

Lady Anne's Blog:

Some Initial Thoughts on the Evolution of Theatrical Commentary in South Africa¹

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“[the Theatre] ... was opened for the first time a few days ago – a very pretty one indeed. We felt ourselves obliged to go and to pay a sum for our box, else we should have been call'd stingy and ill-humoured. The scenes were well done, some of them by young Cockburn.... It opened with an address to Apollo, spoken by Dr Somers, and wrote by Mrs Somers. It was too fine for anyone to understand it, and seem'd rather an index to pretty learning than to any conversation which Apollo could have liked to listen to – however the scene was good and all was new. The piece was a dull one, the first part of Henry the 4th. The Doctor thought he shone in Falstaff, we did not agree with him.” (Lady Anne Barnard, Cape Town, 1801)

In her diary entry, considered by many to be the first formal and extant “review” in South African theatre, the influential socialite and hostess of Cape Town society described her (reluctant) attendance of the opening performance in the newly built African Theatre at the start of the nineteenth century. Today she might have used an internet blog and written something much less circumspect.

So much of what one talks about in the field of the humanities, and specifically so in arts criticism, is highly dependent on its use in a particular context and epoch. For example, the very notions of drama and theatre – even ideas about performance (and indeed criticism and scholarship), are at best slippery in post-Apartheid South Africa and the surrounding regions.

Over the course of the first 300 years after the arrival of the first Europeans on these shores in the seventeenth century, the political history of the region basically brought over, imposed and entrenched a particular way of looking at and thinking about the new continent. An effect was to overshadow local traditions and cultural practices and devalue them. It was only during the twentieth century, and more particularly its second half, that cultural expressions and practices of the indigenous peoples, and the values underlying them, were slowly recognised. Then writings about them became more than marginal commentaries on what appeared to be radical, oppositional, esoteric, or possibly even eccentric. Today of course indigenous forms have become a much more serious field area of study and contemplation and, for most of us today, experimentation and exploration with the forgotten forms and traditions have become major driving forces in the arts. Yet, the process of reinterpreting the original histories has only begun and obviously still has far to go, as formerly hidden aspects of the history are unearthed, re-evaluated and integrated into the new thinking. This change has naturally been heavily influenced by the arrival of a spate of new paradigms for thinking about African and South African history in itself, especially during the transitional period (1987-1994).²

A necessary, wider and more flexible concept of theatre would include the products of and oral/kinetic, or “performance” culture, as David Coplan (1985) so aptly termed it. Today we tend to accept that theatre history, and particularly in the non-Western contexts, needs to be a study of the history of *performance*, rather than a literary study of (printed) texts – and this is particularly true of contemporary theatre in Southern Africa. However, colonial thinking had long favoured a focus on the text and thus tended to exclude a wide, comprehensive world of theatre, performance and what Wilmar Sauter (2007) has termed “theatrical playing”, in the region.

Like so much of the early history of mankind, the history of this period in Southern Africa is still extremely tentative, and based on much theorizing and speculation. This also applies to ideas about the social life of indigenous communities and the function of art within them, which no doubt were as varied as the social, economic and political conditions. There are certain

indications however of a widely spread material culture in the region, notably represented by San rock-art, and the pottery, beadwork and other artifacts of the Nguni, Sotho and other peoples. The salient point is that creative tendencies seem to have been integrated into communal life, and not separate entities with an own discrete existence outside of their communal function. Also, following the argument of Mudimbe (1988), one has to bear in mind that none of this history is *static*; it is as changing, as evolutionary, as open to the impact of social, cultural, economic and political pressures as any period to follow, as any period about which we have more information. So, though one may speak of general tendencies, there must have been vast and constantly shifting differences between forms, themes, occasions and the like.

While there are many who may believe that indigenous practices changed as a result of white arrival, and that the reverse traffic is more recent – post 1994 in the eyes of some - I have come to believe this is a slightly parochial point of view – blinkered precisely by the kind of thinking discussed here. In the 1960s Guy Butler had already remarked that “The English are being Afrikanerized, the Afrikaners Anglicized, Africans Westernized and the whole lot Africanized.”.³

Actually the evolution of the Afrikaans language and Cape cuisine alone are testimony of a far more pervasive and interactive hybridization taking place, from the very first contacts between Africans and Europeans. And I certainly believe it happened in performance as well. It was simply not noticed, that is all.

But the more important factor, from a Western point of view, is that we are dealing with a set of oral cultures, where no orthography or any tradition of written history existed. We know less about the performance art in this period than about any other form, quite simply because of the ephemeral nature of the theatre as form and because no demonstrable examples have survived unmediated. Nor are there documented (written) critical responses available. Nevertheless, the few fragment we do have, plus the later records provided by incidental travelers and scribes from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, do allow certain deductions concerning the kind of performance activities which existed in these societies - if not their origins, their functions and/or their meaning within specific historic societies.

The oldest known performances in the region are the shamanistic dances among the San, recorded in certain San rock art paintings – some of them up to 25 000 years old, some dating back to the nineteenth century. Remnants of these dances still occur today in the Kalahari among the descendants of the San. In a similar vein the arrival of that later crystallized out as the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and other peoples brought a rich heritage of social, religious and military performance and ritual to the region. These performance events, including wedding ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, harvest festivals and the like, informed the daily lives of these peoples and seem to have been communal actions of a purposeful nature and participative in format, very formally structured and containing a strong mimetic content. Remarkable to us today is the sheer scale on which some of these events took place, involving large groups of dancers and thousands of spectators, and stretching over a period of days.⁴

While there is strong evidence that the performances themselves, being of a purposeful nature and participative in format, often offering social, cultural, ethical and political comment, there is little evidence that there was ever a structured system of critical commentary on performances. The participative work of course was not “seen” by outsiders, hence not “criticised” and thus not recorded in any way. Also, while one has little doubt that performers and performers needed and received comment, even where there was an audience present, the feedback would have been informal, oral or gestural, one-on-one perhaps – and certainly not recorded for posterity.

From the foregoing it is clear that it really only becomes possible to discuss critical commentary in the region when we reach the time of European settlement and the known history of written criticism, about which there have been substantially more records.

While the odd descriptions appeared earlier, the formal arrival of the critical comment came in the 1800s, when first newspapers began to appear in Grahamstown and Cape Town, and the first formal theatre was being built. Early newspapers include Fairbairn and Pringle’s *South African Journal* (1824), *New Organ* (1826) and *South African Commercial Advertiser*, and they certainly contained commentary on the arts. However, as mentioned above, the popular version is that the first critic was Anne Barnard, wife of the colonial secretary at the Cape of Good Hope, who,

interestingly enough, commented in her diaries on the performances of the soldier-amateurs of the Garrison, but also on the Dutch amateurs of the town. And it was thus natural that she would be one of the first to comment on theatre in Cape Town's new theatre.

However, the first well-known critic in the formal sense was a British immigrant, William Layton Sammons, (1801-1882) an author, journalist, columnist and editor best known by his *nom-de-plume* **Sam Sly**. His weekly review - *Sam Sly's African Journal* – was founded to promote culture and entertainment in general in the Cape. Gradually, as the various mining towns (Kimberley and Johannesburg in particular) and ports (Port Elizabeth and Durban) developed, this form of journalism and accompanying critical practice spread to all the major metropolitan centres. Some examples of early reviews tended to be little more than notices and announcements (i.e. advertising and reports), or commentary on social events (gossip or “news”, including comment on audiences), but by the 1860s more substantive reviews (comments about technical and theatrical matters, such as texts, performers and productions themselves) began to appear and gradually became more frequent, more incisive and more influential. These reviews also often contained some kind of evaluation of the experience. This was not yet what we would consider formal criticism today (i.e. in depth discussion of the merits of play, performance and so on, with reference to a wider cultural, political and social sphere), but the theatre reviewer had arrived and people like Peter Plymmer, Frederick York St Leger and later Vere Sent were feared for their attacks on poor acting and production values and their opinions were respected.

As can be gathered, the basic format and philosophy behind the writing was borrowed directly from British practice and the colonial versions thereof and was to last well into the first half of the 20th century.

The evolution from report to review accompanied the enormous increase in theatrical activity as well, as more and more companies and artistes – traveling through the various British colonies - visited the country, many settling down here. Among them strong personalities from England and Australia, such as Sefton Parry (1857 – 1862), Disney Roebuck (1873 – 1885), the Wheeler brothers (Ben and Frank, 1886 – 1910), Luscombe Searelle (1887 – 1896), the Holloway Company (1886 -1899), and particularly Leonard Rayne (1905 – 1925).

By 1920s these twin forces meant that there were increasing numbers of critics of substance, for by now a fully fledged professional theatre system had evolved in English dominated by actor/directors as Rayne and actor/writer Stephen Black, while the newspaper business also flourished. The influences in this case were interesting – they were largely based on the British model brought to the country through the British education system, as we have seen, as well as the many British journalists who over the years settled in South Africa, to work with SA papers - including Thomas William Mackenzie (*The Friend* in Bloemfontein), Hedley A Chilvers, Joseph Langley Levy (*Sunday Times*, Johannesburg, 1910-1940).

In the 19th century however, another tradition had also been surfacing among the descendants of the 17th and 18th century Dutch settlers. Regular debating and cultural clubs (“Rederykerskamers”), the basis of a performance tradition, were slowly evolving in the Dutch/Afrikaans tradition. In contrast to the primarily entertainment objectives of the English language theatre and media, growing Afrikaans cultural nationalist was establishing a literary and cultural context for the new, emerging language of Afrikaans. This meant more rigorous demands of cultural purpose being placed on arts and literature. Thus, part of the conscious drive to promote the cause of Afrikaans and Afrikaner nationalism – utilising the educational system and the emergence of a powerful press and publishing industry - was also a desire to establish an own indigenous cultural, literary and theatrical tradition, one devoted to the nationalist cause.

As far as theatre is concerned, the last aim initially came into being via the wide-spread amateur movement, a direct descendent of the earlier Dutch organizations, with more and more farces and melodramas being written for performance by schools and societies. But there was also a more serious side to the movement, which slowly evolved in educational centres such as Stellenbosch, Bloemfontein and Pretoria, spearheaded – not always effectively – by the literary heavyweights of the language struggle, such as novelist D.F. Malherbe and poet Eugene Marais.

However a even more significant thrust towards a fully fledged Afrikaans theatre came with the arrival in South Africa of a number of Dutch and Flemish performers, in particular a superb Dutch actor-manager named Paul de Groot, who brought professionalism and in-service training

in Afrikaans to a host of versatile and creative performers. In 1925, the year Afrikaans was formally declared an official language of the country, De Groot himself went on to found the first professional Afrikaans theatre company, with two energetic amateurs, Hendrik and Mathilde Hanekom, following suit and taking to the road with a number of farces they wrote themselves. This coincided with the emergence of a second generation of playwrights, much more serious individuals who sought to emulate the European theatre and actually set the tone and style of Afrikaans theatre for the next three decades or more.

In this context we meet up with the first Afrikaans critics of note and become particularly aware of two dominant strains in theatre reviewing and criticism that would dominate a large part of the mid-century: the pragmatic, journalistic writing in English newspapers on the one hand, and the international, often more erudite writing by better educated cultural figures in Afrikaans newspapers. Unlike their English-speaking counterparts, who did not come from an intellectual tradition (few had tertiary education till the 1970s), a number of the Dutch (and later Afrikaans) critics were university trained individuals who had gone to Holland and Germany for their post-graduate work, usually in philology, philosophy or literature. As a result they tended to be influenced by a more Germanic and Dutch tradition, as well as an European view of theatre and the arts, and adopted a far more intellectual approach to their craft. More importantly, in contrast to the primarily entertainment focus of the English-language theatre, the second group of performers were part of the growing Afrikaans cultural nationalism. This became particularly noticeable in the reviews of the first half of the twentieth century, when the Afrikaans community was trying to establish a formal literature and artistic identity, as noted above.

A good case in point was one of the most prominent of later critics and arts editors, W.E.G. Louw, who claimed to have seen over 1 000 European performances during his frequent visits to the continent, and he would draw on those experiences when writing about South African plays. Similarly erudite critics of the time included Frederik Rempel, F.E.J Malherbe, G. Cronje, Ignatius Mocke, H.A. Mulder, E.C. Pienaar and A.M. van Schoor. They became the harbingers of the new language, its literature, and its associated performances – thus helping to shape and promote Afrikaans as a fully fledged cultural tool.

And this tradition would remain for a very long time, for once the drama departments were established in the 1960s, and the formal training in what came to be known as *theatre studies* began, a number of similarly trained people would become the leading figures, entrenching this tradition till late in the 1970s. It is from these academic sources that, increasingly, the more prominent English-speaking critics would also come. Thus it appears that the Afrikaans approach even to the evolving field of *theatre studies* included a strong interest in the role of text focused critic, researcher and historian at the start – perhaps because the departments were largely founded and/or partially led by academics or journalists rather than practitioners, and these were people who came from the Dutch/Belgian/German world of formal drama study. The most influential of these were Geoff Cronje, F.C. L Bosman at University of Pretoria (with leading actress and director Anna Neethling-Pohl as the practical voice), playwright Gerhard Beukes and critic Louw Odendaal at University of the Orange Free State (Bloemfontein) and Fred Le Roux following the Belgian actor-director Fred Engelen as head at University of Stellenbosch.

However the 1930's also saw the first stirrings of another cultural awakening, a formal theatre interest among the various urban blacks – under the influence of missionary schools and the university of Fort Hare – and the significant appearance of writer, practitioner and teacher H.I. E Dhlomo. Others writing at the time include W. Mbali and Walter Nhlapo (who both worked for *Bantu World* 1930s-1940s). However, the Eurocentric training supplied by the missionary schools and the University College at Fort Hare or the University of South Africa remained largely text bound, as indeed it did at most other (“white”) institutions till the mid 1970s. And more alarmingly, for much of the century “criticism” remained tied to the study of the nine indigenous African (Bantu) languages, and therefore was immensely literary in approach (analysis of plot, characters and so on, and moral issues in the plays) – again premised on the British or European model. Unfortunately the legacy of this approach is still immensely powerful when one looks at theses and critical writings on African theatre texts – not only in South Africa, but across the continent of Africa.

By 1950s this mix of influences was well entrenched, but was still largely European in style, although now increasingly affected by the exciting “new journalism” from the USA and the winds of political and cultural change sweeping through Africa. It is from a mix of these factors

that some of the more powerful critics, writing for the daily and weekly newspapers, now emerged. These writers not only had substantial space and influence, but increasingly had academic training and something to write about in the flourishing professional and state-funded theatre of the country. They wrote in either English or Afrikaans, (or in some cases, both languages) and at times with great authority and impact. Names such as Oliver Walker, Phyllis Konya, W.E.G. Louw, Merwe Scholtz, Lewis Sowden, Percy Baneshik and Terry Herbst soon became familiar and considered formidable in arts circles. By the sixties a number of younger, even more politicised, critics would join them – including André P. Brink, Wilhelm Grütter, Philippa Breytenbach, Owen Williams, Johan van Rooyen, Michael Callenborne, Fiona Chisolm, Raeford Daniel, Michael Venables, William Pretorius, Derek Wilson, Cas van Rensburg and Rykie van Reenen.

By and large these were professional critics, who not only responded to the arts, but in many ways shaped and influenced their direction. However, again there is possibly a rather important distinction to be made: In the golden years of the printed media critics in England, the USA and Europe tended to be seen as “professional” in that writing criticism was their full-time occupation: few of them were actually fulltime newspaper employees. In South Africa we only had a few such examples, some Afrikaans artists/critics (such as WEG Louw and André P. Brink) perhaps falling into this category of professionals. Most of the other critics however, were fulltime professional *journalists*, entertainment reporters and interviewers, covering the generality of the arts and entertainment, as well as writing reviews. They multi-tasked, with reviewing being only one of their tasks. Their “professionalism” thus lay not so much in the nature of their employment, but in the rigour they brought to their reviewing practice.

It was in this time that a new brand of black journalism began to make its appearance. Often termed the *Drum*-magazine generation (after the most famous of the new magazines to appear), these young writers and activists found a vibrant and dangerous world to report on in the so-called “freehold” areas of Sophiatown and District Six, places where all races could still mix and black citizens could own urban property, and in the multitude of performances, poetry readings and theatrical events occurring there. Writers such as Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Nathaniel (Nat) Nasaka, William (Bloke) Modisane, Arthur Maimane, Bob Leshoai, Elliot Makhaya,

Joseph Latakomo, Aggrey Klaaste, T. Leshoai, Victor Metsoamere, Sipho Sepamla began with journals like *Drum* and later *S'ketsh*, and then moved on. Some into exile, some on to the daily and weekly papers, like the *Ilanga Lase Natal*, *Post*, *Sunday Post*, *World*, *Weekend World* and *The Sowetan* - even the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Weekly Mail* - writing about township culture and the cultural struggle. Some went on to become significant literary and academic figures, others faded away or moved elsewhere. But their influence on the shape of the arts in the long run was enormous. What was intriguing has been their attempts to create an own style, strongly based on American new journalistic principles, but also a little more aware of the African performance traditions that gradually invaded and have come to dominate theatre performances, particularly musical and dance works.

With them, far more than with the formal (white) critics of the commercial newspapers and media, art truly became a weapon in the ongoing struggle for freedom and recognition. At the same time many artists were beginning to reject the aesthetic considerations of Western theatre, in favour of a much more crude and visceral form of confrontational theatre of immediate response.

Somehow, out of this mix of cultural traditions would come what some may call the “pre-post-colonial” theatre critic – someone initially schooled by the writers of the heyday of big professional theatre companies (1960-1980), but also immersed in the day-to-day rough-and-tumble of the Apartheid/anti-Apartheid real-politik. Such critics were well equipped and able to respond to the major wave of experimentation and energy that washed over the country in the 1970s and early 1980s. The fact is that the appearance of the so-called “alternative” (political) theatre spaces and processes (the Space Theatre, the Market Theatre), and the concomitant emergence of a substantive body of work by black playwrights, directors and performers, - as well as the many workshopped plays making their way into the theatres - left many of the older critics dumbfounded and floundering. With the immense range of styles, traditions and forms on offer – drawing on many traditions, including 1960s experimental workshop processes and a variety of African performance forms - they at times found that their “traditional” training was totally inappropriate for dealing with works such as *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland*, *The Island*, *Woza Albert*, *The Hungry Earth*, *Sophiatown*, etc. Indeed there was a built-in antipathy

to the new work among many established critics. For example, Robert Greig recalls it being referred to as “junior theatre” by a prominent editor (an adjective that was apparently even applied to the first work done by Athol Fugard) and few dared to travel into Soweto and other areas to review the work.⁵

What made the situation worse in many ways for the traditionally trained critic was the surprising impact the cultural boycott (instituted in 1966) would have on the way the arts would develop in the country. For one of the most positive effects of the boycott was that it (inadvertently) enforced a focus on local writing and the production of local plays - thus ironically liberating many of the new (English) writers and performers from the competition with renowned international writers and the pressure to conform to dramatic models evolved in Europe and America. This in turn saw an increasing number of university-trained actors, directors and theatre writers emerging from the “liberal” anti-Apartheid atmosphere of the 1970s, with a growing sense of that the state arts councils were tainted. This then led to the establishment of the many alternative theatres where - because of Fugard, Simon and Mshengu’s work in the 70s - the notion of the workshop theatre and experimental plays became central to, even emblematic of, so-called “struggle theatre”. And, as we now know, from these theatres would gradually emerge a number of totally new, specifically South African theatrical forms and conventions, forms that – as I have mentioned – would challenge and stretch the new critics in a multitude of ways over the next few decades.

By the 1980s the competent critic found that he/she was again being challenged by a new phenomenon: the arts festival. The arrival of the Grahamstown Festival (National Arts Festival) in 1976, Kampustoneel (Campus Theatre) in 1981 and a rash of later festivals from 1990 onwards (notably a string of Afrikaans language festivals in Oudtshoorn, Stellenbosch, Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom and Cape Town), tested the critic’s ability to adapt to the new even more. There was just so much, of such varying and alarmingly diverse quality and style on offer, it left one dizzy. It is this festival circuit which became the real training ground (and challenge) to the most outstanding critics of the alarmingly unfocussed yet exciting pre- and post-apartheid periods (about 1984-1998). Among them are such outstanding individuals as Adrienne Sichel, John Mitshikiza, Kaiser Ngwenya, Barry Ronge, Barry Hough, Paul Boekkooi, Robert Greig,

and Gabriel Bothma, writers able to “read” the radical new local work *in performance* and respond to it as South Africans. And by the 1990s a new generation of professional critics has emerged. It is schooled in a new and evolving South African theatrical system represented in some 40 festivals that constitute a theatre season. These exhibit a proliferation of performance styles reflecting new spaces, techniques and issues. The newer critics thus have a much greater awareness of and freedom to write about the multi-cultural and lingual context represented by a changed

These then are some of the origins and key influences in critical debate now. However, it may be important to end by making a few comments about the technical aspects of the system, for these too has played a dominant role in shaping the kind of critic we have today.

For much of the twentieth century South African criticism was primarily a media and economy driven system, governed by the growing influence of newspapers and radio (and to a smaller extent later, TV), with a limitation on space and time. Over the years there have been many attempts to try to have an alternative, more substantive, system of review, for example by founding arts journals or magazines (e.g. *Helikon*, *Scenaria*, *Theatre SA*, *S’ketsh*, *Teaterforum*, *Critical Arts*, *South African Theatre Journal*.) Few of them have actually been able to sustain any kind of longer term review response to the industry or to place the substantial reviews they hoped. This is because: (a) they were not financially viable (with a remarkable exception in Julius Eichbaum’s *Scenaria*, funded out of his own pocket), (b) South African runs of plays are too short (average a week or two) to have the luxury of time that someone writing in London, New York, or Paris might have and (c) most critics are really general journalists or part-timers used as reviewers. Nevertheless some of these reviews did offer us alternative reviews of less formal work in the townships and banned venues, notably in journals such as *Drum Magazine* and *S’ketsh*.

Today (post 2000) this situation has become far worse, since there is now no real focus or system to theatre and performance anymore – it is largely driven by a relentless circuit of festivals (many of them with anything but cultural intentions) and large-scale (imported and local) popular musicals and dance shows (*Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats*, *The Lion King*, *Zulu*, *African*

Footprint, etc.) Some of the best critical writing in journals now tends to describe and analyse trends (e.g. about nature of the festivals themselves as cultural events), rather than review individual presentations, since this kind of summary review would have a better chance of publication (and does not necessarily require in depth knowledge of theatre even). Thus it appears the old English tradition of generalists, rather than critics, may be reasserting itself.

There is perhaps some cause for concern amid this flood of work on offer, when one considers the *kind* of people who are now at times called upon to help out as additional reviewers, particularly for festival productions. The evolution of an almost overwhelming *festival* culture, and its need for instant “notices” – has thus lead to the return of the amateur critic, the “public opinion poll” and the student reviewer as solutions to the desperate need to respond to the enormous growth in number of performances (see festival newspapers such as *CUE*, and *Krit*, as well as the many free newspapers, town and suburban newspapers, etc, which all have to respond to local work.).

An additional concern lately has been the advent of the digital media as a major force. For instance, the internet has made self-expression in public media generally available. Print media, the previous vehicles of informed opinion, have to compete more for advertising revenue and reflect advertisers’ target market – the young and affluent or potentially affluent. The ultimate effects of both has been to establish cyber platforms for self-expression and to erode newspapers as sites for informed judgement. Theatre has tended to be recast as entertainment; the critical role replaced by entertaining readers. The theatre has been upstaged. Here and abroad certain genres of arts no longer have space reserved for them in newspapers. Space formerly reserved for other genres – fine arts or dance - has diminished.

By eliminating the critic who, being a specialist, was costly to employ, newspapers have saved money and replaced critics with entertainment guides. This approach has the advantages reducing newspapers’ overheads, rendering employees more easily replaceable and assuring commercial advertisers that they have the advertisers’ interests at heart. While this new development is certainly not all bad – the internet has much to offer as a source of information and an “information highway”, and I think we will debating this for a while to come – but I fear

that, perhaps, among the casualties of the sudden rush to embrace the digital revolution may well have been those qualities associated with criticism at its best: independence and informed dissent.⁶

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² Vide for example the writings of V.Y. Mudimbe (The invention of Africa :gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge, 1988; The idea of Africa, 1994) and others.

³ Guy Butler said this at a conference 1960 – and quoted himself in his essay “On Being Present where you Are: Some Observations on South African poetry 1930-1960” (*Poetry South Africa: Selected Papers from Poetry '74*, AD Donker, 1975)

⁴ Vast as this history is, the fact is we know precious little about it compared to what we know of say Afrikaans theatre of the 1920s-1940s or the British touring companies of the 1860s-1890s. And one reason is the existence of a history of critical writing. The other is our attitudes about the Other or foreign cultural uses and products. See for example the work of Peter Larlham (1985) and David Coplan (1985) in this regard.

⁵ E-mail correspondence with Temple Hauptfleisch, Stellenbosch 16 February 2010.

⁶ For this closing discussion of the impact of the digital media I am once more greatly indebted to comments made by Robert Greig (16 February, 2010), as well as some of the initial research undertaken by Hugo Theart for his masters’ thesis at the University of Stellenbosch.