garden. Due to a number of reasons, such as their lack of skills, the high rate of unemployment, inadequate trade union representation and a low minimum wage for their particular area of employment, domestic workers and gardeners are amongst the lowest paid workers in South Africa.

²⁵ As mentioned in Footnote 21 of this Chapter, the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed that the South African Police Force had a poor human rights' record during apartheid.

²⁶ A policy of job reservation came into existence in South Africa in 1911 when 'regulations emanating from the Mines and Works Act of 1911 ... restrict[ed] skilled work to whites' (Cameron & Spies, 1986:234) and ensured that blacks 'remained a cheap, docile and ... exploitable labour force' (Oakes, 1988:316). Fifty years later (1968) 'the employment of Africans in particular categories of work in urban areas – behind counters and as receptionists, typists, telephone operators, clerks or cashiers, or as doctors in urban locations serving their own people' was still banned and blacks were still regarded as 'cheap labour' (Cameron & Spies, 1986:306).

Uys's satire once again blends pleasure and pain, but while the emphasis is the 'absurd, comical and/or outrageous' (Little *et al.*, 1973:1830), Uys's portrayal of members of the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging* is very vituperative. Uys exposes these people as incompetent bunglers who not only 'fall drunk off their horses' but who are also cruel and/or perverted because they 'molest' defenceless animals ('sheep'). Instead of attracting television coverage for their good looks and deeds, Uys depicts the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging* members as 'overweight' and 'sloppy' anti-heroes with 'funny hats' and 'dirty beards'. In a particularly 'below-the-belt' jibe at the leader of this movement, Uys refers to certain sensational facts that earlier received media attention both locally and overseas. Through his reference to 'holes in his green Y-fronts' (underwear), Uys presumably alludes to an allegedly illicit relationship between a female reporter and Eugene Terreblanche, while 'cries on the witness stand' acts a reminder of how Terreblanche reputedly broke down under cross-examination.

In addition to sarcasm and invective (discussed above) Uys also employs irony as a satirical tool. Aspects of this stylistic device that are relevant to Uys's pleasure/pain mode are explored below. Uys's utilization of irony as an 'indirect and almost tenderly administered poison' (Eastman, 1948:207,193) is examined because this term also aligns irony with Uys's habit of couching his censure in humour. Uys, in the guise of Evita, often practises this 'foxy way of talking' (Eastman, 1948:193,201) and ironic comedy arises when Uys engages in a chiasmic conflation of either 'understat[ing] his exaggeration' or 'exaggerat[ing] his understatements'. In Evita's previously referred to amusing but systematic annihilation of Dr Zuma, Uys understates his exaggeration'. For example, Evita (Uys, 1997a:93) comments that, despite all the Minister of Health's 'blunders' ('commissioning Sarafina 2' and employing '250 Cuban doctors') President Mandela still has faith in Doctor Zuma. According to Evita (Uys, 1997a:93), 'he won't hear a word against her' because, when 'he came out of jail', she cured his 'terrible headache' with an over-the-counter remedy.

Uys is equally capable of 'exaggerating his understatements' in order to produce some 'raw

and bitter' irony (Eastman, 1948:20) as, for example, when Evita (1997a:12) maligns 'the Reverend Alan Boesak' as follows:

He also cannot count. Millions of Danish *kronen* in donations for the poor and needy vanished somewhere in his domain. As Alan is neither poor nor needy, we, the people, demand an explanation [or] will it be ... another O J Simpson²⁷ farce?

By comparing Boesak to 'O J Simpson', Uys undermines everything that the former 'African National Congress leader of the liberation movement in the Western Cape' stood for, namely integrity and concern for the disadvantaged members of his community.

As Cuddon (1977:338) rightly notes, ironic statements, whether light-hearted or vicious, usually exhibit 'an incongruity between words and their meaning, actions and their results, or appearance and reality'. The following extract in which Uys (1997a:21), through the voice of Evita, comments on corruption, offers evidence of a number of the semantic inconsistencies that are typical of irony:

Corruption - isn't it awful and a bit funny to see how our present ANC Government did not learn anything from the previous NP Regime? It is now said this government is more corrupt than the old one! Nonsense! No one could be more corrupt than the apartheid *Broeders* [brothers] were! (Ask me: I was there. Not involved, mind you, just watching. Purely from the sidelines as a mere woman) No, this new lot are not more corrupt; just better at it.

In this text Uys offers a veiled warning that his persona's opinion will contain more pain than pleasure when he prefaces a phrase that suggests amusement ('a bit funny') with one that connotes alarm ('isn't it awful'). However, the saying 'isn't it funny' has a dual meaning that is often expressed in the colloquialisms 'funny ha-ha' or 'funny peculiar'. In terms of the first expression, 'a bit funny' can be interpreted as 'slightly amusing'. According to the

²⁷ An American celebrity accused of killing his wife during the early 1990s and whose trial was compared to a Hollywood movie because of the phenomenal media coverage it received. Simpson was subsequently found not guilty and many people felt that his acquittal was due to his celebrity status rather than a true assessment of his innocence.

second one, this term means ‘strange’ or ‘not quite right’ or even ‘something devious’, a definition that offers support for the claim that irony involves the exposition of differences ‘between words and meaning’ (Cuddon, 1977:338). Uys uses Evita to alert his audience to the fact that corruption, a practice that he obviously believes occurs in many bureaucratic institutions worldwide, is a serious issue that should not be ignored. Consequently, Uys does not ‘pull any punches’ and his persona offers harsh criticism of both the former Nationalist Party (‘no one could be more corrupt’) and the ruling African National Congress government (‘not more corrupt, just better at it’). In so doing, Uys/Evita reminds the electorate that no political party, not even the legendary Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress, is above corruption. Evita’s ‘opinions’ once again offer evidence of how Uys utilizes both syntactic and semantic chiasmus as a satirical tool. In the statements ‘this government is more corrupt than the old one’ and ‘this new lot are not more corrupt’, the sequence of words is reversed, namely ‘more corrupt than the old one’ versus ‘new lot are not more corrupt’. These statements also contain a change of meaning (‘more’ versus ‘not more’ and ‘old’ versus ‘new’).

In the extract under analysis, Uys’s persona supposedly bases her condemnation of the Nationalist Party on personal experience (‘I was there’). However, being ‘a good and very “normal” white South African’ (Uys, 1997a:68), Evita immediately exonerates herself of any liability when, in Uys’s typically chiasmic style, she claims she was ‘not involved ... just watching’. Uys’s heroine then justifies her seemingly passive acceptance of corruption by explaining that as ‘a mere woman’ she had ‘no voice in the political structure’ (Uys, 1995:80). In the light of the political achievements that Uys ascribes to Mrs Bezuidenhout in his *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a), *Funigalore – Evita’s Real-life Adventures in Wonderland* (1995) and *The Essential Evita Bezuidenhout* (1997a), Evita’s explanation offers a double layer of meaning. At the first level, it suggests that, regardless of whether Uys’s ‘Grand Dame of white angst’ enters ‘the holy portals of [the Nationalist-led] parliament’ or travels ‘down the road of grassroots politics’ (De Beer, 1999a:2), she finds it equally difficult to distinguish between truth and fantasy. At the second level, it reveals the existence of similar disparities between both appearance and reality and the ideal and the actual that are

part of the socio-political experience of Evita's fellow South Africans at the beginning of the twenty-first century, regardless of their race, culture, social position or political allegiance.

In some of his texts, Uys employs a mixture of both 'situational' and 'comic' irony, forms of censure that, as Fowler (1973:101) notes, require that the 'author and audience have access to a shared set of assumptions or prejudices'. Fowler (1973:102) (albeit unconsciously) points to the essentially chiasmic nature of irony when he states that irony heightens the satiric thrust by bringing 'two conflicting and contrasting worlds [into] sharp focus' for the purpose of both 'unifying the apparent contradictions of experience [and] assert[ing] the world's diversity'. This type of irony is found in Evita's comment (Uys, 1997a:35) that is set within the socio-political context of South Africa during the final years of apartheid:

Billie-Jeanne married Leroy Makoeloeli in 1990 [who is] a black. I nearly died but mercifully Leroy is nearly white in his education and manners. Their first child, named after its mother and the Mother of the Nation, is Winnie-Jeanne.

Uys, speaking through the voice of Evita, looks at some of the problems that arise from 'mixed' marriages or partnerships, a practice that is becoming more common in contemporary South Africa since the Mixed Marriages Act and Section Sixteen of the Immorality Act were repealed in 1986. Despite legal sanction some South Africans still disapprove of mixed marriages. However, and not without irony, Uys suggests that if, like Leroy, their future son- or daughter-in-law has adopted the trappings of his/her own society (in this instance the 'education and manners' of 'white' society), most families would, like the Bezuidenhouts, find him/her acceptable. Leroy has another noteworthy attribute that Evita fails to mention – he is reputedly the son of the President of the fictitious Homeland of Bapetikosweti – a fact that will be known to Uys's readers. Thus Uys infers that wealth and social status are likely to be determining factors in gauging the acceptability of a prospective son- or daughter-in-law. Here it appears that Uys (Fowler, 1973:101,102) is using irony to expose both the 'shared ... assumptions' and 'apparent contradictions' that people of different races and cultures experience. However, by stating that Leroy has 'mercifully ... nearly' succeeded in bridging the divisions that are perceived to exist between European and African cultures, Uys's Evita, somewhat ironically, affirms, rather than negates, the existence

of a racial and social gap with its concomitant disparities. Uys's belief in the possibility that South Africans will successfully surmount this fissure is evidenced in his creation of Leroy's hybrid offspring who is, reputedly, Evita's 'pride and joy'. Evita's fictitious 'mixed-race' granddaughter reflects a microcosm of South African society that is epitomised in her name. Winnie-Jeanne is, in itself, a chiasmic conflation that combines the name of an [in]famous black woman (Nomsamo Winifred Madikisela-Mandela, a veteran of 'the struggle' and ex-wife of President Mandela, who is both revered and hated by the South African public) with an Eurocentric name, 'Jeanne'. The presence of subtle verbal slippage and innuendo in this particular text provides evidence of Uys's characteristic deployment of chiasmic configurations as an intrinsic aspect of his satiric thrust.

In addition to the pleasurable and painful facets of irony already examined in this chapter, Abrams (1971:81) draws attention to its intellectual aspect when he reminds his readers that irony demands a certain level of mental sophistication from its creator, interpreter and/or evaluator:

Recourse to irony by an author carries an implicit compliment to the intelligence of the reader, who [as part of] the knowing minority [is] not taken in by the ostensible meaning. That is why many ironists are misinterpreted and sometimes ... get into serious trouble with obtuse authorities.

Many of Uys's explicitly critical plays were, as mentioned in Chapter One, banned by the officials of South Africa's Censorship Board during the late 1970s, not because these officials were 'obtuse', but because they understood the satirical undertones of Uys's texts. In order to avoid further 'trouble with the authorities', Uys began writing and performing his blatantly sardonic revues. It is surely ironic, therefore, that these revues or *konserts* (Uys, 1986:vii), in which Uys ridicules political figures and parties, did not suffer the same fate at the hands of the censors as his earlier plays. In the following extract, Uys (1986:49) first explains his method of writing and then speculates on why his revues were never censored:

The realisation that our society had been systematically neutered into submission through the fear of authority, the laws, and what is allowed, gave me even more reason to push ahead with my exploration into the limits of acceptability ... [and] infiltrate into sacred meadows where sacred cows low. The government were my inspiration; they were my script-writers; they said it all. I simply repeated their political pornography. ... So, if the powers-that-be stopped me from saying my piece, would they not be stopping themselves who uttered such rubbish in the first place?

This extract contains further evidence of Uys's use of semantic chiasmus during his 'off-stage' dialogue. Despite attempts to 'systematically neuter [him] into submission', Uys continued to 'push ahead with [his] exploration into the limits of acceptability'. When he describes his method of writing political satire, Uys resorts to semantic chiasmus when he juxtaposes phrases such as 'the government ... said it all' versus 'I ... repeated their political pornography', and 'stopped me' versus 'stopping themselves'.

Although Uys credits the government with writing the 'scripts' for his satirical reviews (mentioned above), the successful interpretation of these texts depends on his readers/audience being members of the 'knowing minority' (Abrams, 1971:81) who constantly extend themselves beyond the literal elucidation of satirical texts. (Luckily for both Uys and his readers/audiences, this was a skill that the censors obviously lacked because they allowed him to create and present his revues throughout the 1980s.) Insightful readers/audiences, however, appreciated the finer nuances of Uys's ironic commentaries, such as the following description of what was, reputedly, Evita's (Uys, 1997a:62) first visit to Rome and the Vatican City with the then State President P W Botha and his wife Elize:

[Rome] was very beautiful, if somewhat ruined. ... The Vatican is where the Pope lives with all the nuns and we went and looked at his place. He has a chapel where Michaelangelo worked. Silly. We walked right through the Sistine Chapel and saw nothing.

Many South Africans appear to prefer watching sports, such as cricket, football or rugby, to viewing either the visual or the performing arts. However, their more astute compatriots are well aware that, when visiting the Sistine Chapel, 'you're supposed to look up' (Uys,

1997a:62), a small detail that escapes the notice of ‘silly’ Evita and her illustrious companions. The implications of this self-reflexive irony – encountered in English literature as early as in Chaucer’s *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400) (Skeat, 1976) – are that even South Africa’s so-called educated elite often behave like stereotypical tourists and ‘do’ Europe without valuing what they see. By contrast, a knowledgeable audience who, with the chiasmic twist embedded in the ironic authorial voice, includes Uys, is able to appreciate the humour of the chiasmic phrase ‘very beautiful if somewhat ruined’. It is precisely Rome’s ruins, such as the Colosseum and the Forum, that constitute a large part of that city’s beauty and, consequently, its fascination for foreign tourists.

The last stylistic device explored in this chapter is wit. As Abrams (1971:179) notes, wit currently includes any literary utterance that ‘exhibits a brilliant and paradoxical style [that] denotes a kind of verbal expression which is brief, deft and intentionally contrived to produce a shock of comic surprise’. The element of surprise results from ‘an unforeseen connection or distinction between words or concepts’ that at first ‘frustrates the listener’s expectation only to satisfy it in a different way’. Wit can be used to raise public awareness of moral, philosophical and religious issues. It is also an ideal tool for implementing Uys’s pleasure/pain mode of satire (as discussed in this chapter) because it includes both ‘tendency wit [and] comedy’. Tendency wit is ‘aggressive’ and directs ‘unsympathetic laughter’ towards a dupe. Tendency comedy, on the other hand, evokes humorous laughter at the expense of a seemingly stupid gull. A ‘wit’ is someone with ‘great mental ... ingenuity and wisdom’ who frequently produces smart and amusing ‘utterances’ (Little *et al.*, 1973:2559).

The weekly satirical column that Uys wrote for *The Sunday Express* during the late 1970s and early 1980s provides evidence of both his ingenuity and mental acumen. Uys frequently engaged in ‘tendency wit’ when he ‘directed unsympathetic laughter’ towards the then current political procedures. One such object of his disapproval was the Nationalist government’s policy of sending young white male conscripts to ‘defend’ South Africa’s borders. In his article ‘Left in the lurch on a *Groot Trek* [long journey] with Olga’, Uys

(1979b:17) describes his overnight stay in Matjiesfontein, a small but well-known Karoo town, as follows:

I bathed the *Groot Trek's* dust off a tired body (mine, drat) amid bubble-bath supplied by the management. Dressed for dinner with pleasure, fabricating a tie from a bathrobe ... ate, drank and was quaintly merry under a twinkling roof of a million stars. ...

And then, like a monster out of the dark chocolate of the Karoo night, headlight cutting through velvet air like a bloodied razor, it approached – effortlessly dragging a string of silent clicking coaches in its wake: the first of three troop trains on their way north.

The first two were full of bravely exuberant noisy children on their way to becoming men; the last train sombrely quiet, its occupants in uniform already men and on their way to a destiny. ...

Bizarre that the nearest I've come to the war was in the middle of the tranquil Karoo and all because of a train at Matjiesfontein.

In the first paragraph of the above extract, Uys amuses his readers with his light-hearted account of his ablutions and evening meal. However, having lulled them into a false sense of security, Uys counteracts their expectations of more amusing anecdotes with disturbing words such as 'monster' and 'dark'. His use of the ambiguous 'wake' not only denotes the rear carriages but also evokes images of a funeral vigil. He then attempts to alert his readers to the harsh reality of both war and compulsory military service, both issues of 'morality [and] philosophy' (Martin, 1974:11). Members of both the South African Defence Force and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* [Spear of the Nation]²⁸ were fighting and dying on South Africa's northern borders and, to a lesser extent, in the local townships. Uys raises his readers' consciousness of these facts through the inclusion of phrases comprising both 'unexpected connections [and] distinctions' (Abrams, 1971:179). Uys uses unusual links in the following phrases because, although 'effortlessly dragging' and 'silent clicking' can be classified as oxymorons, these expressions suggest ease of movement. Uys's use of the words 'coaches' and 'troop trains' involves an 'unusual distinction' because, while 'coach' and 'train' both

²⁸ 'The armed wing of the ANC' (Oakes, 1988:410).

suggest travel, the adjective ‘troop’ indicates that this is not a journey undertaken for pleasure or business but for military purposes, or to be more exact, for war.

In the quoted passage Uys again engages in semantic chiasmus to strengthen the effect of his censure. He juxtaposes the disparate phrases ‘cutting through velvet’ with ‘bloodied razor’, ‘bravely exuberant noisy children’ with ‘sombrely quiet occupants in uniform’ and ‘on their way to becoming men’ with ‘men ... on their way to a destiny’. The depth of contrast between the light-hearted ‘exuberant noisy children’ and the sombre ‘men on their way to a destiny’, a fate that involved putting their lives at risk while defending their country, helps to reinforce the enormity of a war in which young healthy men on both sides were killed or maimed.

However, Uys satisfies his readers’ expectations when he reminds them, that like himself, many of them are still free to engage in life’s more pleasurable pursuits, such as drinking ‘sun-downers’ ‘under a twinkling roof of a million stars’. He also reassures them that, for the majority of South Africans, their experience of war will, like his own, remain a purely vicarious one. This concept is connoted in the last paragraph through another chiastic contrast, namely ‘the nearest I’ve come to war’ versus ‘in the middle of the tranquil Karoo’. Uys ends his message on a lighter note with the phrase ‘a train at Matjiesfontein’. This appears to be a comic allusion to the then popular Afrikaans song ‘*Trein na Matjiesfontein*’, sung by the well-liked Sonja Herholdt and featured regularly on music request programmes such as those dedicated to ‘troupees/troepies’ (national servicemen).

Almost two decades later, Uys reflects on the fate of those National Servicemen he had written about in his newspaper article in 1979. Speaking through his persona, Evita, Uys (1997a:76) has the following to say about soldiers:

Soldier – All mothers had one of those in the family during the last twenty years. Some mothers lost sons. Some sons didn’t die, but lost their will to live. There are hospital wards still full of half-men, crippled survivors of pointless battles. We were told it was to fight communism, to uphold democracy, to protect Christianity. Rubbish! It was greed and self-interest. Someone gave the orders. I wonder who?

The above extract again confirms Uys's deployment of both syntactical and semantic chiasmus as a satirical tool in the statements 'some mothers lost sons' versus 'some sons ... lost their will to live'. His satire is strengthened by the inclusion of yet another 'unexpected distinction' between the supposedly 'ideal' reason for war – 'to fight communism, uphold democracy and protect Christianity' versus what he sees as the 'actual' reason – 'greed and self-interest'. Whether the reasons for justifying war are moral, financial or religious, as Uys (1997a:76) points out in the extract above, soldiers are maimed and/or killed during this 'pointless' process. Through his use of the inclusive phrase 'all mothers', Uys reminds his readers that during the years of apartheid, it was not only white mothers who lost their sons or white soldiers who died.

Uys (1997a:91), again in the guise of Evita, adds a postscript to his discussion of 'soldiers' and 'pointless battles'. Here he employs a more hostile form of wit when he defines war in the following cynical epigram.²⁹

A state in which I think I, and the rest of South Africa, spent most of our lives. And who won?

Uys exhibits 'adroitness of form' (Cuddon, 1977:756) when he asks the brief but telling rhetorical question 'and who won?' and then chooses not to provide the reader with an answer, thus supporting his previously expressed condemnation of 'pointless battles' fought to further 'greed and self-interest'. When Uys wrote this comment, compulsory military service had been abolished and many members of former 'terrorist' or 'liberation' groups had returned to South Africa.³⁰ Despite the demise of apartheid, the expectations of many South Africans have, as yet, not been fulfilled and, seven years after the introduction of majority rule, allegedly racially motivated crimes still occur. However, it does appear that South

²⁹ Cuddon (1977:756) defines an epigram as 'verbal deftness or adroitness of form' and classifies it as wit.

³⁰ Also known as freedom fighters by those South Africans who supported the armed struggle led by 'Umkonto we Sizwe' [Spear of the Nation] (Oakes, 1988:410) against the Nationalist Government.

Africans are starting to follow Uys's advice and are not only asking 'who won?' but also 'what have we won?'.³¹

The last issue to be discussed in this chapter is the problematic nature of political satire in a contemporary society that accepts the 'notion of the equal validity and invalidity of different constructions of reality' (Fletcher, 1987:ix). As mentioned in Chapter One, Fletcher (1987:ix) argues that because reality is no longer regarded as definitive, there are no grounds for promoting the 'absolute priority of one set of moral values over another'. The following commentary provides evidence of contemporary South African society's blurring of moral values and the resultant introduction of such 'bizarre realities' (Fletcher, 1987:ix) as the public justification of political dishonesty. In his editorial comment 'No room for a Pinocchio premier in government' in the *Sunday Times* (1999:22) of 27 June, the (anonymous) editor comments on two different perceptions of the 'reality' of political integrity in South Africa, as expressed by two politicians and, in so doing, offers yet a third perception.

The Premier of Mpumalanga, Ndaweni Mahlangu, is not the first high-ranking government official to expound a novel view on the question of lying. ... [When] the Director General of Sport, Mthobi Tyamzashe was cross-examined on the subject of lying ... [he said] a lie was not necessarily dishonest. Some lies were honest lies, and, depending on the motive or intention, some were dishonest. ... President Thabo Mbeki has promised clean administration and an end to corruption, but the fact that Mahlangu still occupies the premier's seat gives the lie to Mbeki's promise, and appears to sanction the Tyamzashe approach to the subject by distinguishing between lies, damn lies and political statements. ... The public has the right to demand that we hear the truth, and that people in public office who tell lies or sanction lies in others, should stand down.

It appears that, like the editor of the *Sunday Times* (quoted above), Uys, as mentioned in

³¹ 'Thousands of marchers converge[d] on [the] week-long World Conference on Racism [held in Durban from] August 31 (*Pretoria News*, 2001d:2). Otto (2001:1) reported that 'trade union members protest[ed] against the creation of "a black elite" as well as the ANC's systematic privatisation of various Government Institutions and the accompanying job losses'. Protesters claimed that they 'did not fight for liberation so that we [the government] could sell everything we [working class people] [had] won to the highest bidder'.

Chapter One, is aware of the uncertain nature of quantifiable reality in contemporary society and frequently expresses this viewpoint both through his personae and personally. On one occasion, Uys (Sichel, 1999:3) confidently stated, ‘nothing is real’. However, after reflecting on his statement, he added that ‘memory is real’. During his promotion of *Dekaffirmated* (1999c) Uys offers a synopsis of some of the more peculiar aspects of South Africa’s current socio-political reality – a reality in which conflicting attitudes towards moral norms exist, such as the different perceptions of the act of lying and political integrity outlined in the newspaper article quoted above. According to Uys (1998c:1), *Dekaffirmated* (1999c) offers

a new look at a fading Rainbow Nation in which there is hope in the hopelessness and optimism in the negativity. This revue reflect[s] the adorable, the absurd and the obscene in our extraordinary society today.

Here Uys appears to confirm the contents of his article ‘From Bothacracry to Democracy, Long Live South African Satire’ (1994b) written four years earlier (discussed previously in this chapter). Exhibiting his proclivity for chiasmus, Uys describes contemporary South African society in semantically opposed phrases – ‘hope in the hopelessness’ and ‘optimism in the negativity’. In this way Uys reaffirms his earlier promise of taking a ‘new’ look at reality, presumably accompanied by a large ‘dose’ of ‘hope’ and ‘optimism’, in an attempt to underpin the ‘fading’ euphoria that has resulted in a feeling of both ‘hopelessness’ and ‘negativity’.

In keeping with his particular mode of censure, Uys’s synopsis of his revue conflates both pleasurable (‘adorable’ and ‘extraordinary’) and painful (‘absurd’ and ‘obscene’) aspects as he attempts to offer a fresh perspective on post-apartheid South Africa, four years after its inception when some of the initial rapture had already dissipated. It is surely safe to assume, therefore, that Uys is aware of the dangers of employing only one particular set of moral, social and political norms as his yardstick for judging contemporary society. Perhaps that is why Uys (1997a:88), speaking through his persona Evita, earlier took a somewhat unconventional approach when commenting on what is normally perceived as a serious problem in most societies – violence:

Violence has taken over from sport and recreation in South Africa as the one thing that everyone is aware of and can do nothing about. ... it has become an investment. There is only one way to combat violence. With more violence! [When] we have got rid of all the perpetrators of violence ... we can settle down to a normal life of law and order, in other words, civilized violence.

In the above extract, Uys's Evita offers a picture of a society in which ever increasing and uncontrolled violence now constitutes the typical reality of South Africa. S/he does this through a chiasmic conflation of various activities, namely 'violence' versus 'sport', 'recreation' and 'investment'. This is a South Africa in which crime not only supersedes both 'sport and recreation' but has also gained financial 'clout' as an alternative means of economic enrichment. Uys's Evita continues her satirical commentary and explains that after having 'combat[ed] violence ... with more violence', South Africans can look forward to 'a normal life of law and order'.

However, instead of the tranquil and prosperous lifestyle that reputedly accompanies the implementation of 'law and order', Uys offers his readers a less orthodox alternative, namely 'civilized violence'. 'Civilized' is synonymous with such positive concepts as 'enlightened, humanized, educated, cultured, refined and sophisticated' while violence connotes such painful notions as 'forcefulness, powerfulness, savagery, ferocity, brutality [and] destructiveness' (*Oxford Talking Dictionary*, 1998). The phrase 'civilized violence' is hence a contradiction in terms. This poses questions as to whether there are any inherent 'norms' associated with 'law and order'. South Africa's socio-political reality suggests there are not. Some members of the South African Police Service, who should uphold law and order, are alleged to have perpetuated rather than prevented violence,³² both during and after the apartheid era. Similarly, during the post-apartheid period, officials of the Correctional Services, whose role is not merely to detain prisoners, but also to 'seek to rehabilitate and train them', have 'themselves become involved in crime' (Granelli, 2001a:1). It thus seems

³² The following report that appeared in the *Pretoria News* supports Uys/Evita's prediction that 'civilized violence' would become the norm rather than the exception in South Africa. Instead of upholding the law, 'six ... Dog Unit members [policemen]' who 'appeared in the Pretoria High Court' charged with committing 'assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm' had, allegedly, deliberately 'set their police dogs on three illegal immigrants (Venter, 2001:3).

likely that through his outrageous prophecy of a future society where ‘civilized violence’ has become the norm, Uys seeks to shock both the government and the general public into taking greater responsibility for eradicating crime and for reviewing their own moral values.

Both the contents of Uys’s revues and his comments on these revues suggest that Uys fully appreciates the important, but often problematic, role of political comics in contemporary society but, perhaps even more importantly, also accepts that the ‘absurd’ nature of modern life necessitates satirists’ being open to change. As cited in Chapter One, Uys explains how his style of performance has evolved during the last quarter of the twentieth century. During the 1970s and 1980s when apartheid and censorship were an inherent part of the South African reality, Uys (Walker, 1997b:9), being a political satirist and critical thinker, spent most of his time ‘speaking [out] on behalf of’ those who could not voice their views through the ballot box. Uys equates this situation with a living death.

However, with the demise of apartheid and the granting of voting rights to all South African adults in 1994, Uys believes that all can now speak for themselves. As noted in Chapter One, Uys (Walker, 1997b:9) labels this situation ‘the culture of life’. However, despite this positive change, Uys warns the public against complacency when he draws their attention to the ambiguous situation in which, although they ‘have freedom of speech’, they opt for ‘no speech’ (another example of semantic chiasmus) and choose not to exercise their right to voice their concerns through legitimate channels. The possibility of such a predicament was the reason why Uys, in his Evita ‘mask’, undertook his voter-education tour prior to South Africa’s general elections in June 1999 in order to counter the electorate’s complacency because people believed ‘the ANC w[ould] win’. It appears that, like Fletcher (1987:xi), Uys rejects ‘total cynicism or resignation’ (‘no speech’) in favour of an ‘imaginative search for existential or partial values [or truths]’ (‘freedom of speech’). During the course of *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a), Uys (1999i:1, 1999j:1), in the guise of Evita, using an admix of pleasure and pain, not only encouraged ‘cynical and frightened [South Africans] to believe that their vote [could] make impossible dreams ... come true’ but, through ‘the question and answer sessions that end[ed] each Indaba’, also provided a



that politicians are no longer able to 'speak on behalf of anybody' (and everybody) and challenged members of the public to exercise their democratic right of free speech by voting in the forthcoming election.

When asked to comment on the rationale behind his voter education review, Uys (Accone, 1999:1) stated:

... the old South Africa was about death. It was negative, the targets too obvious. Voter education is about everybody mattering. No one must take me seriously, but I must take everyone seriously.

In this extract Uys, in his usual chiasmic 'speak', compares the negative past ('death') with the more positive post-apartheid South Africa ('everybody mattering'). Through his use of the chiasmic phrases 'no one must take me seriously' and 'I must take everyone seriously', Uys justifies his continued use of satirical humour as a tool for safeguarding democracy.

The political satire that Uys (1995:264) creates plays an important role in the 'Reconstruction and Development Process' in contemporary South Africa and critics praise his social commitment, theatrical enterprise and abundant energy. One such critic is Krouse (1999b:2), who describes Uys's 'drag interpretations of everyday South African life' and his voter-education programme as follows:

Whatever their backgrounds, when [South Africans] considered the June election they had little choice but to take Uys's view of it into account [because] all ... must have encountered him in the flesh or on television. At no stage of his career has he fulfilled his role as the country's major satirist with more visibility [as when] he travelled to remote places in full drag preaching that however serious, this was also a moment for light reflection on party promises.

Krouse (1999b:2) appears to focus (perhaps unconsciously) on Uys's use of the pleasure/pain mode of satire when he draws attention to both the humorous aspects ('full drag' and 'light reflection') and the more sombre ones ('serious' and 'party promises').

This chapter has attempted to provide a comprehensive resumé of Uys's special brand of satire. It began by exploring various definitions of satire and identifying and delineating its multifarious components (parody, burlesque, caricature and fantasy), writing styles (sarcasm, invective, ridicule, irony and wit) through a series of analyses of a selection of Uys's literary and performance texts (monologue, newspaper column, play, poem, prose and revue). During this process, attention was paid to Uys's constant deployment of chiasmic configurations as a writer, actor and creator of personae and, in particular, Evita Bezuidenhout, as a means of intensifying his satiric message. The problems facing political 'comics' who operate within modern societies that lack definitive moral or political values were also explored and Uys's efforts at 'aesthetically ordering' today's 'bizarre realities' (Fletcher, 1987:ix) were examined. As a result of this exploration, it was discovered that Uys's work 'forcefully and artistically express[es] a basic dissatisfaction with the status quo' and is thus deserving of 'respect and critical analysis' (Petro, 1982:21). Glenn (1992:81) offers the following pertinent comment on South African satire:

Satire in South Africa now is attractive because it avoids old identifications and identities and starts defining a new identity and culture. As South Africa searches for a political and cultural middle ground or meeting place, we should expect satire to increase as a cultural phenomenon and corrective force, both chastising and ridiculing excesses.

This description adequately delineates Uys's particular brand of satire at the turn of the millennium – a witty mode of discourse that 'spares no one: from the dinosaurs of the old National Party, to the young lions of the African National Congress' (Pons, 1999:11).

CHAPTER THREE

SATIRE THROUGH CHIASTIC ROLE-PLAY AND THE TRANSVESTITE PERSONA

Theatre is central to our understanding of the world around us – it absorbs, analyses, presents, sometimes dictates, reinterprets and often disturbs. ... The transvestite [persona] or drag queen has a place on the stage [and] can tell the audience where to look, or can leave a choice open.

Roger Baker

Chapter Three focuses on Uys the writer, fore-grounding his creative impulse and dramatic method. Integral to the latter is a discussion of Uys's role as actor and, more especially, of his role as female impersonator, which involves a complex chiasmic conflation of the performer and transvestite persona. Testifying to the success of the dramatist's innovative transvestite creations, the name of Uys, writer and actor, has become synonymous with that of his *alter ego*, Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout, South Africa's popular 'comic queen' who commands 'joyful allegiance' (Kustow, [1998] 1999:2) wherever and whenever she performs. Uys adopted the guise of Evita in order to articulate his dissatisfaction with South Africa's socio-political climate under the apartheid system during the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Uys's Evita persona has grown in popularity over the years, and is now 'much more than a theatre personality, [she] is a myth¹ and, 20 years after her first public appearance, [has] slipped the bonds of her creator Pieter-Dirk Uys, to live an independent life' (Pons, 1999:11). Thus, during the run-up to the 1999 parliamentary elections in post-apartheid South Africa, the relationship between creator and created was temporarily reversed when Uys was referred to as 'Evita's *alter ego*' by critics De Beer (1999a:2) and Krouse (1999a:16).

It can be argued, in terms of the thrust of this present study, that it is precisely this slippage between actor and persona and between reality and illusion (this latter aspect is explored in Chapter Six) that has engendered yet another kind of chiasmic trope: an intervention between past and present, between the history, the 'her-story' and the 'high-story' of South African politics – or between the 'old', the 'new' and the 'not-so-new' South Africa. It is within the context of the last thirty years of the twentieth and the opening years of the twenty-first century that the work of Uys, as a writer and a performer, is explored in relation to his role as an 'inventor' (creator), an 'intervener'²

¹ An aspect of this particular persona that is explored at length in Chapter Five of this thesis.

² Invention is 'the fabrication ... or production of a new method of art ... and entails the devising of [an] idea or method of treatment by exercising the intellect or imagination'. An inventor is 'one who [skilfully] devises something fictitious [or] new'. An intervener is someone who 'intervenes [disrupts, intercepts, prevents or hinders] in a suit to which he was not originally a party' to 'effect a transform[ation]' (Little *et al.*, 1973:1107).

(challenger) and an ‘interventor’³ (mediator). Extracts from a number of Uys’s literary texts are subjected to a close reading. These include the following: plays – *Paradise is Closing Down* (1978), *God’s Forgotten* (1981) and *Panorama* (1989b); prose – *No One’s Died Laughing* (1986), *A Part Hate, A Part Love – The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout* (1994a), *Funigalore – Evita’s Real-life Adventures in Wonderland* (1995) and *The Essential Evita Bezuidenhout* (1997a) and live performances and video recordings of performances – *Adapt or Dye* (1982), *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985), *Evita’s Indaba* (1993), *Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d), *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) and *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a), *Evita – Live and Dangerous* (1999e), *For Fact’s Sake* (2000d) and *Symbols of Sex and State* (2001i). In an extension of the discussion on satire in the previous chapter, cognizance is taken throughout these analyses of Uys’s habit of harnessing chiasmus for satirical purposes. Here, however, an examination is made of Uys’s customary application of both syntactic and semantic contrasts such as his deployment of the chiasmic configuration of ‘male actor/female character’. The configurations ‘ideal/actual’ and ‘real/fictitious’ are mentioned here, but they are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Uys believes that actresses have greater theatrical potential than actors and thus he frequently channels his inventive impulse as a dramatist through female characters and personae. This preference probably explains the primacy of women in his early plays. When, as a result of censorship, Uys was unable to produce his plays, or have them produced by others, he could no longer use actresses to articulate his political raillery through the voice of his female characters. Hence, he devised a ‘new’ means of expressing his satirical views. Firstly (as explained in Chapter One), he created a female voice in his newspaper column and then, later, he ‘re-invented’ himself and adopted a variety of masks in his revues, the most (in)famous of whom is Mrs Bezuidenhout. Uys’s artistic singularity lies in the fact that his *konserts* or revues are usually one-man shows with Uys impersonating multiple personae, some based on well-known national figures and others purely fictitious creations, as a means of socio-political

³ An interventor acts as ‘a mediator, an intercessor, an intermediary [and/or] go-between’ (Little *et al.*, 1973:1107).

‘intervention’. This shift in Uys’s artistic mode and dramatic method became apparent with the presentation of his first revue, *Adapt or Dye* (1982), in Durban in April 1981. Uys, albeit unwittingly, admitted his role as an ‘intervener’ when, with the advent of democracy in South Africa in April 1994, he acknowledged that he had been fighting towards this goal since his youth.

Uys’s dramatic inspiration and, in particular, his penchant for fabricating female characters, is scrutinized initially in this chapter through an overview of the three dramas listed at the start of the chapter. Parallels are drawn between the women in these plays and Uys’s subsequent ‘invention’ of his illustrious drag queen and members of her family and entourage. Uys’s frequent use of chiasmus in his female characters’ dialogue is then examined and compared to Evita’s use of this device as an integral part of her role as the mouthpiece of a political ‘intervener’ or satirist. The settings of the three plays are also briefly reviewed and a link is established between these milieux and Evita’s ‘world’ as well as between the issues that Uys raises in both his plays and his *konserts*.

An examination of the cast lists of the selected plays reveals a proliferation of female parts – ten female characters compared to two supporting roles for men, thus confirming Uys’s belief in the dramatic potential of actresses. Six of these female parts are for mature women who play a more dominant role than the younger women. Likewise, it is Evita, a mature woman, who has become a leading character in Uys’s revues and television shows. A close reading of *God’s Forgotten* (1981) reveals a similarity between Tosca, the main character, and Evita. Tosca, like Evita, is engrossed in politics and her authority is vicarious. However, Tosca exercises her power through her father (President of a ‘forgotten’ Afrikaner laager) and not, as Evita does, through her husband. Tosca has a strong personality and Uys (1981:14,22,23,32) describes her as ‘Excelsior’s pushy guardian angel’, ‘the most glamorous widow this country has ever seen’ and a woman who will ‘delay the Day of Judgement for the sake of [her] catering’. Tosca is nicknamed ‘our own Evita Peron’ and appears in ‘every newspaper, like ... royalty’. Some of these epithets are also appropriate descriptions of the fictitious Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout, who is ‘glamorous’ and has reputedly appeared ‘on the best-dressed list

for the second year running' (Uys, 1994a:92). She is renowned for her 'catering' and Uys (1994a:147) recalls how 'not a week passed without [her] succulent *koeksisters* being requested for some ... function around Parliament'. Photographs of Uys in the guise of Evita frequently appear in South African newspapers and magazines and Uys (1994a:10) admits the link between the two Evitas when he asks: "Could someone called Evita in the [19]80s be far from the blueprint passed down from one Mrs Peron to the next?" The fact that Uys has turned the now defunct Darling railway station in the Western Cape into a shrine to Evita and punningly named it 'Evita se *Perron*' (platform) provides further evidence of this link (this stage of Evita's development is discussed more fully in Chapters Five and Six).

As mentioned earlier, supporting characters in the three plays under discussion act as role models for members of Evita's fictitious 'family'. Aliza, Tosca's youngest sister, is a forerunner of Evita's sister-in-law, 'Corrie-Elizabeth' (Uys, 1994a:59). Aliza loves a 'coloured' man and Corrie a 'liberal' – unacceptable choices in apartheid South Africa – and thus both these women disgrace themselves in the eyes of the society in which they reputedly 'live'. Uys also invented the supporting roles of Mouse in *Paradise is Closing Down* (1978) and Karen in *Panorama* (1989b). These women provide a foretaste of such characters as Bokkie Bam, Evita's assistant, whom Uys (1994a:326) disparagingly describes as 'short, uptight, conservative, bigoted, virginal and white'. Such insecure characters are an ideal chiasmic foil for an extrovert such as Mrs Bezuidenhout.

Paradoxically, although, as mentioned above, Uys 'peoples' his plays predominantly with women, in the three plays under analysis, very few of the female characters can, within the world of the play, function effectively on their own. Most of these women are either unhappily divorced, or desperately seeking a 'meaningful' relationship with a man. Anna (Uys, 1978:143) in *Paradise is Closing Down* says of her ex-husband: 'I had lunch with Helmut on Monday because I still adore him.' She says of her deceased brother: 'He was a man – and I love him and I want to think about him.' Sarah (Uys, 1981:10) in *God's Forgotten* confirms women's ambiguous role when she describes Tosca and herself as 'two white princesses [who] will have to play at being handmaids to the big boss' (their

father). Rosa (Uys, 1989b:137) in *Panorama* questions her suppression when she asks: “Why am I always bowing and scraping, “yes, sir” this, “no, sir” that.” However, she makes no attempt to change the *status quo*. The worlds of Uys’s female characters revolve around their appearance, their subordinate positions and their domestic interests such as preparing or eating food. Thus their lifestyle appears similar to that of Evita’s early married life, as depicted by Uys in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a). Evita’s submissive role began shortly after her wedding day when her husband announced that she must ‘spend time preparing for her duties as a parliamentary wife’ (Uys, 1994a:62). Uys defines Evita’s responsibilities as looking beautiful, cooking and serving the needs of her husband – stereotypical tasks that society usually allocates to women and, in particular, to married women.

However, Uys’s Evita is not an archetypal housewife. In fact, Uys (1994a:9) later affords his transvestite persona a position of considerable social and political stature, even if an imaginary one, namely that of Ambassador to a Black Homeland Republic. Her husband, on the other hand, fails dismally in his quest for political power. Uys’s portrayal of Evita’s phenomenal rise from obedient spouse to advisor to the leaders of the National Party Government, and, more recently, to the African National Congress-led government, is discussed in detail in Chapter Five of this thesis. In his revue, *Live from Boerassic Park*, Uys (1997b) even hints that Evita has gained dominance over her inventor when he quips to the audience: ‘I don’t do Evita, she does herself’ (an issue that is explored in Chapter Six).

As mentioned earlier, the characterising dialogue of Uys’s female characters in the three selected plays acts as a precursor for the style Uys later uses for his persona, Evita, namely in his employing syntactic and/or semantic chiasmus. In *God’s Forgotten* (1981), a play Uys (1981:2,11) defines in his usual ‘double-speak’ as ‘a black comedy or a white tragedy’, Tosca and Sarah argue about their younger sister, Aliza, who supposedly lives abroad. The sisters’ repartee offers evidence of Uys’s use (1981:20) of chiasmic structures:



- Tosca: She's a traitor.
- Sarah: She's our sister! ...
- Sarah: She's free, Tosca.
- Tosca: She's an exile. I don't know her.

The presence of the seemingly semantically incongruous words ('traitor' versus 'sister' and 'free' versus 'exile') within a syntactically parallel format serves to stress both the sisters' affinity and their dissimilitude. In this way Uys underscores the fine line that exists between contrasting elements such as love and hate, friend and enemy, liberty and confinement, and thus, by implication, between what a particular society regards as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Readers of Evita's fictitious biography will be familiar with the fact that Evita's (imaginary) daughter, Billie-Jeanne, marries a black man. Although, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, multi-racial partnerships are more readily accepted in a supposedly prejudice-free post-apartheid South Africa, Uys's Evita, like Tosca and Sarah, initially has reservations about such a union. However, with her usual aplomb, Evita (Uys, 1997a:35) soon adapts to changing political circumstances and, in retrospect, admits, somewhat ironically, that she 'sometimes prefers him [Leroy] to her own son Izan'.

Evidence of this particular notion of the incongruity of human reactions is also found in Uys's *Paradise is Closing Down* (1978) in the following pair of similarly structured sentences:

- Anna: You have a bad habit of bringing out the savages in the best people.
- Molly: It's just that the savages always bring out the best in me.

In this dialogue, Uys (1978:148) deploys a combination of semantic chiasmus ('savages' versus 'best people' and 'best in me') and the more traditional syntactic chiasmus when he 'invert[s] the order of similar phrases in a sentence' (Gray, 1984:43), namely 'bringing out the savages' versus 'the savages always bring out'. Uys's dialogue points to the

existence of multifarious interpretations because within the context of the first statement the term ‘savages’ evokes a negative emotion, in the second the term’s impact is a positive one. This particular notion of the incongruity of human nature and emotions is also broached in the series of similarly structured statements in which Anna (Uys, 1978:170) describes the play’s three main characters:

Eleanor, you are nice, just nice. And Molly is a shit, just a shit. But me?
Actually I am – a nice shit!

In this quotation, the chiasmic trope is more complex than might at first be perceived, because the satiric thrust could also involve a form of ‘chiasmic interplay’ (Jacobs, 1997:5) between a Formalist and a Marxist mode, namely the aesthetic form versus the social message. Here, the simplistic depiction of the first two women as one-dimensional characters, namely the one wholly good (‘nice’) and the other wholly bad (‘shit’), is contrasted with the more realistic view of the complexities of the human psyche that is presented through the conflation of these two opposing words into a single phrase, namely ‘nice shit’.

In a continuation of the already discussed confrontation between Sarah and Tosca in Uys’s *God’s Forgotten* (1981), as the two sisters continue their argument over their younger sibling, Aliza, the following statements again testify to Uys’s (1981:20) frequent manipulation of the chiasmic form:

Tosca: Don’t use the Scriptures to justify her action.

Sarah: We all use the Scriptures to justify our actions.

When Tosca rejects her plea for sympathy for Aliza, Sarah endeavours to justify her appeal to Tosca’s Christian principles (‘Scriptures’) by aligning herself with the rest of humanity through the use of the pronoun ‘we’.

The sisters’ dialogue points forward towards Uys’s subsequent criticism of South Africa’s National Party Government and their promotion of a Christian National

Education that claimed to be grounded in the doctrine of the Bible and the 'Scriptures'. In Evita's 'biography', *A Part Hate, A Part Love – The Legend of Evita Bezuidenhout* (1994a), both Uys (the author) and Uys (the character) draw attention to the fact that the National Government did not always unconditionally apply the Christian commandment 'love thy neighbour as thyself' (Matthew, 22:39) to all South Africans (see also Chapter Two). The following passage, in which Uys (the author) (1994a:80) speaks through his Evita persona, contains evidence of such an accusation:

“God spare me from ever being a refugee,” said Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout, wife of a man who had personally seen to the displacement and relocation of up to one million black South Africans, from the land of their fathers to a new, dusty ghetto. All in the name of God and Verwoerd. But then they were not refugees. Just blacks.

The above passage contains a linguistic cross-over that operates at the level of connotative rather than purely denotative meaning (these terms are discussed in Chapter Four with specific reference to non-verbal sign vehicles when Uys's texts are subjected to semiological analyses). Uys juxtaposes the following seemingly incompatible words or phrases: 'displacement' and 'relocation', 'from the land of their fathers' and 'to a new, dusty ghetto', 'God' and 'Verwoerd' and 'not refugees' and 'just blacks'. In this way Uys draws his readers' attention to what he apparently perceives as one of the paradoxes of the apartheid system.

In *Panorama* (1989b) (one of the plays under discussion) Uys's female characters' perceptions of Robben Island provide readers with conflicting views of this infamous maximum security prison where Nelson Mandela was detained for almost twenty-seven years. Uys intersperses the embittered but realistic impressions of Sibi Makhale (a young, banned black woman and daughter of a political prisoner) with the more idealistic images of Rosa (a middle-aged, white school teacher).

Sibi: I believe the wind can blow very hard here.

Rosa: A beautiful sight, the cloud over the mountain, the tablecloth.

Sibi: A cruel wind that makes men mad.

Rosa: It just cleans the air.

The disparate versions of the same scene depicted in such phrases as ‘a beautiful sight, the cloud over the mountain’ and ‘a cruel wind that makes men mad’ reveals the vastly different physical and mental experiences of black and white South Africans who, prior to 1994, lived in racially segregated communities. Through his juxtaposition of semantically opposed ideas, Uys infers a society in which different races have little knowledge or understanding of each other’s points of view.

The women’s dialogue above offers a foretaste of the different perceptions of Evita’s home in ‘the parliamentary compound ... in Acacia Park’ in Cape Town, that Uys (1994a:146) provides in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a) that likewise contain clues as to Evita’s character. Uys’s description reveals how Evita’s views differ from those of her supposed biographer and, presumably, those of some other South Africans. According to Uys (the character/narrator) (1994a:146), Evita’s house was:

One of the oldest in the parliamentary compound [and] had the most beautiful yellow-wood floor, heavy stinkwood doors and elegantly pressed steel ceilings. – a pressed ceiling was a rare trophy anywhere in the Cape; the precious woods were a tribute.

It appears from the following comments that Evita does not appreciate this ‘old-world charm’:

She couldn’t believe that people still liked all that old, primitive, smelly stuff in a modern house. ... In came pretty linoleum to replace the yellow-wood floors. Out went the stinkwood doors and mottled pine stable-doors took their place. The ceilings were ripped out and thrown away, and panelled asbestos squares were stuck up with strong glue. ... Evita ... knew that her house, once finished, would be something to be proud of. She would allow magazines to photograph her taste for the green eyes of the world to see.

Here, as in *Farce About Uys* (1983), Uys mocks the pretentious lifestyle practised by the fictitious Ambassador to Bapetikosweti, and, in so doing, offers a satirical critique of South Africa’s *nouveau-riche* public figures (discussed further in Chapter Four).

The above brief overview of aspects of Uys's *God's Forgotten* (1981), *Paradise is Closing Down* (1978) and *Panorama* (1989b) suggests that parallels do exist between the characters, dialogue and issues that form the central focus of these plays and Uys's prose works and revues in which Evita, his transvestite persona, features.

To counteract the banning of his plays, Uys (as noted earlier in this chapter) switched to revues and invented male and female personae, both 'real' and imaginary, such as Evita. Uys began this process of 'gender-blending'⁴ when he disguised his political censure as woman's 'gossip' in his *Sunday Express* column. Subsequently, in *Adapt or Dye* (1982), Uys introduced this Nationalist MP's wife to theatre audiences. As a result of public demand, Uys gave Evita a surname and a family and eventually involved his most popular persona in a variety of political intrigues. Somewhat ironically, Uys (Jaffer, 1999a:11), cross-dressed as Evita, participated in a 'real' political event when s/he addressed the National Assembly in Cape Town in February 1999 in an attempt 'to get politicians to lighten up' prior to South Africa's second fully representational election. Uys's establishment and perpetuation of Evita as myth as/or legend is discussed at length in Chapter Five.

The focus of this chapter is Uys's dramatic technique. Hence, the discussion now shifts to the public or performance aspect of transvestism (or cross-dressing) as practised by male actors in public venues as a form of entertainment (both on-stage and off-stage)⁵ in general, before moving on to Uys's use of this form of entertainment and his creation of the Evita persona. Baker (1994:17,16), in *Drag – a History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts*, calls a 'female impersonator who entertains by [cross]-dressing as a woman' a 'drag queen' and defines a 'transvestite' as 'a male-to-female cross-dresser who finds ... personal satisfaction in dressing as a woman and being treated ... as he feels a woman should be treated'. While a transvestite 'hopes to pass as a woman in

⁴ Jacobs (1996:4) states that 'gender-blending' is an 'umbrella term' coined by Elkins and King (1996:1) and thus it includes both 'cross-dressing and sex-changing'.

⁵ The private aspect of cross-dressing or female impersonation carried out off-stage as a form of personal and/or sexual gratification is not relevant in terms of this study and, consequently, is not examined.

public' s/he normally 'has no wish to undergo surgical transformation'.⁶ Baker's use of alternative labels such as 'cross-dresser', 'female impersonator' and 'transvestite' as synonyms for 'drag queen' are similarly employed during this chapter's exploration of Uys's utilization of the chiasmic device of male actor/female persona.

Tewksbury (1994:27-43), in his article 'Gender Construction and the Female Impersonator: The Process of Transforming "He" to "She" ', also offers a definition of drag. Like Baker, Tewksbury (1994:31) places cross-dressing in a theatrical context and states that the female 'illusionists'⁷ who participated in his empirical study regarded cross-dressing as 'a means of attracting attention and/or a way to initiate an entertainment career'. These entertainers enjoyed engaging in public performances in 'role', both during a stage show or in public venues such as bars or clubs. Kirk and Heath (1984:introduction), in their book *Men in Frocks*, offer a similarly conventional definition when they label the concept drag 'a theatre and performance-based' activity. Uys's Evita conforms to this broader but still traditional explication of drag, because Evita not only engages in stage performances but also appears in drag outside the theatre. One such 'off-stage' performance was at a social function in Grahamstown in 1997, held to celebrate the awarding of 'an honorary doctorate from Rhodes University' in recognition of Uys's 'contribution to literature and entertainment' in South Africa (Walker, 1997a:1).

Baker (1994:18) considers the somewhat extravagant term drag queen an apt name for male cross-dressing entertainers as it 'conveys perfectly the chutzpah and the self-confident, challenging abrasiveness of these powerful performers'. Baker (1994:63,56) lists typical attributes of female impersonators as 'affected mannerisms, [a] mincing walk and [an] exaggerated use of accessories', hence a drag queen is 'larger than life ... in the way she dresses, makes up, does her hair and delivers her material'. Tewksbury (1994:33,27) offers further insights into an actor's metamorphosis into a drag queen

⁶ Baker (1994:16-17) considers 'someone who seeks the surgical sex-change or gender re-assignment operation' to be a 'transsexual' and feels 'these terms have no significance in a theatre context'.

⁷ Men who earn a living as male-to-female cross-dressers and synonymous with female impersonators.

when he rightly observes that male-to-female cross-dressers ‘consciously engage in a series of cosmetic and social adjustments’ in order to create ‘glamorous, sexy and fashionable women’. Once the transformation is complete, the appearance of the newly invented drag queens both ‘captivates and challenges the audience to define their gender’ and success is achieved only when the transvestites are accepted as ‘real’ (if stereotypical) women.

Anyone wishing to verify the drag queen’s ‘exaggerated use of accessories’ and ‘affected mannerisms’ only has to watch *Funigalore I* and *II* (1994c; 1994d) in which Evita interviews well-known political figures. Evita (1995:189), dressed in a red and black satin can-can style gown and holding a red rose in her mouth, dances the tango with Jay Naidoo, the then ‘Minister Without Portfolio’ responsible for ‘the implementation ... of the Reconstruction and Development Programme’. On another occasion, wearing four inch heels and a pink sequined jacket, Evita minces around the old stone quarry on Robben Island with Mac Maharaj, the then Minister of Safety and Security. As indicated above, Robben Island is the setting of one of Uys’s earlier plays, but instead of the purely fictitious impressions that he creates in *Panorama* (1989b), Uys engages his persona in a chiasitic blending of fact and fiction (an aspect that is discussed more fully in Chapter Six). Uys’s heroine visits this historic site and persuades Maharaj to share his bitter-sweet personal memories of the years he spent as a prisoner on Robben Island. Ironically, Uys’s Evita must allegedly take some responsibility for complicity in Maharaj’s fate. Evita (Uys, 1994a:119) admits in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* that she advised Vorster, the then Minister of Justice, that, instead of hanging the ‘prominent members of the banned ANC’, they should be ‘lock[ed] up somewhere’ – that somewhere being Robben Island (an issue that is discussed further in Chapter Five).

Although Baker (1994:18) interprets the term drag queen in a purely theatrical context, he alerts his readers to the possibility of its having homosexual connotations, as ‘both words are part of the vocabulary of gay slang’. However, Tewksbury (1994:31,34) reports that while most of the female impersonators he interviewed during his empirical study admitted an involvement in the gay community, they did not regard themselves as ‘men

living out sexual fantasies’ and denied ‘ “performing” in character while at home or alone’. Kirk and Heath (1984:introduction) also probe the relationship between drag and homosexuality. They offer a more complex definition of drag when they distinguish between ‘conventional drag’ and ‘modern drag’ and attempt to clarify this latter concept as follows:

... the evolution of modern drag goes hand in glove with the increased visibility of those gay men who not only enjoy debunking the traditional male image, but also enjoy doing it in public.

Here it appears that Kirk and Heath (1984:introduction) are implicitly making a distinction between traditional ‘theatrical drag’ (Baker’s female impersonator and Tewksbury’s female illusionist) and what they call ‘modern drag’. In so doing, they are engaging in a chiasmic conflation of semantic nuance, namely the essential variance between dramatic ‘role-playing’ and social practice. The term ‘modern drag’ can be read as simply another synonym for ‘transvestite’, ‘cross-dresser’ and ‘gender-b(l)ender’.⁸ Moreover, the quoted extract suggests that Kirk and Heath (1984:introduction) imply a correlation between cross-dressing and sexual gratification and, consequently, a direct connection between ‘modern drag’ and the gay community. Thus, as a natural process of change, the term drag currently intervenes to debunk the traditional male image because a more overtly liberal attitude toward homosexuality (and at times even a flaunting of this practice) has become more acceptable in Western society.

Although Uys’s dramatic repertoire appears to be more closely aligned to ‘conventional drag’ than ‘modern drag’, Uys (1995:262) describes himself as a ‘middle-aged, gay man with great legs’. It is possible, therefore, that this comment might be construed as confirmation of claims by Baker (1994), Tewksbury (1994) and Kirk and Heath (1984) that the term drag is often seen as an analogue for gay society. However, when Uys was asked by Bishop (1991:198) whether *Evita* started because Uys liked dressing up in women’s clothes, Uys replied: ‘I don’t go to bed in a wet suit, says the deep-sea diver.’

⁸ Three terms are used to describe ‘people who consider themselves to be men and dress in clothes or outfits that most [members] of society associate with women’ (Kirk & Heath, 1984:introduction).

This denial suggests that Uys uses transvestism purely as a performance tool. Uys (Bishop, 1991:202) claims that during the 1980s South Africans had ‘a tremendous hang-up about a man dressing up as a woman’ – in other words, they still had serious reservations about transvestism as a social practice⁹ both in public and in private. When Bishop asked Uys ‘do you think you have made [transvestism] respectable’, Uys sidestepped Bishop’s question by stressing the performance angle of his cross-dressing and rejoined: ‘What I do on stage is theatre. ... It’s my job ... I play a dog, an angel ... a woman and a man.’ Thus when Uys (1995:3) defines himself as a drag queen, he is using this term in the conventional sense of a female impersonator who entertains by disguising himself as a woman. Despite further probing, Uys (Bishop, 1991:207) refused to be drawn into any discussion of his personal life (and presumably his sexual orientation) because ‘it has got nothing to do with anybody and it is not that interesting’.

The importance of neither overlooking nor focusing solely on the female impersonator’s sexual orientation, together with the role played by homosexuality, are aspects of transvestism that are probed at some length by Garber in her detailed socio-psychological study of cross-dressing *Vested Interests - Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992) (mentioned in Chapter One). Garber (1992:4-5) analyses both male-to-female and female-to-male cross-dressing and discusses the utilization of this phenomenon for the purpose of stage transformations and/or public performances, as well as for private sexual and psychological gratification. However, it is her discussion of the public aspect of drag or female impersonation that is regarded as most pertinent to this study of Uys’s creation of his transvestite persona. Garber believes that either ignoring or stressing the importance of homosexuality debunks ‘the cross-dresser’s more important social and cultural role’, namely that of ‘pricking’ the conscience of both the individual and the general public. Garber thus regards the cross-dresser or drag queen as a satirist or ‘intervener’ who challenges the *status quo*. This is similar to the task Uys has apportioned both himself and his persona, Evita, and one that is discussed at some length

⁹ Since the advent of post-apartheid South Africa in the 1990s, there appears to be greater tolerance for transvestites, as the rights of previously marginalised groups, such as homosexuals and lesbians, are now protected by the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.

later in this chapter, after Uys's role as an inventor or creator has been fully explored.

In order to 'invent' his 'phallic woman' (Garber, 1992:9) for the purpose of public performances, both on and off stage, Baker (1994:14,15,17) maintains that the female impersonator engages in either 'real disguise' or 'false disguise' or a combination of both. Baker's 'real disguise' occurs 'when the actor playing a woman is taken by the audience and the other actors ... as a real woman'. Although both groups are aware 'of the actor's real gender ... this knowledge is irrelevant to the nature of the drama being played out, or to the effect of the actor's work'. Baker regards 'performers who use "real disguise" [as] male-actresses' because they attempt to 'project authentic female characters rather than male-designed fantasy types'. 'Real disguise' was practised by 'the boy actors of the English Renaissance theatre' and 'disappeared from the English stage in the late seventeenth century' when women were allowed on the stage. As Baker (1994:36) notes, the term 'boy actors' is a misnomer, because during the Elizabethan period 'to boy' a part 'meant to play a female role on the stage irrespective of the actor's real age'. Baker thus believes that such demanding roles as Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra would have been played by mature male-actresses. In some cultures 'the convention of "men" playing female characters ... survived into the twentieth century as, for example, ... the *tan* of China and the *onnagata* of Japan' (Baker, 1994:18).¹⁰

Baker's ideas are applicable to Uys's portrayal of Evita. Uys was in his thirties when he first introduced Evita to South African audiences in 1981. He did this through a process of 'false disguise' because at times he 'became' Evita in front of the audience and later reverted to the role of Uys, the actor, on stage. Throughout the last two decades of the twentieth century, Uys continued to use this persona and, as her popularity grew, he changed to 'real-disguise' and began 'project[ing an] authentic female character' who was accepted 'by the audience ... as a real woman' (Baker, 1994:17). Evita continues to grow in popularity in the new millennium, although both she and her 'mentor' have passed their half-century.

¹⁰ The *tan* and *onnagata* are transvestites or male-actresses who play female roles in classical Chinese and Japanese theatre respectively.

Baker (1994:79) further theorises that a successful 'male-actress' acknowledges the androgynous side of human nature and interacts with his 'feminine' inner self to produce 'a subtly and beautifully incarnated woman'. One such male-actress was Edward Kynaston,¹¹ who was reputedly so successful at playing female roles that critics claimed that no actress could 'so sensibly touch the audience'. The fact that audiences apparently find male-actresses more entertaining than actresses is an important facet of transvestism and is investigated later in this chapter when Uys's role as an 'interventor' is discussed.

Baker (1994:15) asserts that the 'antique art' of 'real disguise' has, in many instances, been replaced by 'false disguise' which occurs when the performer acknowledges that he is 'a man playing at being a woman'. Such actors often employ 'self-referential asides' that constantly remind the audience of their masculinity.¹² However, as Baker (1994:15) notes, 'a high-profile performer' such as 'Dame Edna Everage/Barry Humphries (or *vice versa*) requires no explanation and the duality is intrinsic to his/her ... presence'. Such a performance is the result of a chiasmic conflation of 'two opposing signs or binarisms' (Budick, 1996:227),¹³ namely, 'real' and 'false' disguise. Bishop (1991:192) calls Dame Edna 'the Australian counterpart of Evita'¹⁴ which, by implication, makes Uys's Evita (or Evita's Uys) a high-profile performer with an intrinsic duality. The issue of dual authority between the actor (inventor) and the persona (invented) is similar to the concept of ' "T" create Image; Image makes "T" ' (Breytenbach, 1985:197) that is defined in Chapter One. The inherent chiasmic duality of Uys and Evita is explored in Chapter Six.

As intimated earlier, the construction of both 'real' and 'false' disguise requires the male-actress to re-invent himself physically by wearing women's clothes and making 'cosmetic adjustments' that suggest 'membership in a female sex class' (Tewksbury, 1994:27). Some of the 'cosmetic adjustments' that female impersonators dislike include

¹¹ Kynaston performed alongside female-actresses during the period of transition in the late sixteen hundreds when 'male-actresses' were gradually replaced by women.

¹² The concept of 'false disguise' versus 'real disguise' is also discussed from a slightly different perspective as 'opaqueness' versus 'transparency' in Chapter Four.

¹³ The definition Budick (1996:227) gives of chiasmus is delineated in Chapter One.

¹⁴ Uys (Bishop, 1991:192) denies that he 'stole the idea of Evita from Humphries' stating that 'Evita could only come out of South Africa'.

‘tucking their genitals, shaving their legs and body hair and wearing ... high heeled shoes – standard performance attire’ (Tewksbury, 1994:35). Uys experienced similar problems during the televising of a scene for *Funigalore I* (1994c) in which he went swimming with Joe Slovo, former leader of the South African Communist Party. Uys (1995:31) jokes about the ‘hazards’ of engaging in ‘cosmetic adjustments’ as follows:

Because of my legs not being properly shaved I have to keep on Evita’s pantihose. Shows what happens when you are not prepared for any possibility. My foam rubber bosoms immediately absorb water and my tits start sagging, weighing me down. Somehow I must keep my wigged head above water.

Uys’s remarks reinforce his claim, cited earlier, that his involvement with transvestism is purely a theatrical exercise and thus his ‘female’ personae are the result of a combination of ‘sex-typed attire’ and ‘cosmetic adjustments’, not surgical changes. On another occasion Uys (1995:28) states: ‘I let Mrs Bezuidenhout get out of the car and, on the highest of heels, manoeuvre round the potholes.’ Uys’s choice of the verb ‘manoeuvre’¹⁵ indicates that wearing high heels requires considerable agility.

As Tewksbury (1994:34) notes, the completion of ‘cosmetic adjustments’ can make it necessary for female impersonators to engage in a structured and complex ritual that can take anything from fifteen minutes to four hours, depending upon both their expertise and the circumstances of the performance. During the early performances of *Adapt or Dye* (1982), Uys changed from one character to another in full view of the audience (a process that can be equated with ‘false disguise’). Initially, becoming Evita necessitated little more than donning makeup and one or two articles of women’s clothing on stage, as can be seen from the way Uys (1986:10) describes one of his early performances:

Since I had not planned costume changes, there was no velcro on the MP’s wife’s dress. I had to tear the dress off. My Pik Botha felt very tall because after the previous sketch of the MP’s wife, I had not planned to take off her high heels.

¹⁵ Little *et al.* (1973:1273) define the verb manoeuvre as ‘to manipulate adroitly’ and a manoeuvre as ‘an artful [battle] plan, an adroit movement’.

When the 'MP's wife' became an established feature of his revues, Uys continued to practice 'false disguise' but sometimes, instead of using a hasty costume change, Uys chose to evolve slowly into Evita in front of his audience. Uys's deliberate application of make-up and putting-on of various articles of clothing and matching accessories became an integral part of the show. At the end of the early revues, Uys often removed his persona's wig and costume, thus drawing attention to his own gender and personality. However, by 1994, Evita's performances were 'immortalized' on film and television and, due to the demands of this new medium, Uys's transformation (1995:154,21) became a more private and elaborate process. While admitting that he had 'made Evita up over 4000 times', Uys states that 'a film grimage is a different style from the one used for the stage', as can be seen from the following description:

Early call at 5.30 which means I'm already awake at 3. ... Get to the studio ... no one there except me and Nico and make-up. We put the lady together.

When Evita starred in Uys's *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) the transformation process involved complex 'cosmetic adjustments'. She was no longer a feature of his ninety minutes continuous performance as a 'quick-change satirical artist' (Uys, 1986:blurb). Instead, Uys introduced an interval during which he underwent a complete metamorphosis. On their return, the audience was greeted by Uys's impeccably made-up and bejewelled star performer, dressed in an elegant sequined two-piece with matching high heels and handbag.

However, the successful creation of a female persona involves more than 'cosmetic adjustments'. As Tewksbury (1994:29,27,37) rightly comments, 'gender is not a purely biological state' but also involves the adoption of 'a set of [socially determined] static and discrete nominal categories'. The female-impersonator's engagement in such activities results in the 'social [re]construction of gender'. In addition to physical modifications, female illusionists undergo a social transformation by adopting socially determined 'submissive interactional roles' that involve specific mannerisms, actions and modes of communication. Uys's Evita (1994a:228) engages in this type of 'emphasized feminine behaviour' when she supposedly 'kneels and massages John Vorster's feet'.

She fulfils a nurturing role when, during *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b), she simulates phoning ‘Madiba’¹⁶ and, ignoring more pressing political issues, enquires after his welfare.

From its inception, the persona develops through a process of ‘refinement and replacement’ that is determined by the ‘audience’s acceptance of this illusion’ (Tewksbury, 1994:38). If the initial performance is successful, the actor then invents a ‘total’ personality with specific characteristics and thus gives the persona an identity and life of her own. This concept is similar to the claims made by both Breytenbach (1985:197) and Baker (1994:70) (mentioned in Chapter One) firstly, that the creation of the ‘image’ develops ‘over a period of years’ and, secondly, that the existence of the ‘stage female’ is dependent upon the audience’s acceptance of this ‘male created artifact’. Tewksbury’s research also revealed that once the actor adopts his female persona, the feminine performance will continue, even off stage, as long as the illusionist remains in costume and character. Uys’s portrayal of female personae offers evidence of this phenomenon because Uys (1986:66) comments as follows on Evita’s behaviour at the end of performances of *Adapt or Dye* during 1983 and 1984:

...Evita would leave the stage, carry the audience with her, and sit in her state car to sign autographs. ... I called this performance “Act Three” and it took Evita Bezuidenhout out of the theatre and into the real world.

Uys also recalls how Evita coped with an incident that occurred after a performance of his first revue in March 1984. This episode suggests that Uys engages in ‘real disguise’. Uys was walking across the foyer of a Bloemfontein hotel in the guise of Evita when he was accosted by three men who obviously disapproved of transvestism. Uys (1986:68) describes his/her reaction as follows:

I was in character ... I always had to stay in character otherwise she [Evita] would disintegrate into tatty camp. ... When you are a woman of ... legendary proportions, dressed to kill and not generally recognised for what is tucked up

¹⁶ President Nelson Mandela’s nickname.

under your fur, you ... do not lift your skirts and run for your room. ... So, taking a deep breath I kept walking ... not daring to look around. The three men followed, ... they came closer. Cold sweat trickled down my neck. Then Evita Bezuidenhout took over. ... she wheeled around and faced them, her eyes flashing. ... The *seuns* [boys] stopped and gulped ... and went away vanquished. Evita Bezuidenhout went to her room and calmly let herself in. The door closed, ... then my knees gave way and I sank into a bedraggled heap.

The above extract provides an excellent example of how, in presenting his transvestite persona, Uys, as mentioned earlier, engages in a chiasmic slippage between male actor and female character. For example, within one sentence Uys refers both to himself as actor and to his actions ('I always had to stay in character') and to his persona's reaction ('she would disintegrate into tatty camp'). In this sentence Uys initially gives the impression that it is he, the inventor of Evita, who is in control of the situation. However, Uys reveals his apprehension in the statements 'I kept walking' and 'cold sweat trickled down my neck' and, in so doing, suggests he is using the persona 'as a shield' (Breytenbach, 1985:148). At the end of this passage Uys reports that 'Evita took over', 'vanquished' her would-be opponents and then 'went to her room and calmly let herself in' where he 'sank' onto the bed in 'a bedraggled heap'. In this passage Uys, albeit unconsciously, describes 'the interactive binarisms' (Jacobs, 1997:4) that occur between a performer and his/her *alter ego* and, in so doing, offers support for Jacobs's claim (mentioned in Chapter One) that a persona can 'become so powerfully integrated in the experience of its creator that it may take over subconsciously as part of the chiasmus'. The issue of control is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

After completing the discussion of the 'rituals' involved in 'inventing' an entertaining transvestite persona, this chapter now attempts to examine the female impersonator's second function, namely that of socio-political intervention. The extent of the transvestite's power, particularly in comparison to that of 'her' male inventor, is probed by Garber (1992:6-9) in her study of Sydney Pollack's film, *Tootsie* (1982), in which an unsuccessful actor 'becomes' a drag queen in order to succeed in his profession. Once he is dressed as a woman, the actor is both more vocal and attractive than he is when

wearing male attire. The resultant female persona¹⁷ is, according to Garber (1992:6), 'much more sensitive, perceptive, ... and professionally successful', than her male inventor. Garber's theory appears to be corroborated by Tewksbury's (1994:33) claim that female impersonators strive to invent 'highly visible personalities' who are more attractive than either other women or their male self.

The findings of both the above writers can be applied to Uys's Evita, who is certainly 'more highly visible' than either himself or his other 'one-dimensional' (Bishop, 1991:198) female characters. As pointed out earlier, with his lack of hair, wrinkles and customary casual apparel, Uys is far less attractive than his glamorous and fashionable counterpart, Evita. Uys's other 'women' often have less charisma and acumen than Evita. For example, in the video of his revue *Evita's Indaba* (1993), Bokkie Bam,¹⁸ Evita's 'short plump right hand slave' (Uys, 1994a:16), constantly trails behind the tall and elegant Mrs Bezuidenhout. Bokkie is portrayed as having a high-pitched voice, appalling dress sense and a low IQ. When these two characters appear together in a review they form a chiasmic partnership that acts in Evita's favour, making her appear more attractive and sophisticated and thus a more creditable tool through which Uys channels his satirical message.

Another interpretation of *Tootsie* (1982) is now examined in terms of its applicability to the role played by Uys's Evita. As Garber (1992:7) points out, some critics claim that this film implies that it is only through the execution of 'the masculine power within the female costume' that women are taught how to achieve their rights. The fact that this transvestite figure succeeds in 'her' job and 'her' private life signifies that 'men are better than women', both in the workplace and socially. A close reading of *Funigalore* (1995) suggests that Uys, like Garber, is well aware of the significance of the transvestite figure. Uys records, how, wearing the Evita mask, s/he interviews Dr Frene Ginwala, the Speaker of the African National Congress-led Parliament. During this interview, Uys's Evita (1995:80) claims that women respect her because she 'represented their interests in

¹⁷ Aptly named Dorothy Michaels, a chiasmic combination of a woman's and a man's name.

¹⁸ Portrayed by well-known South African actress Liz Meiring.

[the] male dominated area' of politics. Evita initially reminds women of their inferior position during the apartheid era when she states: 'I was one of the few Afrikaner women associated with politics [because] we never really allowed our women a voice in the political structure.' From Uys's/Evita's perspective, this 'political structure' was the policy of apartheid, a doctrine entrenched by 'South Africa's first exclusively Afrikaner [National] Party government' (Oakes, 1988:374), a political Party composed mainly of white male Afrikaners.¹⁹ However, it is not clear from the quoted text if Evita's 'we' and 'our' imply men or women. If men, the use of the word 'allow' reinforces a male-imposed dominance and, if women, then it implies that women are complicit in their own subjection. In both instances, this male power is overthrown by Evita who, after all, is a combination of both sexes, namely a 'woman with balls' (Uys, 1994a:9) whom Uys (1995:5) christens 'the power behind the apartheid throne'. This is an ambiguous title because, while on the one hand it suggests Evita's political achievements in the words 'power' and 'throne', the inclusion of the word 'behind' implies that her authority is only vicarious. It is also an ironic statement in view of Evita's previous comment on South African women's lack of political involvement before 1995. Thus the statements that Uys attributes to Evita (quoted above) are something of an enigma because they ascribe political efficacy to a woman within a society in which women were not 'allowed' to be politically active. The answer to this may lie in the fact that Evita is no ordinary female but a transvestite persona and 'phallic woman' who threatens 'the power of the male role [by] rejecting what maleness stood for' (Baker, 1994:239), which in Evita's world, was and is political dominance. Hence, it is possible that Uys alerts his audience, albeit unintentionally, to women's continuing struggle for gender equality (an issue that is discussed in Chapter Five).

Another example of Evita's double role of simultaneously reinforcing women's second-rate status and championing their rights occurs towards the end of the interview

¹⁹ The first republican Cabinet of 1961 was comprised entirely of men – there were 20 members in total (Cameron & Spies, 1986:303). The majority of members of the Electoral College which elected P W Botha as South Africa's first executive State President in 1984 were men as can be seen from a photograph which appeared in *Die Burger* in September 1984, and was reproduced in *An Illustrated History of Southern Africa* (Cameron & Spies, 1986:314).

(mentioned above) during which Evita (Uys, 1995:81) and Dr Frene Ginwala discuss the need for 'a party of National Unity'. When Dr Ginwala says '...we'll fight over it in the next election', Uys's Evita (1995:81) rejoins with '... and may the best man ... or best woman win'. In this statement Evita places men in the superior position and relegates women to second place. A few moments later the order is reversed when, sitting in the Speaker's chair, Uys/Evita (1995:89) comments on the Speaker's role in Parliament and quips 'to think that a mere woman has so much power over all those men'. In his typically chiasitic style, Uys, speaking through his persona, initially appears once again to undermine women's newly found political status in post-apartheid South Africa through the inclusion of the deprecatory 'mere', however, s/he quickly reminds women of their full potential with the phrase 'so much power over all those men'. Presumably this is an area in which Evita is well-versed, because, according to Uys (1997a:2), she had been the 'confidante to the gods on the *Boere* Olympus'. The Speaker (Uys, 1995:89) then asks Evita what she means by the term 'a mere woman'. However, Evita deftly avoids confrontation by affirming South African women's improved political status when she responds: 'At last women are where they belong.'

As was stated earlier, Chapter Three examines the role of drag as a 'theatre and performance-based activity' (Kirk & Heath, 1984:introduction) that involves both the activities of the female-impersonator and those of his transvestite persona. As Baker (1994:14,24) notes, 'theatre is central to our understanding of the world around us'. Consequently, 'when a civilisation is waking up and looking about and into itself ... drama emerges as ... a means of self-examination' (and, by implication, public examination) with the transvestite playing 'a vital role in this act of self-discovery'. The drag queen was born at the end of the seventeenth century when 'long-held assumptions and expectations were being called into question' (Baker, 1994:15) – a state of uncertainty that was surely similar to that experienced in South Africa during the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the next century. During this period, Uys continually strives to arouse the public's awareness of South Africa's socio-political situation. Through his written works and stage performances, and especially through his Evita persona, Uys challenges his audience to engage in the chiasitic activity

of both 'look[ing] about and [looking] into itself' (Baker, 1994:24). Uys (Bishop, 1991:189) acknowledges the valuable role his transvestite personae play in this task when he says that, for him, playing another sex is 'as effective as playing different political persuasions'. Exhibiting his usual predilection for chiasmus, Uys (1986:50) describes the scope of his work during this period as follows:

... I ... cover ... the spectrum of white South Africa, from left to right, with equal sympathy and equal disgust. Everyone gets a rose and everyone gets a thorn.

Here Uys combines a mixture of similar and contrasting ideas. For example, he repeats the following words and phrases: 'equal' and 'everyone gets', and juxtaposes the following contrasts: 'left' versus 'right', 'sympathy' versus 'disgust' and 'rose' versus 'thorn'. In this way Uys draws attention to the enigma of 'white South Africa' that consisted of people of European descent who held widely ranging political and cultural viewpoints, as is evidenced in the phrase 'from left to right'. (Since 1994, people of all races, cultures and political preferences live and work in close proximity.) Through the repetition of the words 'equal' and 'everyone', Uys warns South Africans that he does not give preference to any particular political ideology and is, therefore, equally supportive ('sympathy' and 'rose') of positive actions and equally critical ('disgust' and 'thorn') of negative ones, regardless of who has perpetrated them. He does not appear to see his role as that of a judge but rather as someone who, as mentioned previously, alerts the public to what is happening and engages them in critical thought but leaves them to take whatever action they see fit. Although in this particular passage Uys refers specifically to South Africa's white population, as South Africa approaches the end of the 1990s, he spreads his net ('cover') wider to include South Africans of all races and political parties. This is evident from the comment 'the Afrikaner in diaphanous drag spares no one' (Pons, 1999:11), because, just as Uys had satirised the National Party politicians, he is equally critical of their successors within the African National Congress. When Pons describes Uys/Evita in this manner she, albeit unconsciously, confirms Uys's conflation of the contrasting elements of male actor and female persona into the 'final ... stage' or *imago* (Breytenbach, 1985:149) and, in so doing, acknowledges the successful

merger of actor and persona. The labels ‘Afrikaner’ and ‘drag’ apply equally to Uys and Evita, because both are Afrikaners and Uys is a drag artist while the fictitious Evita is a drag queen.

Transvestite personae, such as Uys’s Evita, should, as Garber (1992:10) suggests, be accepted in their own right as a ‘third sex’²⁰ who, like the third actor²¹ introduced into Ancient Greek drama by Sophocles, ‘offers a challenge to easy notions of binarity’, thus introducing a state of crisis into situations previously conceived of as both stable and unchangeable. Garber (1992:16) argues that the transvestite’s ability to engage in the disruptive act of crossing boundaries of gender and/or rank,²² through the act of cross-dressing, constitutes, as mentioned before, ‘his/her’ most important cultural function, namely that of indicating ‘category crisis’ by alerting the public to aspects of ‘cultural, social or aesthetic dissonance’. Garber (1992:10) suggests that transvestism, a practice that involves both cross-dressing and the creation of a third entity, is contrary to certain recognized biblical teachings. Garber (1992:28) also points out that in terms of Deuteronomy 22:5 cross-dressing by either sex was regarded as both spiritually and morally degenerate (and still is by certain religious groups).

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

Garber (1992:17) states that sartorial laws, regulating how men and women should dress, emanated from this particular biblical directive. One of the main reasons why theatre in England during the late sixteen hundreds was condemned by the Puritans²³ was that ‘boys’ (or men) cross-dressed as women and played the female roles, an action that ran counter to the injunction quoted from Deuteronomy.

²⁰This concept is dealt with in greater detail later in this chapter.

²¹According to Garber (1992:11) ‘a third speaker was added to the protagonist and antagonist, enabling a freer, more dynamic dramaturgy’.

²²Female impersonators can wear clothes that will elevate their position in the social hierarchy.

²³‘A party of English Protestants who’ during the reign of Elizabeth I ‘called for the “purification” [of the church]’. They were ‘strict and scrupulous in religious matters’ (Little *et al.*, 1973: 1711).

In South Africa, during the apartheid era, Uys (Bishop, 1991:202) states that ‘South Africa [had] a tremendous hang-up about a man dressing up as a woman’ and ‘people [had] been locked up (imprisoned) for doing less’ (presumably Uys is here referring to less contentious activities). The National Party-led Government thus appears to have supported Deuteronomy’s injunction against transvestism. Ironically, however, in implementing its policy of separate development throughout South African society, this same Government did not always uphold one of the underlying principles of Christ’s teaching, namely ‘thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matthew, 22:39)²⁴ which can be interpreted as an injunction to treat all people the same way. Evidence of the process through which the Nationalist Government implemented a policy of different rights for white, black, Asian and coloured South Africans can be found in legislation introduced during the apartheid era.²⁵ It was in an attempt to draw attention to this ‘oversight’ on the part of the Nationalist Government that Uys began playing the role of the political comic or intervener – paradoxically often cross-dressed as a woman – and challenged what seemed to be ‘stable and unchangeable’ situations (Garber, 1992:10).

As Garber (1992:28) reports, in addition to the ‘divinely ordained’ dress code that forbade cross-dressing on religious and moral grounds, sumptuary laws in England in the late sixteen and early seventeen centuries also condemned cross-dressing across boundaries of ‘ “class”, “rank”, “estate and condition” ’. Ostensibly the reason for introducing these restrictions was because ‘excess of apparel for either gender ... had a deleterious effect upon patriotic pride and ... the national and domestic economy’ (Garber, 1992:28). In reality the authorities’ main reason for instigating these rules was to entrench normative categories such as rank, class and gender in order to maintain the *status quo* of the socio-political hierarchy.

Uys delights in debunking all types of ‘holy cows’ and probably would have had as little time for the pompously worded statements promoting ‘sumptuary legislation’ (Garber, 1992:31) in Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century as he does for members

²⁴ *The Holy Bible*, authorized King James version.

²⁵ See Chapter 2, Footnotes 6, 15 and 26 for details of this restrictive legislation.

of contemporary society who endorse similarly dictatorial policies. Thus it is no surprise that Uys's Evita ignores the 'deleterious effects' of expensive outfits and consequently outshines her peers – formerly the wives of other Nationalist Party politicians and currently her new colleagues in the African National Congress-led government. Uys's choice of clothes for his transvestite persona serves various purposes. Firstly, it supports Uys's pleasure/pain mode (discussed in Chapter Two) because outfits such as the elegant red sequined two-piece that Evita wears in *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) are pleasing to the eye. Secondly, Evita's appearance often enhances Uys's satirical message such as when her outfit serves to castigate Nomsamo Winifred Madikisela-Mandela (ex-wife of President Mandela) in *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a). This outfit offers evidence of Uys's penchant for chiasmus, not only in his dialogue but also in his stage costumes. Uys/Evita wore a 'sassy' Euro/African designer outfit that combined the sleekness of the classic western figure-hugging long black dress with the colourful ethnic designs of Africa in the huge puffed sleeves and matching turban. Evita confided in the audience that the dress had been created for the (in)famous 'Winnie' but repossessed when she did not pay for it, offering the bullet holes in one of the sleeves as proof of her claim. In this way, Uys draws attention to the allegedly questionable lifestyle of the outfit's original owner and, in so doing, undermines the integrity of the President's former wife and, by implication, that of other political figureheads. Thirdly, Uys strengthens Evita's legendary status (discussed in Chapter Five) when he dresses her in the exotic leopard skin-print coats, dresses and/or accessories with which she has become synonymous over the last two decades, long before such articles became high fashion garments. Through the use of imitation leopard skin Uys also alludes to Evita's seductive powers. (Uys's choice of this particular material is discussed in Chapter Four.)

Uys recognises that wearing the 'right' clothing can enhance his message, an aspect of semiotic significance discussed more fully in the following chapter. Consequently Uys not only engages in cross-dressing across boundaries of gender, rank and social class, but also uses clothes as a means of blurring both racial and political boundaries. During the television series *Funigalore I* (1994b), in which Uys's transvestite persona performs a mediating role, Evita wears a brightly coloured 'ethnic gown, exotic turban and beaded

dreadlocks' (Uys, 1995:51) when she shares a 'stage(d)' dinner with Cyril Ramaphosa, the then Secretary General of the African National Congress. Such 'traditionally' styled outfits are worn by many sophisticated black women in preference to Western fashions. When Evita visits the opera with Patrick 'Terror' Lekota, the then Free State Premier, she is resplendent in 'a *Voortrekker* dress in the ANC colours' (Uys, 1995:62). This description again provides evidence of Uys's constant recourse to chiasmus, because it combines the dogma of the early *Boere* pioneers and the colours of the African National Congress. (This dress is discussed again in Chapter Four.) Ironically, although Uys's persona is oblivious of her own over-the-top appearance, Uys (1995:63) uses her to alert the public to the dangers of becoming obsessed with external appearances. He mocks 'the sentiments of most Afrikaans opera-goers' when his persona states that 'the only thing [she] like[s] about opera are the intervals [when] you can go to the bar and see what your friends are wearing'. This statement not only debunks the customary reverence afforded this type of entertainment but also ridicules the 'excess of apparel' (defined above) practised by its patrons and, on this particular occasion, by Evita herself.

The existence and continued popularity of Uys's drag queen gives credence to the theory that 'clothes ... make the man – or woman' (Garber, 1992:31,32) and that, consequently, man's (or woman's) personal and/or spiritual self-actualization is at the mercy of fashion or clothing. However, it is precisely the cross-dresser's ability to 'self-fashion' him/herself that causes concern amongst 'authoritarian structures' because, as Garber (1992:25) asserts, it 'signifies the constructedness of socio-political categories'. If it is acceptable to ignore or break socially created gender or class/rank related dress codes (as is the case with transvestism) then, by implication, other norms or stereotypes (such as those relating to culture, language policy and political and/or economic power) can likewise be ignored. An accumulation of such actions could possibly dissolve the arbitrary boundaries of 'social law and custom' (Garber, 1992:25) upon which governmental 'authority' is based, thus leading to anarchy. Tewksbury (1994:27) likewise suggests a link between 'the transvestite figure [and] gender and social structures [and] norms'. He maintains that female impersonators successfully 'invent'



both physically and socially gendered performances²⁶ in opposition to their biological sex, thus proving that gender is ‘a dynamic, contextually guided, individually managed social construct’. Tewskbury’s premises appear (albeit inadvertently) to bolster Garber’s claim that female impersonators serve to remind society that all normative systems should be seen as merely constructs of the society in which they exist.

In South Africa, during the apartheid era, racial discrimination was an institutionally motivated and hegemonically imposed normative system. The National Party Government strove ‘to retain political domination through ‘wide-ranging restrictive controls over all forms of public communication’ (Hachten & Giffard, 1984:ix) including literature and the theatre. The rights of marginalised groups were not yet entrenched in South Africa’s Constitution²⁷ and thus transvestism was still regarded as abnormal in South Africa. It is possibly this very abnormality – this chiasmic conflation of such diverse attributes as male versus female, absurd versus normal, reality versus illusion and ‘someone who is’ versus ‘someone who isn’t’ – that makes Evita an ideal vehicle for Uys’s satirical messages. It also helps to explain why, during the heyday of South Africa’s apartheid government, that Evita, arguably Uys’s most widely-known transvestite persona, succeeded in making her voice heard, both in the media and on the stage, while the words of his female characters in his earlier plays had been repeatedly censored. Many of the ‘major sketches’ that Uys (1986:dustcover) performed in his record-breaking revues ‘arose out of everyday [South African] events’ and when asked how he continually ‘got away’ with his ‘onslaught against the establishment and the Afrikaners in particular’, Uys said that he merely parodied the speeches of politicians (discussed in Chapter Two).

In his discussion of theatrical drag, Baker (1994:23,24,18) also promotes the transvestite persona as an ideal vehicle for satirical comments when he states that the drag queen

²⁶ These changes are described earlier in this chapter in the section on the transvestite’s role as an inventor.

²⁷ There have been four constitutions in South Africa since the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The first three were introduced in 1910, 1961 and 1983 respectively. An Interim Constitution was implemented in 1993 and was replaced in 1996 by a new Constitution that entrenched the equality of all South Africans. In terms of the 1996 Constitution, discrimination ‘on one or more grounds, including race, gender, ... colour [and/or] sexual orientation’ is prohibited (Republic of South Africa, 1996:7).

originally had ‘two faces: the sacred [and] the secular’. In her ‘secular’ role in which comedy was used as ‘a means of self-examination’, the drag queen was aligned with ‘anarchy and defiance’. Baker’s ideas are similar to Garber’s (1992:17) claim that transvestism destabilizes comfortable binarity. Thus, implicitly invoking chiasmic dualism, Baker (1994:24), like Garber and Tewksbury, attributes schizophrenic-like qualities to the drag queen when he points out that ‘she’ ‘fascinate[s and] terrorise[s]’ audiences because ‘she’ represents ‘the unseen but ever present tensions between order and chaos’. Consequently, Baker (1994:23) equates the drag queen with ‘a court jester’ who was ‘privilege[d] to challenge the laws of society’, a description that can be applied to Uys’s use of this theatrical ploy. As quoted earlier, when Uys, as protest dramatist, was proscribed, he became Uys, the role player, and, in defiance of censorship, invented Evita to carry on his work of subverting the repressive system of apartheid. As evidence of his obstructive intentions, Uys (1986:65) states that he created Evita

... to say things that otherwise could not be said. ... Rumours, gossip and facts abounded but they were either subjudice, covered by the Official Secrets Act, or just plain libelous. This “wife of a Nationalist MP”, however, could let slip mysteriously all these facts at various “social gatherings” in Pretoria.

Uys (1979a:23) describes Evita’s behaviour at one of these ‘social gatherings’ as follows:

Her casual blasphemy joined the other echoes of treachery and small-talk at this Day of the Covenant do. ... She hadn’t changed ... still elegant, still beautiful and still as dangerous as a “*slang in die gras*” [snake in the grass]... a fountain of bubbling classified gossip and *remoer* [gossip and anarchy]’.

Here Uys’s description of Evita appears similar to Baker’s portrayal (1994:18) of a secular drag queen who simultaneously ‘confronts’ and ‘appeases’ his/her audience. Uys displays his usual affinity for chiasmic configurations by first presenting the reader with examples of the more pleasant side of Evita’s nature (‘elegant’ and ‘beautiful’) and then immediately following these with darker images (‘dangerous’ and ‘*slang in die gras*’). He draws attention to Evita’s equivocal nature by linking her diverse attributes through the repetition of ‘still’. Uys continues to utilise the chiasmic trope when he depicts Evita’s

paradoxical modes of communication through a deft juxtaposition of such oxymoronic phrases as ‘casual blasphemy’, ‘treachery and small-talk’ and ‘classified gossip’. The words ‘casual’, ‘small-talk’ and ‘classified’ are acceptable aspects of an ‘ordered’ society, while ‘blasphemy’, ‘treachery’ and ‘gossip’ can lead to its downfall, thus implying the consistent tension between order and anarchy.

In further support of the changeable nature (mentioned above) of the drag queen, Baker (1994:18) argues that the transvestite simultaneously disseminates conflicting images that both ‘create and release tension’ as s/he engages the audience in a ‘love/hate’ relationship. (The role that Baker affords the transvestite persona appears similar to the one Breytenbach (1985:148) attributes to the image, namely that of ‘a means of contact and ... an isolator’, concepts that are discussed more fully in Chapter Six.) It is this ability to generate a polarity of responses that makes cross-dressing an ideal tool for a political comic such as Uys, who, as mentioned earlier, constantly engages in a chiastic blending of entertainment and education through his juxtaposition of pleasurable and painful words and images. Uys appears to be well aware of the importance of presenting his audience with open-ended messages capable of engendering a variety of interpretations when he appropriately entitles the ‘biography’ of his transvestite *alter ego*, Evita, *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a). This title, *A Part Hate, A Part Love*, thus epitomizes Uys’s relationship with his motherland as he describes himself as ‘anti-apartheid but not anti-South Africa’ (Bishop, 1991:205). Jacobs (1996:9) states that this text ‘reflects the way [Uys/Evita’s] life has been paradoxically locked into the conflicting discourses of apartheid South Africa that s/he has satirised on stage across the borderlines of gender [male/female], language [Afrikaans/English] and race [white/black]’.²⁸ (Uys’s creation of Evita’s two seemingly incompatible but equally illusory life stories as a means of perpetuating the Evita myth and/or legend is examined at length in Chapter Five.) In his chiastic presentation of Evita’s ‘memoirs’, Uys constantly crosses class boundaries. Uys, the character and narrator, presents a somewhat risqué portrait of Evita as the illegitimate child of a prostitute whose homosexual brother doubled as Evita’s

²⁸These categories are similar to Garber’s (1992:16) already mentioned ‘comfortable binarit[ies] of male/female [and] black/white’.

father – all characters of deliberately dubious morals and questionable social status. Evita’s account contains the story of the daughter of respectable, middle-class Afrikaans parents who, as a result of her marriage to the son of a well-respected Afrikaans family, becomes intrinsically involved with the upper echelons of both ‘Afrikanerdom’ and the Nationalist Government. As was the case with Uys’s choice of Evita’s clothes (mentioned above), this chiasmic milieu serves a dual purpose – entertainment and education. It is entertaining because the reader enjoys the numerous bawdy references as well as the thrill of being let into the darker secrets of Mrs Bezuidenhout’s past. It is educational because the parallel accounts create an awareness of the duplicity of the socio-political ideology that existed during apartheid. This doctrine stringently censored any profane or sexual references from all forms of public discourse on the basis of their being morally and socially damaging²⁹ but legislated practices that resulted in a large number of South Africans being denied their basic rights.³⁰

Baker (1994:15,18) argues (as cited earlier in this Chapter) that the transvestite persona often employs ‘self-referential asides’ and, in so doing, disseminates conflicting images that compromise the nature of gender identity. Similarly, Jacobs (1996:6) notes that the process of male to female ‘gender-blending’ often includes ‘deliberate slippages’ that reveal the actor’s masculine identity. As a result of the constant utilization of these deliberate ‘attention-getting’ actions, Jacobs regards transvestism as a form of ‘writerly text’.³¹ Here Jacobs supports Garber’s (1992:37) earlier classification of the transvestite persona as ‘both a signifier and that which signifies the undecidability of signification [as] it points towards itself – or towards the place where it is not’. Jacobs strengthens his labelling of this dramatic mode as a ‘writerly text’ by citing Garber’s (1992:149) claim

²⁹ In terms of the Publications Act 42 of 1974, publications, films and public performances could be censored if they were considered ‘harmful to public morals ... or offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic’ (Hachten & Giffard, 1984:162).

³⁰ For example: the right to vote – Act No 46 of 1951, the Separate Representation of Voters Act (Cameron & Spies, 1986:278); freedom of speech – Act No 44 of 1950, the Suppression of Communism Act (Cameron & Spies, 1986:282) and the Publications Act 42 of 1974 (Hachten & Giffard, 1984:161); freedom of movement – Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, 1951 (Oakes, 1988: 378) and Act No 64 of 1956, Natives Prohibition of Interdicts Act (Cameron & Spies, 1986:278).

³¹ A text that deliberately draws attention to its composition for the purpose of enhancing its message, a ‘post-structuralist’ technique that has been used extensively and effectively since the 1960s by writers such as John Fowles and Kurt Vonnegut.

that in ‘undoing itself as part of its process of self-enactment’³² the transvestite focuses attention on the dual activities of ‘*reading and being read*’ – two key components of post-structuralist literature. Garber (1992:11) maintains that it is important for society to ‘look at’ rather than ‘look away from’ the transvestite persona by focusing attention on the invented character instead of the inventor (the actor).

In his prose work *Funigalore* (1995), Uys creates a ‘writerly text’ when he frequently reminds his readers of the ambiguous nature of his transvestite persona. In the introduction to this book, Uys states:

Evita ... doesn’t exist, in spite of the history she has hijacked. Everyone knows it’s me. ... But not one of the guests on *Funigalore* ever referred to me as “Pieter” while I was presenting Evita Bezuidenhout.

Such meta-dramatic humour continues in his wry acknowledgement of the role of reception aesthetics, because Uys (1995:5) attributes the public’s acceptance of Evita both to his own skills, when he points out that it is ‘part of [his] job as a performer, to make them forget the impersonation’, as well as to the fact that ‘it’s on video, therefore it must be’. In today’s world many people’s immediate experience is outweighed by the mediated reality they perceive through the eyes of the media – newspaper, radio and television. Uys uses the techniques of the ‘writerly’ text in *Funigalore* (1995) when, through his deployment of ‘false disguise’, he reminds his readers and viewers of the dangers of accepting, at face value, everything they see or hear through the media (and, by implication, in the course of their everyday lives). Throughout the book, almost every time his readers become engrossed in its verisimilitude, Uys shatters their belief in Evita by engaging in a variety of ‘self-referential asides’ (Baker, 1994:15), for example when he describes his need to engage in such masculine activities as using a urinal or shaving. In the following extract from *Funigalore* (1995), Uys (1995:83) recalls an incident when, still in the guise of ‘Evita’, he was forced to shave between shooting scenes. This description appears to support Garber’s (1992:37,149) claim (cited earlier) that the transvestite figure demonstrates the unreliability of signals because it constantly

³² A similar concept to Baker’s (1994:15) ‘false disguise’.

undermines itself during the process of self-enactment and, in so doing, challenges the audience to question the nature of reality and truth.

I find a place with hot water and a mirror. The men's toilet. ... I put shaving soap on my cheeks and chin. ... I'm in full costume, wig and all; Evita Bezuidenhout is there under the shaving soap. I start scraping off the beard with the razor. ... [A] man in a grey suit enters. He gives me a casual glance as he walks to the porcelain.

"Môre, Mevrouw!" [Good morning, Madam!] he says cheerfully.

"Môre, Meneer!" [Good morning, Sir!] comes from behind the razor.

Through Uys's engagement in certain male-specific actions, such as entering the 'men's room' and starting to 'shave',³³ Uys acts as 'a signifier' and his presence is acknowledged when the 'man in a grey suit' gives him 'a casual glance'. However, Uys is 'in full costume, wig and all' and it is these female signs that obviously persuade Uys's observer to 'look away from' (Garber, 1992:11) the inventor and focus his attention on the invention – Uys's transvestite persona. Hence, the 'man in a grey suit' has no difficulty in recognising 'Evita Bezuidenhout ... under the shaving soap', and, ignoring Uys, politely greets her. Uys's description of himself during the process of transformation in which his image offers a conflation of male (facial hair, shaving soap) and female (costume and wig) characteristics, appears to justify classifying the transvestite persona as a separate entity in his/her own right.

The third role ascribed to the transvestite entertainer is that of mediator. As Garber (1992:6) points out, female impersonation should be seen as an 'enabling fantasy and not merely [as] a male actor's parody of a woman'. The introduction of what Garber (1992:11) terms a 'third entity' provides a 'more dynamic' performance that promotes greater insight into how things could or should be. Uys appears to be fully aware of the dramatic and satirical possibilities of cross-dressing. Uys (1995:3, 264) explains the

³³ Uys also uses the women's toilet when undergoing the transformation from actor to persona, an activity that is dealt with in some detail in Chapter Six.

rationale behind Evita's *Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d), a series that he wittily describes as a process of 'Reconstructing Prejudice and Developing Compassion', as follows:

The machinery of Nationalist propaganda had been so well oiled that a nation firmly believed what they'd been told. Now it was time to tell them otherwise. Now it was essential for them to look with their own eyes and hear from the lips of these [new] leaders, that after all ... the land was in good hands.

The above description suggests that, through the combined skills of Uys the author and Uys the actor, in the guise of his transvestite persona, Evita, these programmes would produce a 'dynamic dramaturgy' (Garber, 1992:11) that would ensure a more effective channel of communication between politicians and their constituents. With Evita's help both would, hopefully, develop a more discerning understanding of the socio-political reality in which they lived and, in so doing, discover that 'space of possibility', namely a 'new' and more mutually beneficial South Africa. Uys (1995:3) acknowledges his transvestite persona's mediating powers when he assigns Evita the task of assuring the public in post-apartheid South Africa that 'the land was in good hands'. As conflated persona, Uys/Evita acts as an intermediary and interviews members of the newly elected African National Congress-led government. Through this action s/he (Uys, 1995:3) demystifies these former 'political prisoners' and 'terrorists' in an attempt to 'change old opinions' that are 'anchored in fear and images of blood' and to 'expose these people in power to the people who had put them there'. With his usual sense of the comic, Uys pokes fun at the gullible readers of *Funigalore*, when he points to the paradoxical nature of Evita's interviews:

You'll believe the words out of the mouths of the people you know exist and you'll never doubt what was uttered by the one woman in the land who doesn't.

In this instance Uys engages in a chiasmic conflation of reality and fiction – an aspect that is dealt with at length in Chapter Six. By including 'real' people who are 'know[n to] exist' in this series, Uys ensures that the public will 'never doubt' Evita and, in so doing, strengthens his fictitious persona's legitimacy and chances of success. Uys reinforces his

argument through the use of the decussated words and phrases ‘believe’ versus ‘doubt’ and ‘people you know exist’ versus ‘the one woman who doesn’t’. Uys (1995:5) also accords Evita the reconciling abilities of ‘the grand courtesans of Parisian society during the revolution’ who brought ‘together the extremes’ as she ‘calmed enemies in her parlour with *rooibostee* and *koeksisters*’. (The similarities between Evita’s role and that of French courtesans are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.)

Some years prior to Evita’s appearance in *Funigalore I* and *II* (1994c; 1994d), Julius Eichbaum (1990:29), a radio and television critic, had panned Evita’s ‘gentle mocking of politicians’ as ‘tame patter’ because ‘satire must have bite, satire can never successfully be polite and accommodating’. Uys (1995:262) readily admits that he employed an ‘accommodating’ (or mediatory) approach during his *Funigalore* television series when he acknowledges that these two shows

... didn’t have the necessary bite ... didn’t have brooding anger. [They] had a gentle stroke, a light tickle. ... Now that we had a democratically elected government, I wasn’t going to lift up my bloodstained toothpick and stab them [the new order] in the cocktail onion.

Deploying his usual blend of syntactic and semantic chiasmus, Uys contrasts the nature of his satiric approach in the phrases ‘necessary bite’ and ‘brooding anger’ versus ‘gentle stroke’ and ‘light tickle’. As cited in Chapter One, Uys states: “I wanted to applaud a culture of life, I was tired of the old culture of death.” Uys thus intimates that *Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d) offered an idealistic rather than a realistic vision of a ‘new’ South Africa. This was presumably because his *Funigalore* television series was presented shortly after South Africa’s first ‘majority’ election, a period in South African history that Uys (1995:262) aptly named a ‘honeymoon of hope’. At this time, Uys admitted to allocating his persona the role of an ‘enabling fantasy’ (Garber, 1992:6) rather than her customary one of alerting the public to matters of socio-political discord. (Uys’s Evita again fulfilled this empowering role four years later in 1999 when she visited numerous

towns and villages throughout South Africa and, according to De Beer (1999a:2), cajoled ‘everyone to vote in ... the world’s most exciting and youngest democracy’.)³⁴

Eichbaum (1990:29) had previously condemned what he termed Uys’s earlier practice of ‘bestow[ing] ... an almost benevolent status’ upon politicians. Similarly, those leaders who took part in *Funigalore I & II* (1994c; 1994d) appeared to appreciate the combined mediating efforts of ‘Bezuidenhout & Uys, Political PROs’ (Uys, 1995:264). Included amongst the political figures Evita interviewed were Joe Slovo, the then Minister of Housing, and ‘Terror’ Lekota, the then Premier of the Free State, each a former ‘terrorist’ who had, ‘by an act of Parliament’, been instantly turned ‘from [a] freedom fighter into an MP’ (Uys, 1995:3). It would appear that Uys’s habit of couching his message in chiasmic configurations rubbed off on his interviewees. For example, Slovo (Uys, 1995:24) commented that the apartheid government ‘tried to make me “Public Enemy Number One” but what they succeeded in doing was make me “Public Friend Number One” for the majority of people’. Here, it appears that Slovo, like Uys, harboured an idealistic view of his role in the ‘new’ South Africa. In response to Evita’s (Uys, 1995:59) comment that ‘for so many years, your people said Amandla and mine Vrystaat’ (both slogans of liberation and possible military force), Lekota replied: ‘Now today we say: “Amandla-Vrystaat”.’ Lekota’s statement is closer to the complex reality that faces South Africa’s citizens now that the initial euphoria has subsided. Unfortunately, it appears that Uys’s (1995:262) ‘honeymoon of hope’ was short-lived if the information contained in two articles published in the local media seven years after *Funigalore I* and *II* (1994c; 1994d) is an accurate reflection of South African society. Granelli (2001b:3) reports:

The release of a study ... by [South Africa’s] National Injury Mortality Surveillance System ... shows that 60,000 people a year die by homicide, suicide, or traffic or other accidents. [Of these] nearly half are the result of murder.

³⁴ Uys’s revue *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) is discussed from a number of different perspectives in Chapters Two, Four, Five and Six.

Leeman (2001:1) draws an equally morbid picture of a post-apartheid South Africa when he reports that ‘according to information gathered from death certificates in South Africa ... almost half of [all] adult deaths in South Africa can now be attributed to HIV/Aids’.

It would thus appear that South Africa has once again returned to what Uys previously referred to as ‘a culture of death’, because poverty, racism and violence still exist (although the latter has changed from political to criminal violence) and to which has been added the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Hence Uys (1995:262) felt compelled to once again ‘lift up [his] bloodstained toothpick’ and, in the guise of Evita and a variety of other personae, attack these socio-political issues with his usual satirical admix of pleasure and pain in such revues as *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b), *tannie evita praat kaktus* (1998a), *Dekaffirmated* (1999c), *Evita – Live and Dangerous* (1999e) and *Symbols of Sex and State* (2001i). The grim statistics of AIDS-related deaths have not gone unobserved by either Uys or his mouthpiece, Evita, and are confronted in both his *For Fact’s Sake, a schools-tour with an entertainment about AIDS/Safe Sex/Taboos and Urban Legends* (2000c) and *For Fact’s Sake* (2000d) (these works are examined in Chapter Six).

Before concluding this discussion of female impersonation – a theatrical device used for invention, intervention and intercession – it seems pertinent to include a comment by another famous drag queen, RuPaul, whom Baker (1994:258), describes as ‘a spectacular act of self-invention’.

We’re all born naked and the rest is “drag”. Any performer who puts on an outfit to project an image is in “drag”. Everything you put on is to fit a preconceived notion of how you wanna be seen. It’s all “drag”. Mine is just more glamorous.

Through the use of the phrases ‘project an image’ and ‘to fit a preconceived notion’ RuPaul’s statement offers support to the claim, made by both Garber and Tewksbury, at the start of this chapter, that gender is a social construct and not a biological given. Thus,

it is through the invention of a third entity in the form of a transvestite persona that the writer/performer becomes an intervener, who challenges the public's preconceptions on both gender issues and other socio-political injustices. According to Greig (1999:10), Uys's *alter ego*, Evita, fulfils just such a role because she

... was – and is – a true subversive. The subversion was in transvestism: it upset the distinct gender categories that we lived with in the seventies and eighties, categories that mirrored the equally rigid racial ones. If a man could be a woman, and a woman so mannish, then by an extension of logic, how fixed could categories of race be? ... Watching Evita in an audience of married couples, one had a sense that the audience was being mocked and challenged.

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Uys's Evita continues to 'question categories' in all areas of society in which s/he feels that prejudice still exists. She frequently reminds the public of the actions of the National Party, lest they forget past inequities in their struggle for survival in the future. She also alerts them to the more questionable activities of the present government. Perhaps even more importantly, Uys continues to use his transvestite persona, Evita, to alert the general public to matters of crucial concern not only to South Africans but to all mankind, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The activities of Uys and his persona, during the last decade of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first, are touched on in Chapter Four and explored in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Before moving on to discuss, in Chapter Four, Uys's utilization of non-verbal signs as an integral part of the chiasmic and satirical dynamic of his performances, it seems fitting to close this chapter on the role that the transvestite figure plays in Uys's satirical works with the following words, ironically spoken by a woman watching Uys (Boekkoi, 1999:5) perform another drag role at the 1999 Grahamstown Standard Bank Arts Festival:

It seems to me that it's still only men who can do everything.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING CHIASTIC SIGNS IN PERFORMANCE SEMIOTICS

Semiology is a grid for the study of the whole world [because] human beings communicate [and] understand the world and each other through signs.

Christopher Brightman

Pieter-Dirk Uys's preferred literary mode appears to be drama and includes live on-stage performances, filmed and audio versions of stage performances and programmes produced for television. This assumption arises from Uys's regular composition of, and performance in, mainly one-man revues from the early 1980s onwards, as noted in the previous chapters. Semiotic¹ analyses in this chapter focus on a selection of non-verbal signs in a number of Uys's dramatic productions in the media mentioned above and enumerated later in this chapter, as well as still photographs of these performances. As indicated in Chapter One, Elam (1980:1) describes semiotics as 'a science dedicated to the study of the production [and exchange] of meaning in society' that is equally concerned with 'the processes of signification [and] communication'. In his unpublished paper, 'A Semiotic Reading of the *Heart of Darkness*', Brightman (*s.a.*:1) describes semiology in more expansive, universal terms when he calls it 'a grid for the study of the whole world' because 'human beings communicate [and] understand the world and each other through signs'. This definition emphasises the altruistic function of signs in all societies and is equally applicable to Uys's use of non-verbal sign-vehicles in his satirical performances, a selection of which are subjected to semiotic deconstruction in this chapter.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Elam (1980) attempts to define the parameters for the semiotic deconstruction of the various sign-vehicles that jointly comprise theatrical performances (and, by implication, televised or video recordings of such performances), because he considers this process to be less straightforward than the semiotic analysis of either real life or literature. The following comment by Terence Hawkes,² printed on the back cover of Elam's book, offers support for Elam's ideas concerning the complex nature of theatrical performances:

¹ Semiotics and semiology are interchangeable terms for both the 'science' (Saussure, in Barthes, 1967:9) and the 'philosophy' of signs (Eco, 1984:10). Little *et al.* (1973:1993) define a sign as 'a token or indication (visible or otherwise) of some fact [or] quality' such as 'a gesture or motion of the hand [or] head' that serve to 'communicate some idea'.

² Hawkes is the General Editor of *New Accents*, a series of books that 'involve[s] scrutiny of the nature of art itself and of its relation to our whole way of life'. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (1980) is part of this series.

For the semiotician, the theatre represents both an ideal laboratory – since practically all signifying modes and all communication codes are potentially at work – and a daunting embarrassment of riches which raise all the fundamental problems of semiotic analysis.

In an attempt to overcome this ‘embarrassment of riches’, Elam (1980:3) divides drama into ‘two types of textual material’. These are ‘written or *dramatic texts*’ that are ‘composed for the theatre’ (the literary text or script) and ‘theatrical or *performance texts*’ that are ‘performed in the theatre’ (the physical enactment of the script). When signs are used as part of a dramatic performance (performance text), they acquire special signifying qualities and thus function differently from similar signs used spontaneously in real life. To assist audiences to distinguish between dramatic performances and real life experiences, Elam (1980:7) formulates guidelines for the semiotic deconstruction of the network of signifying processes that constitute a performance text by tabulating the components of the ‘cooperative [sign]-systems’ that jointly produce meaning in the theatre. As Elam (1980:53) states, authors, directors and/or actors³ select eclectic ‘semiotic units’ from these ‘cooperative systems’ and combine them into a ‘single unified structure’. Subsequently, these ‘semiotically-loaded choice[s]’ (Elam, 1980:62) influence the audience’s interpretation of any theatrical event. These ideas are considered in the semiotic analyses of Uys’s works in this chapter.

In order to provide essential background information for the analyses of selected works by Uys, the first part of this chapter presents an overview of semiotics from the perspective of performances, together with examples of Uys’s utilization of the more pertinent concepts, wherever relevant. The second part then discusses the following specific non-verbal ‘systemic’ and ‘linguistic’ theatrical codes and subcodes that Elam (1980:57,58) lists under his cooperative systems (mentioned above): vestimentary, cosmetic, kinesics, proxemics, colour and audio sign-vehicles.

³ Throughout this chapter, the term ‘actor’ is used as a synonym for performer and thus includes both actresses and actors.

In an attempt to facilitate a better understanding of Uys's manipulation of non-verbal signs, his utilization of a number of pertinent semiological notions is examined, primarily in terms of Elam's (1980:7) grouping of stage sign-vehicles⁴ into 'cooperative-systems'.⁵ The first three chapters of this thesis concentrate on analysing the various verbal signs (language codes) that Uys utilizes within the linguistic discourses of his written works or dramatic performances. Consequently, the focus of the semiotic analyses set out in this chapter is Uys's selection, combination and/or manipulation of the various non-verbal stage sign-vehicles listed in Elam's (1980:57,58) 'Systemic' and 'Linguistic' cooperative systems. Copley and Jansz (1997:131), in their book *Introducing Semiotics*, state that while certain texts 'may contain many elements which make them complex, multi-layered structures ... they can also contain a special component which imputes an overall character to the communication'. It is the contention of this study that for Uys, this 'special component' is his habitual deployment of chiasmic configurations that serves to heighten the satirical quality of his message. In this chapter, the focus is the non-verbal nuances of the semiology of his communication.

Semiotic analyses are conducted on the following works: extracts from video recordings of a selection of Uys's dramatic performances, namely *Adapt or Dye* (1982), *Farce About Uys* (1983), *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985), *A Kiss on your Koeksister* (1991) and Uys's voter education programme, *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) together with the televised version of this revue, *Evita's People's Party incorporating The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999b). Selected still photographs of scenes from Uys's television magazine programmes, *Evita's Funigalore I* and *II* (1994c; 1994d) published in *Funigalore* (1995), are also examined. A CD recording of Uys's revue *Truth Omissions* (1997e) is analysed in terms of its paralinguistic features. In the discussion that ensues, Uys's works

⁴ For the purpose of theatrical semiotics, Elam (1980:7, Footnote 1) employs the term 'sign-vehicle', but states that 'there is no essential difference of meaning' between this term and 'signifier'.

⁵ Elam (1980:57-62) lists twelve cooperative [sign]-systems: 'Systemic, Linguistic, Generic Inter-textual, Textual Structural, Formal Presentational, Epistemic, Aesthetic, Logical, Behavioural Ethical, Ideological, Psychological and Historical' (see Annexure A), but only the first two are examined in this chapter.

are not treated chronologically but as appropriate to the particular semiotic trope that is illustrated.

Additional clarification of some of the more complex stage sign-systems is provided in the first part of this chapter to facilitate greater insight into the nature of performance texts. These explanations are interspersed with examples of Uys's deployment of these stage signs within his already listed works. Chapter Four next discusses, in greater detail, Uys's selection, combination and/or chiasmic manipulation of some of the non-verbal codes and subcodes that form part of the 'systemic and linguistic cooperative systems' (Elam, 1980:57,58) that jointly give meaning to a performance text, as revealed through semiotic analyses of Uys's selected works (cited earlier).

In Lavers and Smith's (1967:39) translation of Barthes's *Elements of Semiology*, the translators define a sign as 'a compound of a signifier and a signified'. Elam (1980:7) widens this definition when he labels a sign 'a two-faced entity linking a signifier or material sign-vehicle with a mental concept or signified'.⁶ In contrast to literary texts that 'describe, explain or define' people, objects and situations, a theatrical performance offers the audience 'a concrete object as the expression of the class of which it is a member' (Eco, 1977:225). Consequently, the primary purpose of a stage sign-vehicle is to represent the object or concept that it signifies (its referent). It only achieves its purpose if the audience can use it to infer 'the presence of [similar] objects in the represented dramatic world' (Elam, 1980:8). This function, known as 'ostension' (showing or displaying an object), is often reinforced during a performance through such foregrounding devices as 'indices and verbal references', both of which help to 'present the stage spectacle for what it basically is', namely a 'display' (Elam, 1980:29-30).

The signifying and symbolic functions of stage sign-vehicles take precedence over their utilitarian function. It is this symbolic⁷ aspect of stage sign-vehicles that enables the

⁶ A 'referent' is the 'idea, event or object' that a sign refers to (Roelofse, 1982:44).

⁷ The symbolic function of stage sign-vehicles is examined in more detail later in this chapter in a section dealing with broad typologies of signs.

audience to move beyond the representational aspects of a performance text and to accept the 'reality' of the 'represented dramatic world' (Elam, 1980:8).⁸ As Elam (1980:12,102) suggests, instead of perceiving a sequence of individual signifiers, audiences simultaneously receive a 'network of meanings' from a wide range of sign-vehicles that help them to affirm the 'hypothetical ... dramatic world' as it unfolds on the stage in front of them.

The concepts of ostension and the symbolic function of stage sign-vehicles explained above and their influence on the audience's understanding of the fictional 'stage-world' are now examined with specific reference to Uys's *Farce About Uys* (1983). During the opening sequence of *Farce About Uys*, Uys presents the audience with concrete objects that 'successfully stand for [their] intended signified' in the 'dramatic world' (Elam, 1980:102) of the main reception room of *Blanche-Noir* (white/black). Here the chiasmic name suggests the visually represented residence of South Africa's fictitious Ambassador to the imaginary 'Republic of Bapetikosweti' (Uys, 1994a:11). These concrete objects symbolize the affluent lifestyle of the Ambassador. Uys selects and combines pairs of seemingly incongruous non-verbal sign-vehicles, to offer what appears to be a sardonic critique of the often extravagant and pseudo-intellectual lifestyle of some of South Africa's politicians and public figures. He depicts an interior in which the accumulation of a wide array of showy, and possibly sentimental, artifacts appears to have taken precedence over tasteful decor.

The following pairs of semantically contrasted objects 'decorate' the set of *Farce About Uys* (1983): an imitation marble replica of *David*,⁹ Michelangelo Buonarrotti's acclaimed sculpture, versus two mass-produced white china cherubs, obviously the work of an unknown craftsman; framed photographs of white politicians versus those of black political figures; sheet music for both the religious song '*I'll walk with God*' and the once popular love song '*Autumn Leaves*'; a painting depicting the Battle of Blood River (arguably one of the most significant events in the history of the Afrikaner nation) versus a copy of a painting of a

⁸ Chapter Six explores how Uys combines reality and fiction as a means of enhancing his satire.

⁹ This version of *David* is minus the normal obligatory fig-leaf required in South Africa in order to comply with the rules relating to public decency as set out in the Publications Act 42 of 1974 (Hachten & Giffard, 1984:162), thus implying the existence of greater intellectual and sexual freedom in Uys's fictitious Bapetikosweti.

black woman by Tretchikoff, a commercially successful South African artist whose work is often disparaged by art critics. (Uys reiterates this picture of ostentatious opulence when in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1994a:17,99) he provides readers with a graphic picture of *Blanche-Noir* filled with expensive objects in somewhat tasteless combinations, such as ‘proteas eternalized in copper and arranged in large pewter pots on stinkwood tables’ and ‘ball-in-claw footstools ... on plush Persian carpets’, and surrounded by lush gardens.)

Towards the end of the introductory sequence of *Farce About Uys* (1983), Uys introduces two other concrete sign-vehicles – a bottle of champagne and a champagne glass – that provide the audience with additional information. Drinking champagne is usually regarded as a sophisticated and fairly expensive Euro-centric practice and thus these symbolic signs, in all likelihood, reinforce the audience’s deduction that the stage set represents the home of a pseudo-sophisticated and well-off western family (the Bezuidenhouts).

Of course, audiences do not only merely decipher individual sign-vehicles such as the bottle of champagne or the replica of Michelangelo’s *David*. Instead they perceive a composite set of meanings from a wide range of signifiers. Hence, for example, the audience’s acceptance of the set of *Farce About Uys* (1983) as the home of Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout is the result of their simultaneous interpretation of numerous signs. These include the various items of western-style furniture and décor. However, these Euro-centric signifiers exist alongside what appear to be non-European non-verbal sign-vehicles, namely African music (audio) and the radio announcer’s heavily accented English (paralinguistic). The function of these seemingly conflicting signals is, presumably, to force the audience to review their initial assumptions of the set and, possibly, to perceive this particular ‘dramatic world’ as reflecting an integration of European and African values.

Shortly afterwards, Evita’s ‘faithful family retainer’¹⁰ (Uys, 1993:blurb), Sophie, reminds Evita’s ‘son’, De Kock, that one half of the ‘reception room’ is in South Africa and the other half in Bapetikosweti. Bapetikosweti is Uys’s fictive utopia where blacks and whites are

¹⁰ Marckwardt *et al.* (1965:1975) define a ‘retainer’ as ‘someone who is retained in the service of a person of rank or position’.

equal, thus confirming the audience's initial conjecture that the set integrates two or more sets of values. Uys places these two politically contrasting 'worlds' within one room through his presentation of semantically diverse stage signs, such as those delineated earlier. This action offers support of this thesis's assertion that Uys employs the chiasmic trope to enhance his satirical critique of South Africa's socio-political reality during the 1980s and 1990s (an aspect that is again discussed in the second half of this chapter).

Sophie's attire (a blonde wig, sexy outfit and high-heeled shoes), coupled with her attitude towards De Kock, reflects the stereotypical 'while the cat's away the mice will play' scenario. The 'maid' plays at being 'madam' during her employer's absence – she sits in Evita's lounge, drinks her liquor and treats her adult son as her equal rather than as her 'surrogate boss'. In this way Uys satirises the perception of some white South Africans that all black domestic workers are lazy, dishonest and/or stupid. However, in both this revue and in *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985) (discussed later in this chapter with regard to Uys's use of vestimentary and scenic codes) this white assumption is proved to be false, as Sophie is consistently depicted as more astute than either De Kock or Evita.

Sign-vehicles play different roles, depending on the types of 'stage-worlds' that are simulated through the physical realisation of performance texts. As Elam (1980:9,86) rightly notes, in a so-called 'realistic' production such as *Farce About Uys* (1983), the actor's mimetic costume, body movements and speech constitute a 'stage sign *par excellence*' that simultaneously 'stresses his physical and social presence' and, in so doing, makes the actor 'transparent'. In all but excessively imitative productions in which performers try 'fully to identify with the represented characters', the actor 'is always to some degree opaque' or visible. Hence, most performances are comprised of 'self-reflexive discourse' involving the roles of both 'actor-as-character' (transparent) and 'actor-as-performer' (opaque). As a result of their interaction with a wide variety of stage sign-vehicles (including the performers), audience members are frequently reminded that they are witnessing a simulated rather than a spontaneous situation. In contemporary theatrical performances, such as Uys's particular dramatic mode, the actor often engages in 'meta-signalling' and alerts the audience to the artificiality of the stage situation by deliberately drawing attention to himself/herself as an

actor acting out a part. Uys deploys meta-signalling when, as described in the preceding paragraph, he adopts the persona of Evita's 'son', De Kock, in *Farce About Uys* (1983). The title here draws attention to the device of meta-signalling. Uys is the name of a character¹¹ in this drama but the title also acts as a precursor for the adoption by Uys (the actor) of various personae in a farcical attempt to deceive Uys (the character), who, at the end of this show, also claims to be Evita's son.

Uys's use of self-reflexive discourse, when he juxtaposes the semantically chiasmic concepts of transparency and opaqueness, is examined through semiotic analyses of *Adapt or Dye* (1982) and both *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) and the televised version of this revue, *Evita's People's Party incorporating The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999b). These productions cannot be regarded as strictly transparent 'fourth wall'¹² performances in which characters interact with each other and audiences play the role of 'privileged onlookers' (Elam, 1980:92). Uys begins *Adapt or Dye* (1982) as actor-as-character (transparent) and, in the role of Evita, walks through the lighted auditorium wearing women's clothes¹³ and using feminine movements. It is only after s/he climbs onto the stage that the house lights are dimmed. During the first ten minutes of the revue, Uys continues to emphasise Evita's 'physical and social presence' (Elam, 1980:9) when he speaks in the slightly higher tone of voice that audiences have come to associate with Evita. Uys remains transparent and, maintaining his character, namely that of a politician's wife, addresses the audience as if they were spectators at a political rally and not a theatre audience. However, once Uys has completed his first skit, he switches to the mode of actor-as-performer (opaque) and, in the presence of the audience, drops the Evita 'mask' when he removes her costume and wig on stage and begins to adopt a new persona. As is common

¹¹ Throughout the thesis the name 'Uys' is used to denote Uys the author and actor. In this chapter, however, in order to avoid confusion in discussions of *Farce About Uys* (1983), whenever the character Uys features, he is referred to as 'Uys (the character)'.

¹² 'A contemporary convention [in the form of a psychological barrier] that developed with realism in the late nineteenth century, in which the actors pretend that the audience does not exist and avoid direct communication across the footlights' (Hallen, 1975:7).

¹³ Evita's costume and appearance are discussed in detail later in this chapter, when the iconic aspects of sign-vehicles are examined.

practice in his one-man revues, Uys speaks to the audience during the transformation process. This reminds them that they are witnessing a simulated and not a spontaneous event. After completing the metamorphosis, Uys, the performer, once again becomes transparent in the role of his next persona, Nowell Fine, a wealthy Jewish woman.

For his presentation of *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a), Uys again arrives on stage in the Evita persona, but this time he remains in character throughout the entire performance. Sometimes during this revue, Uys assumes and/or maintains this role beyond the confines of the stage when he interacts with the local population outside the venue either prior to, or after, his performances. However, in the voter-education television series *Evita's People's Party incorporating The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999b), aired during the run-up to the 1999 elections, Uys once again plays the dual roles of actor-as-performer (opaque) and actor-as-character (transparent). In addition to seeing Uys playing Evita on stage, viewers also see Uys (1999b), the writer and actor, behind the wheel of the vehicle he has dubbed '*The Ballot Bus*' as he drives from town to town with 'Evita in a suitcase in the back of this vehicle'. (See Chapter Six for further discussion of the slippage between Evita and Uys in the voter-education production).

Semioticians divide signs, including verbal and non-verbal signs, into two major classes, namely natural and artificial signs, in terms of the manner in which a material signifier is associated with its mental signified. The relationship between a stage sign-vehicle and its referent is now explored. Natural signs are 'determined by strictly physical laws' (Elam, 1980:20) because the signifier and signified are 'bound in a direct cause-effect relationship'; for example, smoke is the natural sign for fire. Artificial signs are the result of 'human volition' (Elam, 1980:20). For example, a viewer chooses to accept a photograph of a baby as signifying a real baby and an architect's floor plan as a sign of the interior of a house. Natural and artificial signs can be manipulated during a performance to point a chiastically multi-faceted message.

When natural signs are deployed as sign-vehicles in the theatre, they are classified as artificial signs. Movements that are little more than reflexes with no communicative purpose

in real life become voluntary signs with a specific signaling function within the performance text. So, for example, when a woman sits down and crosses her legs, she will often, as a reflex action, check the position of her clothing, regardless of whether she is wearing a short skirt or one that covers her knees. Uys makes use of this reflex action to accentuate both Evita's femininity and sexuality. During the opening sequence of *Adapt or Dye* (1982) Uys, in the guise of Evita, sits on a chair and gracefully crosses his/her legs. After a few seconds, Evita looks down and focuses her gaze on her exposed knees. She then looks up at the audience and, with a coy smile, slowly and deliberately pulls her skirt over her knees. Given that it is in fact a man who is overtly using this supposedly natural feminine sign, the sign becomes artificial. Furthermore, in *Farce About Uys* (1983) Uys engages in a chiasmic conflation of natural and artificial sign-vehicles. He uses a male actor to play a female character (Uys plays De Kock who pretends to be Billie Jeanne) and a black actress to portray a character who emulates western style appearance and customs (during the opening sequence Sophie wears a blond wig, short shorts and high-heeled shoes and drinks champagne).

In addition to their broad classification as artificial signs, all stage sign-vehicles, in common with their 'real life' counterparts, are further categorised according to the relationship that exists between the nature of the physical sign-vehicle and its mental referent. This classification has, as Elam (1980:21) notes, resulted in the formulation of 'three broad typologies' of signifiers, namely 'icon', 'index' and 'symbol'. Each of these typologies is discussed below with particular reference to stage sign-vehicles.

Iconic signs are physically similar to their referent as, for example, the photograph of Dr H F Verwoerd used to decorate the set of *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991) (discussed in some detail later in this chapter) that presents an 'exact' likeness of the sitter and that will be recognised as such by members of the audience. However, due to the illusory nature of the theatre, there are varying degrees of physical similarity between a stage sign-vehicle and its signified. The basis of iconism on stage is purely conventional; for example, the sign-vehicle for a silk costume can be either a silk garment, 'an illusion created by pigment on canvas or an image conserved on film' (Elam, 1980:22). Audiences are happy to accept such 'iconic

anomalies' as 'boy' actors in female roles, men impersonating women (see Chapter Three for a full discussion of Uys's use of this chiasitic device) or 'ageing theatrical stars [playing] the roles of romantic heroes or heroines' (Elam, 1980:23).

An indexical sign does not exhibit the same degree of 'semiotic literalness' (Elam, 1980:23) or physical resemblance to its referent, but there is a causal connection between them. On stage an index is usually related to its mental concept through a physical likeness. For example, when Uys adopts the persona of ex-politician and State President, P W Botha, he wets his lips with the tip of his tongue and 'wags' his pointed forefinger at the audience. These are both actions for which P W Botha was notorious during his political career and, through these indices, Uys creates a close physical resemblance to his persona.

Sometimes, however, instead of a physical or causal connection, the link between a sign-vehicle and its mental concept is conventional. This kind of sign is known as a symbol and its conventional meaning is determined by the society or culture in which the sign-vehicle is used. As Elam (1980:30) correctly points out, while it is possible for a particular stage sign-vehicle to function as an icon, an index or a symbol, these same signs often span more than one typology and are thus 'complementary rather than mutually exclusive'. For example, a performer's costume may, simultaneously, iconically represent the style of dress worn by the character being portrayed, 'stand indexically for his/her social position or profession' and act as a symbol of particular aspects of the character's nature (Elam, 1980:25). This form of multi-signalling applies to many of the elaborate costumes worn by Uys/Evita both on and off the stage.

In *Adapt or Dye* (1982), the sign-vehicles that Uys uses during his presentation of Evita are actual articles of women's clothing – a leopard skin print blouse and skirt and matching handbag, a large hat with leopard skin trim, long black gloves, a fur stole and platform shoes. If read individually, these sign-vehicles are physically similar to their referents, namely articles of clothing and accessories worn by women during the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, if all these sign-vehicles are viewed simultaneously as an outfit, they promote an image that, in fashion jargon, could be termed 'designer safari' and symbolise qualities such as pseudo-

sophistication and affluence. They thus appear to be suitable signifiers for an impersonation of a white woman who is not only the powerful wife of a South African politician but also an ambassador in her own right. However, Uys is, as mentioned previously, a satirist and hence most of his stage signals have multiple meanings. In a chiasmic sleight of hand, his use of leopard skin print also connotes a 'tarty' image that was mocked by refined Afrikaans women as both flashy and 'trashy'. (Uys's choice of this particular material is also discussed in Chapter Three.) Thus, in the eyes of some audience members, it is possible that instead of portraying cultivated elegance, Evita's outfit makes her appear cheaply provocative. These negative qualities could cast doubts on Evita's moral stature and could, by implication, undermine the credibility of her political colleagues.

Occasionally one particular signifying function predominates and, when this happens, that aspect overrides all the other 'mode[s] of signifying' (Elam, 1980:26). During the 1970s and 1980s, Uys's persona openly declared her allegiance to the ruling Nationalist Party, but in the 1990s she appears to have switched sides and supports the newly elected African National Congress. After the demise of apartheid, the blue, white and orange flag of the Republic of South Africa was replaced by a brightly coloured more ethnic style flag that both incorporated the African National Congress's colours and epitomized the spirit of the 'new' South Africa. Hence, Evita appeared shortly afterwards in one of Uys's revues wearing an elegantly styled but garishly coloured sequined gown that resembled this new flag. The symbolic function of this costume as an emblem of her shift of allegiance took precedence over the iconic and indexical functions and thus the audience had little difficulty guessing where Evita's stated political sympathies lay.

Uys also employs sign-vehicles that coexist as icons, indices and symbols during his portrayal of a character called the '*Wit Wolf*' (White Wolf),¹⁴ in *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991). For this scene Uys wears a costume comprising a type of bonnet or helmet, a false nose, a cape, a tail and slippers, all made from off-white synthetic fur, plus a pair of shorts

¹⁴ '*Wit Wolf*' is the self-imposed nickname of Barend Strydom, a member of the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*, who, towards the closing years of the 1980s, was responsible for 'the gunning down of eight black [South Africans] in Pretoria's Strydom Square' (Devjee, 2000:7), allegedly without provocation or warning. Strydom later claimed amnesty for his actions on the basis of their being politically motivated.

made from camouflage material. Uys also carries a toy pistol and a naked, chubby black baby doll. Uys's costume functions at an iconic level, as the bonnet/helmet has sharp pointed ears, the snout is pointed, the tail is long and all are furry, and thus it physically resembles its referent – a wolf. This same costume, however, also signals indexically because, although it is only a partial costume, it is related to its 'pointed-to' (Elam, 1980:22) referent through physical similarity (the white fur head, snout and tail). The camouflage shorts and the pistol also work as an indexical sign of military and paramilitary groups such as the then South African Defence Force,¹⁵ the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging* and the Africa National Congress's military wing – *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the spear of the nation (Oakes, 1988:476).¹⁶ These two signs, therefore, serve to reinforce the militant nature of the character Uys is portraying. Uys's costume also signifies at a symbolic level as the front of the cape is painted bright red with a centrally placed logo that is similar to a swastika, the 'emblem of the German nazi ... regime in 1934' (Little *et al.*, 1973:2664). The red paint can be read as a symbol for the blood of the victims that was shed on Strydom Square and the three-armed logo symbolizes the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging*. On the other hand, the naked black baby doll can be taken as a symbol of the vulnerability of South Africa's black population during the apartheid era because of their lack of political representation, especially in the light of what happens to the doll later in the scene.

Two scenes from *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991) offer evidence of how Uys enhances his satirical message through his chiasmic conflation of seemingly incongruous verbal and non-verbal signifiers. In the '*Wit Wolf*' skit described in some detail above, Uys counteracts his gruesome dialogue with humorous non-verbal signifiers. Instead of the authentic animal costume usually found in more 'realistic' stage or film productions, Uys chooses, as the

¹⁵ 'The suddenness and enormity of the unrest ... by workers and students in the Vaal triangle ... caught the [South African] government off guard and [on] 23 October 1984 ... 7 000 troops in armoured trucks rolled into Sebokeng. ... Sharpeville and Boipatong. Soldiers with R-1 rifles were stationed every few metres in the streets of [these] townships. The Minister of Law and Order stated: "As far as we're concerned it's war, plain and simple" ' (Oakes, 1988:474). 'In SWA/Namibia the South African Defence Force, supported by the local territorial force, launched major attacks on SWAPO bases in Angola in 1978, 1980, 1982 and 1984' (Cameron & Spies, 1986:300).

¹⁶ *Umkhonto we Sizwe* – the spear of the nation, the fighting arm of the African National Congress, encouraged 'internal unrest' through 'acts of sabotage and violence' such as the attacks on 'the oil-from-coal Sasol installation in the [then] Orange Free State' and 'the Koeberg nuclear power station in the Western Cape' (Oakes, 1988:476, 456).

vehicle for presenting his harrowing verbal monologue, a wolf's costume that is closer to those worn in pantomimes (a genre better known for its comic exploits than its social commentary). Initially, the image of Uys, in a 'bonnet' with ears, a long false furry nose and furry 'bedroom slippers' appears to be in keeping with Uys's practice of sweetening the stinging impact of his vituperative verbal message with humorous touches. This scene ends with what appears to be both a stylised re-enactment and a sardonic critique of the Strydom Square massacre. Uys, in his '*Wit Wolf*' persona, shoots the black doll at point-blank range, removes the top of its head and begins to scoop out and swallow a glutinous substance (presumably representing its brain). This gruesome image contains elements of the mordant wit and despair often associated with black comedy. Through his deployment of ostensibly incompatible verbal and non-verbal sign-vehicles, Uys injects a macabre touch into his performance. It is possible that Uys's choice and utilization of bizarre sign-vehicles (such as supposedly taking off the top of the doll's head and eating its brain) as his medium for recalling this horrific event 'profoundly disturbed some members of the audience' (Cuddon, 1977:694) and, in so doing, alerted them to the harmful consequences of condoning violence, even if it is 'politically motivated'. Greig (1999:10), however, felt that Uys's combination of verbal and non-verbal sign-vehicles lacked the subtlety needed for effective satire. He criticised 'this lurid sketch' stating that Uys failed to 'maintain a balance between self and performance'. Instead, 'the link between the two was severed', thus relegating the sketch to merely 'all howls and horror comic stuff'. Hence, in Greig's opinion, the audience would not have appreciated the satirical impact of Uys's chiasmatically composed message.

In another scene from *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), Uys plays a schoolgirl selling kisses to raise funds for the Nationalist Party. For this part, Uys wears a blonde wig with long plaits, a simple white blouse and a knee-length black tunic, all of which help to stress the girl's youthful innocence. However, although the schoolgirl's tone of voice and manner of speaking suggest guileless 'chatter', Uys's choice of verbal signifiers quickly counteracts this impression. The girl's dialogue contains many sexual innuendoes that simply continue the explicitly lewd connotations of the title of this revue. In this scene, the seemingly innocuous '*koeksister*' does not simply refer to a piece of sweet confection that is usually eaten, but rarely kissed. The word '*koek*' is an ambiguous term. It refers to a confection, but is also a

crass colloquialism for a part of the female anatomy. Sometimes it is taken to mean the same as *'poes'* ('cunt' – a term applied to women as a form of vulgar abuse). At other times it is used in place of *'moer'* ('uterus' with specific reference to the afterbirth). In this instance, the girl herself is the *'koeksister'* being kissed and, by implication, exploited for the financial benefit of a political party.

Uys's chiasitic message is reinforced in the setting he chooses for his schoolgirl sketch. Uys uses a large white screen on which imprints of outsize red lips (similar to those found in St Valentine's Day advertisements) are juxtaposed with dollar signs. Through this admix of seemingly incongruous signals that both attract and repulse, Uys heightens his satirical exposure of sexual and political abuse. Love (as symbolized by the red lips) is often accompanied by physical attraction and sexual contact between the lovers. However, Uys's inclusion of dollar signs suggests that love and sex are commodities that can be bought and sold, thus implying the existence of prostitution, a practice in which females, and sometimes males, receive payment for engaging in a variety of sexual behaviour. Uys's schoolgirl appears unaware of the reality of the situation that lies ahead of her. She naively tells the audience how, with her father's blessing, she plans to raise funds for the Nationalist Party by giving and receiving kisses, probably from older and/or lecherous men. Here again, Uys implies that she is being exploited both for the financial benefit of a political party and the sexual gratification of men who are prepared to pay for such a service. This activity raises doubts as to the legitimacy of the Nationalist Party's fundraising procedures and, by implication, its financial policies. The sharp contrast between Uys's choice of verbal and non-verbal signifiers attracts the audience's attention and, in so doing, also points to the high incidence of child abuse, child prostitution and paedophilia both in South Africa and internationally. This scene also reinforces Uys's (2000a:23) belief in the close connection between political and sexual exploitation, which he verbalises in the following comment:

Of course innocence can be exploited, as it was in the days of our childhood – the 50s and the 60s – when we were ruled by National Party politics, Dutch Reformed Church morality and that all powerful word: SIES! We knew nothing about sex, because no one spoke about it, let alone answered questions.

Uys attempts to rectify this omission through both *For Fact's Sake, a schools-tour with an entertainment about AIDS/Safe Sex/Taboos and Urban Legends* (2000c) and his revue *For Fact's Sake* (2000d).

In addition to the three broad typologies of artificial sign-vehicles already described in this chapter, there are three other categories – ‘metaphor,¹⁷ metonymy and synecdoche’ (Elam, 1980:27) that, likewise, are classified according to the relationship that exists between the physical sign-vehicle and its mental referent. A metaphoric stage sign-vehicle is ‘based on the existence of equivalence’ between two [concrete] objects (Elam, 1980:27). A metonymy is also grounded in physical approximation such as when a stage ‘property’ stands for its user or for the action in which it is employed. Most theatrical signs function as a synecdoche because ‘part’ of an object or concept is used to represent the ‘whole’ of the object or concept. As Elam (1980:29) rightly notes, directors and actors expect audiences to ‘accept the actors’ ... symbolic or metaphorical [movements as] a complete and meaningful act’ even though these are frequently ‘incomplete and inconsequential’.

Many of the stage sign-vehicles that Uys uses in his theatrical presentations function as a metaphor, a metonymy and/or a synecdoche. In *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), Uys uses a pair of chiastically opposed sign-vehicles, namely a white and a black doll, as metaphoric signs. The signs’ contrasting colours act as a metaphor for white and black South Africans. Uys, dressed as a security guard, moves the white doll into a more dominant centre-stage position, but still overshadowed by a photograph of F W de Klerk (the then President of South Africa and leader of the Nationalist Party). The guard then knocks the black doll onto the floor. The dolls’ new positions can be read as a metaphor for South African society prior to the 1994 general elections. During this period, white South Africans had voting rights and thus more political power than disenfranchised black South Africans, and yet both races were

¹⁷ According to Abrams (1971:61), a metaphor occurs when ‘a word or phrase that, in standard usage, denotes a particular kind of object, quality or action, is applied to another [object], in the form of a statement of identity instead of comparison’.

subject to laws promulgated by the Nationalist government.¹⁸ This particular metaphor is further reinforced by the fact that both these sign-vehicles are inanimate objects without free will and thus subject to manipulation by others.

In *Adapt or Dye* (1982), Uys combines sign-vehicles that exhibit a physical similarity to their referent (described earlier in the section dealing with iconic signs) as a metonymy for P W Botha, the then Prime Minister of South Africa. Although a metonymic sign is not in itself chiasmic it can be used in chiasmic configurations. For example, in this sketch, through his use of kinesic signals Uys portrays P W Botha as a simpleton, while his vestimentary signals (dark suit) create the impression of a respectable businessman or politician. Later, in this same revue, Uys employs a sign-vehicle as a synecdoche when he wears an even larger pair of spectacles attached to an oversized pointed nose and elephant-like ears to signal Dr Piet Koornhof, the then Minister of Cooperation and Development.

In this same revue Uys (1986:38) also dons a ‘long, curly Louis XIV wig, [a] black hat with orange, white and blue feathers [and] a small moustache’ and strides across the stage, walking stick in hand. Uys’s audiences, as predicted by Elam (1980:29), interpret these ‘incomplete and inconsequential’ signs as a meaningful message. The audience appears happy to accept this skit as simulating the arrival at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 of Jan van Riebeeck, the Commander of the Dutch East Indian Company’s first permanent settlement (Oakes, 1988:37). The spectators seem unperturbed by the fact that, apart from the period wig and hat, Uys’s Van Riebeeck is dressed in a modern white lounge shirt that covers his torso but exposes his bare legs and feet. ‘The [image of] Van Riebeeck most South Africans recognise is similar to a portrait painted by Derek Cracy’ (Oakes, 1988:37) that depicts Van Riebeeck in elaborate period costume and a shoulder-length curled wig. It is this imposing presence that is reflected in illustrations in the majority of history books deployed in South African schools at the time of Uys’s performance. Consequently, the chiasmus occurs within the costume itself, namely between Uys’s use of period and modern

¹⁸ Examples of these restrictive laws (cited in Chapters 2 and 3) are Act No 55 of 1949 – the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (Cameron & Spies, 1986:278), and the Publications Act 42 of 1974 (Hachten & Giffard, 1984:162).

vestimentary signs and, in particular, his bare feet, a sign-vehicle that connotes a wide range of readings, namely freedom, a lack of sophistication, poverty and even disrespect. In this instance, Uys uses chiasmic structures to heighten his sardonic 'send-up' of one of the supposedly more significant events in South Africa's history – namely the arrival of the first European colonists or settlers.

In order to decipher non-verbal theatrical sign-vehicles and their accompanying messages, authors, performers and audiences must first separate the theatrical performance 'from normal social praxis' (Elam, 1980:12) and perceive it as an artificial construct. To do this, performers and spectators apply a combination of 'cultural rules' and 'established performance canons' to the performance text (Elam, 1980:87,92). Performance canons are 'a set of transactional conventions' that govern how authors, performers and audiences understand and interpret the 'kinds of reality involved' in performance texts (Elam, 1980:88). Elam (1980:87) labels this ability 'theatrical competence'.

When writing and performing his revues, Uys takes cognizance of both cultural rules and performance canons. He is also aware that his audience will employ theatrical competence to make sense of his *konserter*. Thus it appears that both the presentation and the interpretation of Uys's performance texts constitute a chiasmic conflation of cultural rules and performance canons that necessitate the merging of reality and fantasy. (The blending of real world situations with Uys's fictional world is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.) For example, Uys knows that the majority of people watching a performance of his *Adapt or Dye* (1982) on the sparsely furnished stage of Johannesburg's Market Theatre accept Evita as a fictional character and do not see her as the wife of a politician in the 'real' world. They are willing to accept Uys's chiasmically structured deployment of miscellaneous sign-vehicles (such as costume, make-up, stance, gestures and movements) as the means through which he not only establishes and portrays the Evita persona, but also disseminates his satirical and humorous message. In other words, they accept Evita as a fictional character and their response to Evita's performance differs from their reaction to real life situations, such as a political gathering held outside the theatre. They consequently respond to Evita's rhetorical questions

and statements with laughter and clapping and not verbal rejoinders, as might have been the case at a public meeting.

On the other hand, spectators watching Uys's *Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) knew that, in addition to entertainment, the purpose of this show was to cajole the public into voting. Thus some people accepted Evita's invitation and went onto the stage and shared their political aspirations with the audience, while others responded to Evita's request and showed her their bar-coded identity documents as proof that they had registered as voters.

Uys also knows that the audience's reaction to the satirical messages, which he couches in a mixture of verbal and non-verbal sign-vehicles, differs not only in relation to the performance text but also in terms of the spectators' life experience and their knowledge of cultural and dramatic conventions. Thus Uys's chiasitic blending of the real world with the fictional world varies, depending upon when and where he is presenting his revues. While the audience's knowledge of performance canons may not differ greatly between South Africa and America, their disparate life experiences necessitate Uys's using different sign-vehicles to carry his satiric message. Thus for performances that he presented in America in 1997, Uys included Michael Jackson, President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine K Albright amongst his personae. For South African audiences Uys created such characters as 'a former South African Police torturer [turned] body guard to Nelson Mandela (Wiesner, 1999:4), an impoverished former 'European countess' now living in Hillbrow, Johannesburg (Greig, 1999:10) and 'Evita's 97-year-old mother ... Ouma Ossewania' (Walker, 1997a:1).

Uys engages in a chiasitic blending of verbal and non-verbal signs at the beginning of *Adapt or Dye* (1982) when he employs a 'frame-breaking technique' (Elam, 1980:90) as a humorous device. In the guise of Evita, s/he loudly admonishes the sound technician for playing 'God Save the Queen' instead of the South African national anthem because 'there are no Queens in South Africa' (Uys, 1982). Evita's comment is both humorous and ironic because it is contradicted by Uys's choice of non-verbal signs. Despite her denial, Evita's flamboyant leopard skin print outfit (described above and in Chapter Three) confirms that

she, or rather Uys, qualifies for the title of ‘drag queen’ (Uys, 1995:3). Once again, through his simultaneous use of non-verbal sign-vehicles, Uys conflates reality and fiction – his choice of sound effects signals the presence of the Queen of England while his combination of visual signs denotes the presence of South Africa’s queen of drag.

Each theatrical sign-vehicle ... is ‘a sign of a sign and not the sign of a material thing’ (Bogatyrev, 1938:33). Uys employs sign-vehicles that evoke different levels of meaning. So, for example, the white and black dolls (mentioned above) can be read at a secondary or connotative level of meaning and as such act as a metaphor for or symbol of South African society. Elam (1980:11) regards a performance text as ‘a constantly shifting network of primary and secondary meanings’. Secondary or connotative meaning plays an important role in performance texts because, in contrast to overt primary meaning, it is linked to both ‘personal attitudes’ and ‘cultural conventions’ (Roelofse, 1982:85).¹⁹ As Elam (1980:11) notes, connotation constitutes ‘a parasitic semantic function ... whereby the sign-vehicle of one sign-relationship provides the basis for a second-order sign-relationship’. This is possibly why Cobley and Jansz (1997:169) believe that a sign-vehicle ‘carries more [culturally] informational baggage than any of its originators realise’.

This particular characteristic enables spectators to assign meaning to sign-vehicles according to the ‘social, moral, and ideological [cultural] values operative in the community of which performers and spectators are part’ (Elam, 1980:11). In his article, ‘Theatre beyond apartheid’, Steadman (1991:78) also draws attention to the social and ideological nature of performance texts. He states:

[A]ll theatre is a historically and ideologically situated activity, and some of the greatest works of the human imagination have been plays [and, by implication, revues] rooted in political argument.

In his revue *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), in addition to white and coloured characters, Uys plays two black personae, namely Bishop Desmond Tutu (later Archbishop) and Nelson

¹⁹ Roelofse’s (1982) definitions of these two types of meaning within the context of real life situations are relevant to this discussion of the semantic nuances of theatrical signs.

Mandela's wife, Nomsamo Winifred Madikisela-Mandela (better known as Winnie Mandela). During the 1980s, Bishop Desmond Tutu, while not advocating violence, encouraged South Africans to show their support for the imposition of sanctions by countries such as America and Great Britain, regardless of the personal and social deprivation such sanctions might cause them. By contrast, Winnie Mandela, on at least one occasion, incited black South Africans to seek liberation through violent methods (Oakes, 1988:480) such as 'necklacing'.²⁰ Uys's portrayal of these two well-known and controversial black South Africans in one revue also offers support of this thesis's claim that Uys deploys chiasmus as a satirical tool. In this instance, Uys utilizes the following semantically divergent stage sign-vehicles – male versus female, cleric versus political figure and advocate of peaceful resistance (sanctions) versus advocate of punitive action or intimidation (physical aggression).

In addition to juxtaposing the above contrasting personae in *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), Uys utilizes another stage sign-vehicle that allows for a range of semantically opposed secondary or connotative interpretations, as described below. For his portrayal of F W de Klerk, the then Prime Minister and State President of South Africa, Uys wears a tri-coloured 'clown' costume, consisting of a pair of wide-legged pants made from layers of white, blue and orange petal-shaped pieces of material that are supported at waist level by a large hoop. At the denotative level, this 'clown' image denotes an amusing character who entertains children in the circus ring or at parties, a reading that focuses on the more humorous elements of satire. At the connotative level, the oversized hooped 'pants' evoke images of the somewhat bizarre 'stiff skirts called panniers'²¹ worn by fashionable, wealthy French women during 'the regency of Philippe of Orléans [that] last[ed] from 1715 until 1723' (Kybalová, Herbonová & Lamarova, 1968:199).

However, as Elam (1980:95) points out, it is the spectator who bears 'the final responsibility for the meaning and coherence' of a performance text. Consequently, amongst Uys's audience there would probably have been a range of connotative interpretations of this

²⁰ 'Necklacing' is a process in which a 'rubber tyre filled with petrol, [is] forced over a victim's head and shoulders, and then set alight' (Oakes, 1988:490).

particular sign-vehicle that blends elements of both a masculine clown costume with a woman's hooped skirt. Some people might have regarded it as an amusing example of the more lenient attitude towards the practice of 'gender-blending' (Jacobs, 1996:49) that had begun to emerge in South Africa during the final years of the twentieth century. To others it might have appeared that Uys portrays De Klerk as a grinning effeminate character, and thus a figure of ridicule, not to be taken seriously. Instead of portraying South Africa's 'first citizen' and leader of the Nationalist party with dignity, Uys subverts De Klerk's political status. Thus spectators who supported De Klerk's political activities would most likely have found this particular sketch offensive. For those spectators who might have interpreted the 'clown' costume in this particularly negative fashion, Uys's portrayal of De Klerk would have seemed an extremely harsh sardonic send-up. (De Klerk played a significant role in bringing about the peaceful demise of apartheid and later became a joint recipient, with President Nelson Mandela, of the Nobel Peace Prize.) By way of contrast, those spectators who doubted De Klerk's political credentials probably would have enjoyed Uys's humorous caricature of the President.

In addition to various connotative readings of Uys's use of the clown costume described above, it is possible that, for the select few, this particular sign-vehicle would have connoted a more cerebral figure, similar to the court jester or 'fool'²² popular in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Renaissance fools were allowed relative freedom of speech and, as mentioned in Chapter Three, were 'privilege[d] to challenge the laws of society' (Baker, 1994:23). They fulfilled a similar role to one played by Uys, namely that of satirist and social commentator and, as such, disguised their thought-provoking comments in light-hearted banter – a style of repartee not unlike Uys's chiasmic dialogue.

The semantic diversity that is possible during the allocation of secondary meaning (as is illustrated in the above discussion of De Klerk's 'clown' costume) produces extensive representational correlation between a stage sign-vehicle and its signified. Consequently,

²¹ 'Panier' skirts ['literally wicker baskets'] were 'stiffened with whalebone' (Kybalová, *et al.*, 1968:199-200).

²² Fools also played an important role in Elizabethan theatre and appeared in a number of works by William Shakespeare (1564–1616).

unlike similar signifiers in a realistic situation, a ‘limited repertory of [theatrical] sign-vehicles’ can ‘generate a potentially unlimited range of cultural units’, thus producing a ‘transformability of dramatic function’ (Elam, 1980:11). This quality makes it possible for one stage sign-vehicle to stand for numerous referents within a single production, or in a number of different productions. Uys utilizes this particular trait of stage sign-vehicles in a number of his performance texts. In *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), Uys uses a single prop, a hand-held ‘walkie-talkie’ or radio-phone, to signal different concepts in two different sketches. In the first instance the radio-phone functions as a tool of aggression as it is used by a white security guard to keep contact with his fellow white guards, all of whom appear to regard physically assaulting black South Africans as one of their objectives. Later in this same review, the same radio-phone is given a more a light-hearted function, namely that of socialising. Here, it is used by Petronella Burger (a politically correct ‘new’ South African who seems to be a combination of Evita, Nowell Fine and Evita’s blonde sister, Bambi) as a means of conversing intimately with a black colleague. In this particular sketch Uys also uses the radio-phone to satirise a stereotypical figure – the affluent pseudo-liberal white South African woman – who, like Nowell Fine, happily ‘chats’ with black ‘comrades’, attends African National Congress meetings and raises her fist and chants ‘Amandla’. Such props with multiple significance are integral to Uys’s chiastic mode.

In three of his shows, Uys presents semantically contrasting messages through the multi-signification of a pistol. In *Adapt or Dye* (1982) Uys, in the guise of Evita, puts his hand into her purse and pulls out a pistol. In this instance, this particular sign-vehicle has humorous implications because, during the early 1980s, the audience presumably would have expected Evita to carry a powder compact and lipstick in her purse rather than a weapon. By contrast, in 1999 in *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a), Evita again takes a pistol out of her purse before she goes off stage, this time supposedly to deal with a troublesome black employee. This sign-vehicle is unlikely to be read purely as an amusing mistake. In keeping with the socio-political climate in South Africa in the late 1990s where violent crime²³ is the

²³ During the second half of the 1990s violent crime in South Africa escalated at an alarming rate. Uys named an earlier review *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) and made considerable play during the opening scene of the fact that this was a ‘live’ performance and that he was ‘alive’, an occurrence that Uys maintained was becoming less and less normal in South Africa.

norm, a firearm is likely to suggest a menacing reality. In *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), as was suggested in the discussion of the ‘*Wit Wolf*’ scene earlier in this chapter, a firearm extends its sinister function when Uys uses a pistol to shoot the black doll.

This concludes the overview of semiotic concepts from the perspective of theatrical performances, together with pertinent examples from a selection of Uys’s performance texts. This chapter now explores some of the non-verbal codes and subcodes that Elam (1980:57,58) lists under his ‘systemic and linguistic cooperative systems’. The following components are either discussed in detail, or just touched upon if they have been examined at length earlier in this chapter: vestimentary codes (clothing and accessories), cosmetic codes (make-up, hairstyles and wigs), kinesics (body movements, gestures and facial expressions), proxemics (spatial relations as evidenced firstly through the use of the building/theatre, secondly through the utilization of stage space – sets, properties and stage lighting, and thirdly through the utilization of informal space – the configuration of both the performer’s and the spectators’ bodies), colour (in conjunction with a number of other sign-vehicle systems) and audio sign-vehicles – music, sound effects and ‘paralinguistic features’ (Elam, 1980:58), such as vocal projection, articulation, intonation, pauses, accents and/or dialects.

Vestimentary and cosmetic subcodes are responsible for the actor-as-character’s appearance and, as Elam (1980:83) notes, play a ‘heightening and indexical role’ because they influence the audience’s understanding and appreciation of the performance text. A character’s appearance is the result of choices made by the author, director and/or performer in terms of the prevailing historical and cultural conventions and dramatic and theatrical codes and subcodes. In *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985) the costumes worn by Evita and Sophie, her domestic helper, when visiting the ‘witch doctor’ serve to delineate Evita’s ‘European-ness’ versus Sophie’s ‘African-ness’. Evita wears an elegant two-piece suit, high-heeled shoes, fashionable western-style day make-up and wig, all of which emulate the appearance of an affluent white woman who dresses according to western fashion trends popular in the early 1980s. By way of contrast, Sophie is barefoot and wears a culturally determined costume – a beaded ‘dress’ made from animal skin, a beaded headband, ethnic-style white facial make-up and hairstyle. By abutting these contrasting outfits, Uys gives material form to the historical

and cultural conventions that divide South Africans of different racial groups and, in particular, white 'madams' and black 'maids' and, in so doing, presumably enhances his satirical message. However, and not without irony, Evita's European style suit is trimmed with a collar and cuffs made from 'African' print material, namely imitation leopard skin. This feature provides concrete evidence of Elam's (1980:50) point that the 'boundaries' between specific codes and subcodes are often poorly 'marked'. It is also possible that Uys deliberately chose to adjoin these culturally diverse signifiers as an indication of the gradual integration of European and African cultures that has occurred during the twentieth century or to suggest that in its multi-cultural context, South Africa inexorably subverts cultural 'purity', stereotyping and separation.

In this same video, *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985), Uys deploys his usual semantically opposed sign-vehicles. While, in this second instance, the technique extends vestimentary codes to include scenic codes, it again draws the audience's attention to the diversity that exists between European and African cultures. Uys presents the audience with two consecutive scenes that offer contrasting images of the same character. The character the audience first sees is playing the part of a well-groomed and immaculately suited black psychiatrist who sits behind a large desk in what purports to be his consulting room. However, supposedly at Sophie's insistence (and to fit Evita's image of an African doctor) this character quickly exchanges his western-style clothes for the 'traditional' animal-skin garb of a 'witchdoctor'. Instead of using the large desk and consulting couch, he pretends to diagnose Evita's problems by 'throwing the bones' while squatting on his haunches. In addition to the more obviously farcical nature of the second scene, Uys may have juxtaposed these chiasmic images of two diverse cultures to alert his audience to the consequences of formulating opinions solely in terms of stereotypical historical and cultural norms. Such procedures could give rise to the premise that only medical doctors in so-called 'developed' countries (for example, South Africa) engage in western medical practices whilst those in supposedly 'less-developed' states (such as Uys's fictitious Homeland of Bapetikosweti) continue to practise tribal customs. Perhaps Uys also deploys these contrasting images to focus attention on the ideological principles of South Africa's apartheid policy that 'introduced the Reservation of

Separate Amenities Act' in 1953 (Oakes, 1988:376)²⁴ and later established the independent black homelands, as a result of which black South Africans were 'strip[ped] of their access to the white political system' and 'substitute[d] these with political rights' in the homelands (Oakes, 1988:378).²⁵ Both of these practices served to separate the different racial groups and thus accentuated their cultural, religious and linguistic differences. With his customary mix of humour and censure, Uys satirises the policy of separate development in *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985) when he depicts how both Sophie and the black psychiatrist pretend to be 'primitive', supposedly to fit in with Evita's image of black people. However, because the audience is allowed in on the secret, it is Uys's persona who is actually shown up as being the less intelligent character. Owing to her perceived inability to accept other people and/or racial groups as her equal in both sophistication and intelligence, she is portrayed as being duped by the people she regards as her inferiors, namely her domestic helper and the black doctor.

Uys's choice of vestimentary and cosmetic codes for the opening scene of *Farce About Uys* (1983) provides further evidence of his use of chiasmus to attract his audience's attention. As was said at the start of this chapter, Uys first shows his audience a character with long blonde hair, thus raising the expectation that this character is both female and European. Although she wears western style clothes (the short shorts and high-heeled shoes mentioned above), when she turns round to face the audience, instead of the anticipated pale complexion, this character has a black skin. This seemingly incongruous image prepares the audience for the fictional world of this revue where white and black South Africans co-exist in harmony. The combination of the characteristics of two racial groups within one sign-vehicle serves a dual purpose. It provides evidence of Uys's employment of chiasmus as a tool for denouncing apartheid ideology's promotion of racial purity and segregation. It also reflects an integration of European and African values and, in so doing, offers them a model

²⁴ In 1953 (cited previously) the Nationalist Government 'introduced the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act. ... In explaining the purpose of the Act, Justice Minister Charles Swart declared: "...reasonable amenities [will always be] provided for all classes according to their aptitude, ... their standard of civilisation and ... their need".' This Act resulted in the 'establish[ment of] separate (but not necessarily equal) facilities for whites and non-whites' in areas such as 'public premises and transport ... offices, beaches, parks, bus stops, benches, service counters and lifts' (Oakes, 1988:376).

²⁵ As cited in Chapter Two, Footnote 13, between the years 1976 and 1981, four 'Independent [Black] States' and six 'Self-Governing [Black] States' were established by the Nationalist Government (Oakes, 1988:426).

for a more positive, if somewhat idealistic, South Africa in which the members of different racial groups co-exist as equals.

Following on from the above discussion of Uys's deployment of vestimentary, cosmetic and scenic codes, this study now investigates Uys's use of what Elam (1980:69) terms 'one of the most dynamic aspects of theatrical performance', namely kinesics or communication through body-movements. Short extracts from videos of some of Uys's performance texts are examined to establish how, during his dramatic presentation, Uys, as author, director and/or performer, manipulates kinesics to enhance his satirical message. Movement is continuous. Therefore, when individual body-movements are viewed in isolation, they provide the audience with very superficial knowledge and do not contribute significantly towards the meaning of a performance text. However, when viewed collectively as a series of movements, or sequence of kinesic behaviour, movements acquire semantic significance and reveal facts about the characters and their attitudes towards either the action itself, other characters or the plot. When read in conjunction with other non-verbal stage sign-vehicles, such as clothing and accessories, kinesics contributes towards the production of both denotative and connotative meaning and thus enables the audience to make sense of the 'world' that is unfolding before them on the stage.

During the opening sequence of *Farce About Uys* (1983), Uys combines vestimentary and kinesic codes in order to establish the effeminate character of De Kock, who wears a red sweater with slashed sleeves and a low neckline, red satin shorts over track-suit pants, 'leg warmers', white running shoes, earrings, a sweat-band. He carries a shoulder bag, a pair of pink ballet shoes tied together with long pink satin ribbons and a white pith helmet. To reinforce his persona's over-the-top and unmanly appearance, Uys engages in a series of 'exaggerated physical action[s]' (Cuddon, 1977:264). Uys/De Kock minces around the stage in an artificial, effete manner, practises ballet steps and poses, gestures ostentatiously and pretentiously brushes and styles a number of long wigs. The effect of this combination of vestimentary and kinesic codes is threefold. Firstly, it enables Uys to 'materialize' De Kock's 'camp' and effeminate nature at the outset. Secondly, it allows Uys's persona to take control of his stage-world (the Bezuidenhout family residence) and, thirdly, it helps the

audience to make sense of De Kock's world – the main reception room of *Blanche-Noir* (described at the start of the chapter).

In order to further strengthen the somewhat hackneyed image of a temperamental male homosexual, Uys presents the audience with a chiasmic conflation of male character and female actions. Uys engages his persona in a sequence of 'socially acceptable feminine behaviour' (Tewksbury, 1994:29), namely the feminine habit of 'dabbing' perfume behind each ear. However, instead of the customary expensive and exotic liquid, Uys chooses the dregs of Sophie's cheap champagne (or possibly Evita's expensive champagne, the audience will never know which). However, Uys's persona accompanies his action with a broad smile, thus confirming that this type of behaviour is not an absent-minded mistake but a deliberate stratagem. Uys/De Kock obviously enjoys presenting this particular over-the-top version of the stereotypical 'gay' man who delights in captivating others' attention with 'affected mannerisms' (Baker, 1994:63). The combined impact of Uys/De Kock's facial movements, coupled with his heightened rendition of the typically feminine gesture of applying perfume, serves to enhance Uys's satirical purpose (described at length in Chapter Two of this thesis) that combines elements of both pleasure and pain. It provides enjoyment and elicits laughter as the audience watch the antics of the supposedly outrageous but obviously harmless De Kock, who, aided and abetted by the more astute Sophie, eventually succeeds in outwitting the overtly masculine 'mysterious stranger' (Uys, 1983:blurb).

Uys believes that many South Africans 'are frightened of the idea of trans-sexualism' (Bishop, 1991:202). Through this presentation of a character that blatantly enjoys blending gender practices²⁶ with regard to appearance and habits, Uys perhaps hopes that the public will become more tolerant of people whose sexual orientation differs from their own. This change of attitude will hopefully enable such often marginalized members of South African society to gain greater acceptance. Similarly, In *Farce About Uys* (1983), Uys chooses Sophie, a black woman, as his second main character and gives her the task of instigating and supporting De Kock's supposed gulling of Uys (the character). Uys's (the author and actor)

²⁶ Blending gender is here used as a synonym for 'gender-blending' (Jacobs, 1996:49).

selection of these three characters provides further evidence of his chiasmic conflation of a wide range of non-verbal sign-vehicles to enhance the satirical impact of his message.

Firstly, there is De Kock – surrogate employer and a white, male, over-the-top, effeminate homosexual. Secondly, there is Sophie – a black, glamorous, female accomplice and confidante. After the arrival of Uys (the character) and, presumably, to comply with society's perceptions of a domestic worker, Sophie sheds her glamorous image (described earlier) in favour of a typical 'maid's overall' and '*doek*' (scarf). She also adopts a range of deferential body-movements appropriate to her supposedly menial position – domestic helper and surrogate mother. Finally, there is Uys (the character) – a white, male, heterosexual, conservative civil servant. The first three attributes often resulted in social and economic privileges in South Africa during the apartheid era (and in some other Westernized countries for that matter). It can be argued, therefore, that in allowing De Kock and Sophie, both members of marginalised sectors of South African society, to outwit the ostensibly superior Uys (the character), Uys (the writer) is, as suggested above, depicting a prejudice-free model-of-society that he hopes will eventually become the norm. This 'model' became a legal reality (even if not a practical one) in 1996 when South Africa's new Constitution²⁷ prohibited all forms of discrimination. A policy of affirmative action currently promotes the rights of groups such as blacks, women and disabled people in the workplace.

Uys uses kinesics or body-movements and scenic codes to reveal characters' attitudes towards situations or points of view and also to confirm or negate their own or others' dialogue. In the opening sequence of *Farce About Uys* (1983), Uys's use of kinesics reveals De Kock's supposed attitude towards Sophie and vice versa. De Kock is portrayed confiding in Sophie. Uys initially depicts De Kock and Sophie interacting as equals and they frequently laugh and exchange smiles. They constantly move from one side of the table to the other in order to ensure each retains an equally advantaged position, during their 'exposé' of the

²⁷ The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, as adopted on 8 May 1996 and amended on 11 October 1996 by the Constitutional Assembly, prohibits discrimination either 'directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth' (Republic of South Africa, 1996:7).

advantages and disadvantages of living in either the 'white' dominated South African side of *Blanche-Noir* or the multi-racial Bapetikosweti side.

At first the character De Kock appears quite happy that Sophie is wearing what is purportedly one of his wigs. Suddenly, however, in direct contrast to his earlier conspiratorial attitude, Uys's persona objects to Sophie's sharing his possessions. When Sophie tries on another wig that De Kock has just finished grooming, his actions indicate that he no longer regards her as his partner. He grimaces in a manner more readily associated with a 'bitchy' woman or a spoilt child than an adult male and, half-spitefully, half-facetiously, snatches the wig off Sophie's head. He then contemptuously touches Sophie's own hair, while commenting disparagingly on its length and texture, before painstakingly re-brushing the wig. A short while later, De Kock sits down at the table opposite Sophie and continues to reveal his supposedly disdainful attitude through his body-motions. With his elbow on the table, his hand under his chin and his index finger on his cheek, he leans towards Sophie and, pretending to play 'madam' for a moment, demands to know why Sophie has not brought him coffee. This 'stretch of kinesic behaviour' (Elam, 1980:71) suggests that the relationship between De Kock and Sophie has changed from one of accomplice to one of master and servant.

Shortly afterwards, however, Uys uses kinesics to mark a reversal of power and the implementation of a mother/child relationship in which Sophie is portrayed as occupying the superior position. Sophie, with her hands placed firmly on her hips, provides a detailed description of the illegal activities supposedly undertaken by both De Kock and his family. De Kock backs away with a shocked look on his face. He shields himself from Sophie's disapproving attitude by placing his arms in front of his body in a manner redolent of a guilty child whose misdeeds are unexpectedly exposed. Uys's De Kock tries unsuccessfully to silence Sophie by simultaneously placing his finger on his lips, shaking his head and pointing towards a picture of his mother in which a microphone is supposedly concealed. Sophie, however, allays De Kock's fears and again asserts her supremacy when she demonstrates how, thanks to her innovative action (covering the microphone with chewing-gum) this intrusive device is no longer operational. In allowing Sophie to outwit Evita, Uys debunks

the stereotypical image of the stupid domestic worker in favour of a wordly-wise one, in a manner similar to that regularly presented in the satirical cartoon series '*Madam & Eve*', created by Francis, Dugmore and Rico (see Francis *et al.*, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d & 1999e).

The detailed analysis of Uys's manipulation of kinesic sign-vehicles during the opening sequence of *Farce About Uys* (1983), delineated above, reveals how Uys creates the impression of the supposedly mercurial interpersonal relationship that exists between De Kock (surrogate employer/master) and Sophie (employee/servant). One of the main reasons for their changing relationship is the different roles that the character Sophie plays, such as De Kock's confidante, his servant and surrogate mother.²⁸ Uys's satire blends both amusement and criticism. This study suggests, therefore, that Uys's presentation of this chiasmatically opposed pair of characters – De Kock (male, white and employer) and Sophie (female, black and employee) – is an integral part of his satirical censure. In depicting their equivocal association, through a series of contrasting body poses and movements, Uys 'materialises' a more accurate picture of another aspect of the socio-political 'world' (Elam, 1980:74) of apartheid, as practised in South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century. Throughout this period a large number of black women worked in the homes of white South Africans under the umbrella label of domestic helper.²⁹ Thus it is very likely that both employee and employer (or the employer's child), in common with their fictional counterparts, Sophie and De Kock, experienced a variety of interpersonal relationships that impinged upon their lives. For example, during the course of their daily duties, domestic helpers, like the character Sophie, are sometimes elevated to the privileged position of family friend and/or 'nanny'³⁰ and, at other times, are relegated to the rank of an unskilled and poorly paid servant or, in extreme cases, an ignorant 'kaffir'.³¹ Through his depiction of the relationship between De Kock and Sophie, Uys possibly seeks to remind his audience of the

²⁸ According to Evita (Uys, 1997a:61), 'the maid [Sophie, as indicated previously] was there ... to help me. She would bath the children, feed them, put them to bed'.

²⁹ Many women of all races hold comparable positions in homes throughout the world and are thus likely to experience similar relationships with their employers.

³⁰ A children's nurse (Little *et al.*, 1973:1383) or child minder.

³¹ 'A racially derogative term' (Oakes, 1988: 400) that, according to Evita (Uys 1997a:46), was/is used to 'degrade and embarrass black people'.

diverse, and often painful, experiences of some members of South Africa's unskilled and lower-paid workforce, as is depicted in Chapter One with regard to Evita's cook Greta.

Thus it appears that Sophie's constantly changing position can be seen as a metaphor for South African society during the closing years of the twentieth century.³² Despite the demise of apartheid and the introduction of social and political changes, many unskilled and/or semi-skilled black women are still employed as child-minders and/or domestic workers in white homes for a minimal wage at the beginning of the new millennium.

As the plot of *Farce About Uys* (1983) unfolds before the audience, Uys continues to utilize body-motions that debunk simultaneously transmitted verbal signals and, in so doing, heightens the humorous impact of his performance text. As noted before, during his opening dialogue, Uys's persona, De Kock, confesses to fellow character, Sophie, that he plans to abscond from *Blanche-Noir*. However, having allowed De Kock to state that he intends leaving immediately, an action he unsuccessfully tries to carry out on more than one occasion, Uys then engages his persona in a series of ridiculous situations that cause him to delay his departure until the end of this revue. This allows Uys to engage in the ludicrous task of playing De Kock supposedly trying to impersonate every other member of the Bezuidenhout family, an activity that evokes considerable laughter from the audience. As cited earlier, somewhat ironically, these cameos are not always as 'successful' as when portrayed directly by Uys. Presumably Uys introduced this particular dramatic mode into *Farce About Uys* (1983) as a means of heightening its farcical rather than its satirical impact. For example, Uys chooses to retain some of De Kock's stereotypically effeminate body-motions when playing De Kock pretending to be Izan. The chiasmic sight of the reputedly 'macho', leather-clad Izan waving his hands up and down in an uncharacteristically feminine manner when cross-examined by Uys (the character), presents a humorous picture, thus ensuring, as usual, that pleasure takes precedence over pain.

³² The rights of women are enshrined in the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, and the number of female Members of Parliament has increased considerably since the demise of apartheid. However, abuse against women, especially black women, still continues in South Africa and the rest of the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

This study of Uys's use of signs now considers how he uses the various aspects of proxemics,³³ namely 'fixed-feature space', 'semi-fixed-feature space' and 'informal space' (Elam, 1980:63) within the context of his theatrical performances. Uys presents his satirical revues in a wide variety of 'fixed-feature spaces' and seems equally happy in each of these. For example, he performed *Live from Boerassic Park* (1997b) on a large 'proscenium arch' stage, *Going Down Gorgeous* (1998b) on an 'open-plan' stage, a televised version of this revue was filmed on a variety of locations; *tannie evita praat kaktus* (1998a) in an intimate theatre-cum-restaurant, *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) on the stages of town halls and community centres and his schools-tour AIDS Education Programme (Uys, 2000c) in school halls and classrooms. He even performed, in the guise of Evita, in the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town in 1999 and again in 2001.

Uys's utilization of 'semi-fixed-feature space' varies according to the type of theatre in which he performs and the nature of his production. In his one-man revues, Uys rarely utilizes 'semi-fixed-feature space' in terms of established theatrical conventions and keeps the set, furniture and lighting effects to a minimum, an approach that facilitates his frequent on-stage 'metamorphoses' from one character to another. In *A Kiss on your Koeksister* (1991) Uys heightens his satirical censure through his use of a simple permanent set as a background for his presentation of a variety of 'real' and fictitious personae. This revue supposedly takes place at a National Party fête and the various scenes are played on a set consisting of a pristine white picket fence, a green floor-cloth and cut-out trees. This pastoral scene appears appropriate for a fête because it creates a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. However, the tranquility of this scene is chiastically contradicted by the coils of barbed wire that Uys places on the top of the picket fence. Barbed wire is symptomatic of imprisonment, military action and restriction and thus serves to remind the audience of the harsh aspects of life and, in particular, of the socio-political situation in South Africa throughout the late 1970s and 1980s in which imprisonment without trial and compulsory military subscription still existed. This set provides an appropriate setting for Uys's satiric critique of various aspects of South African socio-political reality under the Nationalist Government. In

³³ Hall (1966:1) defines proxemics as 'the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture'.

Symbols of Sex and State (2001:i) Uys, dressed as Evita in a glamorous red evening gown, performs his satirical commentary on contemporary South African society against the background of a kitchen table at which is seated ‘an apparently mute black woman called Koekie (played by Warona Seane), whose job is to sit and peel carrots while madam talks. Seane managed this traditional South African task admirably’ (Willoughby, 2001:back page).

This chiasitic conflation of vestimentary and proxemic sign-vehicles serve as a reminder that, despite the supposed racial equality that exists in post-apartheid South Africa, in reality very little has changed for many South Africans who, despite their having gained political freedom are still ‘silenced’ due to poverty and a lack of education and skills. Here it appears that Uys (1994b:3) affirms his claim that it is through satire that ‘the voiceless ones [are] given a whisper’.

The director’s or actor’s use of informal space within a dramatic performance is usually gauged in relation to the signs of what Elam (1980:65) defines as the ‘four major’ positions along the ‘spatial continuum’. Society perceives these positions as the physical embodiment of varying degrees of emotional involvement, with a ‘near-touching position’ representing an intimate relationship between two or more persons. Consequently, during ‘realistic’ stage presentations, directors utilize the various cultural conventions with regard to ‘informal space’ to portray the extent of characters’ social and emotional involvement.

In his television series, *Evita’s Funigalore I and II* (1994c; 1994d), Uys, in the guise of Evita, interviews a number of South African politicians and public figures. An examination of selected photographs from *Funigalore* (1995) reveals how Uys uses different forms of ‘informal space’ to alert his audience to the relationship that exists between Evita and the people she interviews. During semi-formal meetings, Evita maintains the appropriate social distance of from one to two metres between herself and her guests, as for example when she has ‘early morning tea ... on a suburban gravy train to False Bay’ (Uys, 1995:164) with Patricia de Lille of the Pan Africanist Congress Party. Evita operates within the limits of personal space (half to one metre) when she ‘dance[s] the light fantastic’ (Uys, 1995:182) with Jay Naidoo (the then Minister Without Portfolio), or when she and Pik Botha (former

Minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs) sit close together during a ride on the Big Wheel at Gold Reef City (Uys, 1995:209).

Uys also manipulates the conventions governing 'intimate space' between actors in *Farce About Uys* (1983) in order to draw attention to some of the more farcical aspects of apartheid. When Uys (the character) arrives to interrogate the Bezuidenhout family, the earlier relaxation of social and racial restrictions that existed between De Kock and Sophie abruptly ceases. While supposedly waiting to interrogate De Kock's fictitious twin brother, Izan, Uys (the character) hangs his suit jacket over a chair and engages in 'polite' conversation with Sophie. Shortly afterwards Sophie sits on the chair and leans back, thus causing her fully clothed back to brush against Uys's jacket. This degree of 'intimate' contact with a black person appears too much for someone supposedly accustomed to more rigid racial practices, because Uys (the character) jumps up, quickly removes his jacket and shakes it, to indicate comically or perhaps, cynically, the removal of all traces of physical contact with Sophie.

However, when Uys (the character) meets (De Kock playing) Billie-Jeanne, De Kock's supposedly beautiful, white and scantily clad sister, he is more than happy to allow her to come into intimate contact with him. Billie-Jeanne, who the audience know is Uys (the actor) playing De Kock, playing his sister, stands very close to the seated Uys (the character) and seductively places her leg across his body, picks up his hand and uses it to caress 'her' leg. In these two scenes, Uys (the actor) exploits the contemporary cultural conventions governing 'actor-actor informal space' (Elam, 1980:65). When viewed in association with each other, these scenes offer evidence of how Uys (the actor) deploys chiasmic configurations to heighten his satirical thrust. Uys (the character) does not want even his clothes to make physical contact with Sophie, ostensibly because she is black and *de facto* occupies an inferior social position, yet he is presented as being happy to 'dally' with the white Billie-Jeanne because she is a show-girl and an ambassador's daughter. Uys (the character) is satirically portrayed as ingenuously believing that he is participating in a socially acceptable pursuit, namely flirting with a white woman. However, the audience knows that he is actually bestowing his affection on a man – namely Uys (the actor) who is impersonating the homosexual De Kock, who is impersonating Billie-Jeanne – a practice that

Uys (the character) would surely reject as being socially deviant. Simultaneously, and in a seemingly endless chiasmic cycle, Uys (the actor) censures his audience when he draws their attention to the fact that, although racial barriers may no longer exist in the fictitious utopia of 'Bapetikosweti', they are still very much alive in the minds of many South Africans.

In conjunction with the already cited vestimentary, cosmetic and/or scenic codes, Uys uses three other non-verbal sign systems, namely colour, lighting and sound, for the purpose of enhancing the audience's understanding of his theatrical discourse. As Elam (1980:84) states, stage lighting helps to 'define' forms in space and, through the director's and/or technicians' manipulation of such aspects of stage-lighting as 'colour, intensity, distribution and movement', concrete 'stage space' is changed into a fictional stage-world.

Uys's manipulation of colour, lighting, music and/or sound effects within his theatrical performances is now explored. For example, Uys uses colour to heighten his satirical attack on the Nationalist Party in *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991). He utilizes that Party's colours (blue, white and orange) in the already discussed 'clown' costume worn by F W de Klerk and, in so doing, metonymically transfers the buffoon-like qualities of the costume onto this particular political party. Another example is Uys's use of two different tri-coloured drapes in *Farce about Uys* (1983) to symbolise two South African political parties existing at that time. The blue, white and orange drape represents the predominantly white National party and the green, black and yellow drape stands for the mainly black African National Congress.

During one episode of *Evita's Funigalore I* (1994c), Uys adjoins seemingly opposite aspects of white and black culture, through his combination of colours and symbols. Uys (1995:54) dresses Evita in what he calls an 'Amandla-Africana ballgown'. This chiasmically named creation contrasts the colours of the African National Congress with the emblems of Nationalist South Africa. Evita's outfit consists of a golden-yellow skirt, a green top and black gloves (representing the African National Congress colours). Over this Uys places an

‘apron’ upon which springbok and protea are emblazoned, two of South Africa’s national symbols during the time of the Nationalist government. Here again Uys appears to draw attention to the manner in which cultural purity (mentioned above) has been subverted by the multi-cultural society that exists in South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, for many people an apron connotes images of domestic activity or even servitude and Uys is thus possibly using it as a metaphor for the declining power of white minority rule in South Africa.

In the majority of his revues, Uys employs simple lighting and sound effects. During the opening sequence of *Adapt or Dye* (1982) described earlier in this chapter, Uys uses a spotlight to focus the audience’s attention on Evita as she walks through the audience. In this way Uys uses lighting as a meta-theatrical device that serves to join the contrasting aspects of the real world of the audience with the fictitious world of Evita Bezuidenhout. Once Evita is on the stage, Uys uses lighting to illuminate the acting area, and in so doing, enables his audience to interact with the various personae that he creates in front of them, through his manipulation of verbal and non-verbal sign-vehicles. As is his practice in most of his revues, Uys uses lighting in *Adapt or Dye* (1982) to simulate natural light. Therefore, in keeping with his customary practice of presenting his audience with chiasmic configurations, Uys uses ‘natural’ lighting as a background for his impersonations of both real and imaginary personalities. Perhaps Uys’s reason for this juxtaposition is to remind his audience that, while it is in order for them to separate his revues from real life, the dialogues and situations that they see enacted on the stage are a reflection of South Africa’s socio-political reality. Some performances of Uys’s voter-education show, *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a), took place in halls and community centres. Uys sometimes kept the hall lights on throughout these performances, not only as a matter of expediency (some venues did not have lighting equipment) but also as a means of breaking down the imaginary ‘fourth wall’ between himself and his audience. In blurring the boundaries of reality and fiction (discussed more fully in Chapter Six) Uys thus reinforces the purpose of this revue – namely to encourage people to think seriously about the forthcoming election.

Uys also uses the semiotics of music and sound effects as an integral part of his performance texts. He enlists various types of music both to introduce and set the mood for his productions. During the opening scene of *Adapt or Dye* (1982) Evita is portrayed as the guest speaker at a National Party function and thus welcomes both the members of the public (the audience) and the (fictitious) attending dignitaries. In order to reinforce the magnitude of this 'auspicious occasion', Evita invites everyone to show their patriotism by standing and singing *Die Stem*, the national anthem of South Africa during the apartheid era. However, although the music that is played with great solemnity is a national anthem, it is not the South African anthem but *God Save the Queen*. In choosing to replace the South African anthem with its British counterpart, Uys again reveals his partiality for employing chiasmic forms as a satirical tool. Although the playing of the British anthem provides an opportunity for humour, the music also alerts the audience to the dangers of limiting prejudice to either apartheid or the National Party, because *God Save the Queen* will surely remind them of the role played by British imperialism in the colonization of Africa.

Uys (Bishop, 1991:203) believes, however, that his 'job in the theatre has always been to go beyond what the public can take'. This is because Uys is a satirist and constantly attempts to alert the public to what is happening in the world around them. However, Uys also believes it is equally important that, as soon as the audience 'catch[es] up' with the socio-political reality that he is exposing, he 'must move on' to something new. Consequently, for *The Ballot Bus and Town Hall Indabas* (1999a) Uys (Accone, 1999:1) wanted music that reflected current popular music trends in South Africa. This revue began with a theme song featuring such popular South Africa artists as 'Yvonne Chaka Chaka, ... the Broderick sisters and Leonel Bastos'.

Uys also uses sound effects to reinforce other sign-vehicles. At the commencement of *A Kiss on Your Koeksister* (1991), Uys, disguised as a security guard, pulls along a lead attached to a dog's collar that is associated with the type of vicious dog commonly deployed by security firms. The existence of such a dog is evoked when a tape recording of a barking dog is relayed through loudspeakers placed at the back of the auditorium. This particular sound effect operates on two levels. It provides humorous relief by reinforcing the inadequacy of a

security guard who is unable to ‘secure’ his own dog. It also serves to reinforce Uys’s depiction of a security guard, who admits to being an ex-policeman and believes it is acceptable to allow his ferocious dog to attack suspects.

A semiotic analysis of a CD recording of Uys’s *Truth Omissions* (1997e) reveals how Uys manipulates a wide range of paralinguistic sign-vehicles³⁴ during the presentation of his personae’s dialogue and, in so doing, heightens both the pleasure and the pain of his satirical messages. Uys begins his performance with a combination of music and coughing when he plays the role of an announcer and ‘clears’ his throat before commencing his introduction of Evita. Through this blending of pleasant and harsh sounds Uys focuses the audience’s attention on both the speaker and his message and thus enhances their validity. However, it is also possible that, in line with his usual practice of utilizing chiasmic tropes, Uys deploys these paralinguistic sign-vehicles in order to produce semantically opposite readings to those suggested by the verbal sign-vehicles. Clearing the throat also creates an impression of self-importance, thus undermining the message. This perception is affirmed when Uys unceremoniously declares that Evita Bezuidenhout does not exist. Uys thus provides his own doubly nuanced introduction to his first item *We can’t Find a Past*, a title that encapsulates the essence of this revue, namely the convenience of selective historical memory, and reinforces Uys’s play on words in the title *Truth Omissions* by substituting ‘omissions’ for ‘commission’. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a vehicle for exposing the true facts of apartheid in order to ensure reconciliation rather than retribution (referred to again in Chapter Six). Uys’s title once more appears to suggest that some South Africans, in common with Uys’s fictitious Mrs Bezuidenhout, have conveniently forgotten their involvement in apartheid, hence the reason for his/her claim that ‘the past is unpredictable’ (Uys, 1994a:380).

At the commencement of *Truth Omissions* (1997e) Uys, in the role of ‘actor-as-performer’ and with his ‘tongue firmly in his cheek’, introduces himself to the audience as a ‘middle-

³⁴ As Elam (1980: 58,79) notes, actors enrich their characters’ dialogue and make the performance more comprehensible and enjoyable for the audience through a subtle manipulation of the following paralinguistics sign-vehicles: ‘articulation, rhythm, pause, ... projection, [accent], dialect and/or idiolect ... stress, pitch, volume, tempo ... tone ... laughing [and] shouting’.

aged, fat, bald, Afrikaans, Jewish, drag queen from Cape Town'. Still in this role, Uys chooses an accent that is classified by linguists as 'conservative South African English'³⁵ (Lanham & Prinsloo, 1978:146) and speaks directly to the audience on various socio-political issues. However, in contrast to this, when Uys changes to the role of 'actor-as-character' in the *P W Botha 1986* sketch (Uys, 1997e:track 6) and adopts his P W Botha persona, he switches to 'Afrikaans South African English' (Lanham & Prinsloo, 1978:157). By exaggerating certain aspects of both idiolect³⁶ and dialect, Uys produces a style of English that contains a range of phonological discrepancies and mispronunciations.³⁷ In juxtaposing two such widely contrasting styles of English accent, Uys is surely offering his audience an opportunity not only for amusement but also for comparison and, hopefully, reflection.

A further example of paralinguistic versatility is Uys's (1997e) presentation of his 'coloured policeman' persona in his sketch *On the Cape Flats 1987*. Here, he employs 'Coloured South African English', a derivative that combines the 'most extreme form of Afrikaans South African English [and] extreme South African English' (Lanham & Prinsloo, 1978:25).³⁸ Uys selects and enlarges certain paralinguistic features that are considered to be 'typical' of the English spoken by some coloured South Africans, particularly those living in the Western Cape, during his portrayal of a coloured policeman from Mitchell's Plain. At a cursory glance, it appears that the purpose of Uys's burlesque of Coloured South African English could be to entertain the audience at the expense of a particular 'type of person [or] class' (Abrams, 1971:153). However, as already noted, competent performers, such as Uys, are capable of manipulating paralinguistic features in order to produce 'subtle shades of attitudinal colouring' (Elam, 1980:83). Thus, in his creation of the coloured policeman, Uys offers two versions of a similar sign-vehicle, and in so doing engages in chiasmus of characterisation involving a slippage between a stereotypical version and a sensitive

³⁵ Lanham and Prinsloo (1978:146) compare conservative South African English to Received Standard English which 'is still the norm [presumably at the time of writing, 1978] for the professional stage and serious radio announcers. Uys (Bishop, 1991:195) 'attended the University of Cape Town during the mid 1960s and obtained a BA degree, majoring in drama'.

³⁶ A speaker's unique speech characteristics.

³⁷ Such as the 'obstruent' or fricative 'r' (Lanham & Prinsloo, 1978:157).

³⁸ Lanham and Prinsloo (1978:156) state that Extreme South African English has its origins in the English spoken by the 'lower-middle and working class' 1820 settlers who came to South Africa from 'London and the Home Counties'.

character portrayal. In addition to his manipulation of ‘dialectal [and] idiolectal codes’ (Elam, 1980:58) and, in order to create this ‘second’ character, Uys employs a gentle tone of voice that helps to reveal both the persona’s inner nature and his own empathy for this persona. Hence, in *On the Cape Flats 1987*, Uys (1997e) offers the audience a persona who simultaneously entertains with anecdotes told in his own irrepressible style and elicits compassionate laughter when he sensitively recounts the story of his grandmother supposedly ‘crying for her past life’.³⁹ He arouses sympathy for the grandmother and, by implication, for her community who, as a result of the Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950 ‘were [forcibly] removed ... from their homes’ (Cameron & Spies, 1986:278). Uys adds to the poignancy of this sketch when, in the role of the coloured policeman, he laughs both before and after the following comments that reflect the socio-political reality at the time of Uys’s performance. Uys thus forces his audience to engage in ‘a retroactive construction of meaning’ (Cobley & Jansz, 1997:94) that, in turn, adds pathos to the text’s historical reality:

In spite of all the rioting here in the coloured township, in spite of all the shooting and the burning and the killing, in spite of all that, old P W Botha still expects us Cape Coloureds to be grateful for all the National Party and apartheid did for us!

The task of selecting and combining verbal and non-verbal sign-vehicles into a composite performance text, involves ‘a semiotically-loaded choice’ on the part of author, director and performers. This ‘choice’ affects the audience’s ‘reading’ of theatrical events (Elam, 1980:62). However, as a result of the theatrical sign-vehicle’s potential for generating numerous meanings, each member of the audience ultimately formulates his or her own holistic meaning from the overall effect of a theatrical production. Hence, as Elam (1980:97) avows ‘theatrical communication begins and ends ... with the spectator’. Therefore, the various semiotic analyses of a selection of Uys’s dramatic works undertaken in this chapter offer just one interpretation amongst the many possible readings. As Uys (1994b:7) himself intimates, there is no definitive interpretation because ‘no one’s sense of humour is the same. Like fingerprints, a laugh is as individual as its enjoyer’. Thus it can also be asserted that the hermeneutics of stage-craft extends to that of critical analyses and more particularly so in a study of the subtle ambiguities of Pieter-Dirk Uys’s characteristic chiasmic configurations.

³⁹ There are similarities between the scene and Uys’s *Paradise is Closing Down* (1978).

As Elam (1980:56) notes, the semiotic analysis of performance texts is still in a ‘preliminary’ phase because, during the second half of the twentieth century, theatre and drama have been subjected to far less semiotic research than poetry and the different narrative genres. Consequently, the application of Elam’s (1980:2) proffered guidelines (as was done above) to a selection of Uys’s dramatic works (live on-stage performances, filmed and audio versions of stage performances and programmes produced for television) is offered in the light of what Elam identifies as the need for a ‘much broader research into so vital a cultural territory’ as the role of signs in the theatre.