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THEATRE AND SOCIETY IN SOUTH AFRICA : SOME REFLECTIONS IN A FRACTURED MIRROR

Hauptfleisch, Temple (1997-01)

BOOK

The debate about the precise relationship between theatre and society is an old and honourable one - whether in terms of the Shakespearean metaphor Oorflēs utilizes (along with a vast range of other writers), or in terms of Aristotle's Mimesis, Or Johnson's Nature, Coleridge's Truth, and the many other metaphors used to indicate the representative nature of the arts. The way one perceives this clearly has a great deal to do with who one is and how one has been socialized oneself. It is also clear from even the most superficial reading of the many theorists over the ages, that no-one sees it as a simple, predictable or even dependable relationship, or even a matter of precise unmeditated imitation of an external 'reality'.¹ It is too dependent on human beings and their complex and perverse natures to be so. It is also perceived as an 'art' created by an individual 'artist' - and the terms art and artist are themselves concepts of some flexibility. But all agree, somewhere along the line, that there is a relationship of some kind between a performance and the socio-cultural context in which it occurs.

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Fractured Times shows this revolutionary traditionalist at his best. It is an account of the collapse of the high bourgeois culture of the 19th century, and an examination of the ruins it left behind in the 20th century. He loved them both, but understood why they could not last. All the certainties of the 19th century turned out to be lies. Instead of progress there were total wars and genocides that mocked liberal optimism. Instead of a rational science, there was quantum physics, which no one, not least quantum physicists, could understand. The scientist JBS Haldane, a comrade of Hobsbawm o African drama and theatre started to emerge in Africa continent when British came to make their affairs of life imposed on Africans. They came with ideas; religion, education, business transaction, making Africa a raw material place where their solid land was built up by it. Some do not recognise a particular person in society because of race or colour but playwright argues that no matter the race or colour, one has to be respected. In this sense, the society (in South Africa) does not claim better life and welcomed development fail to exist among black creatures. To show the level of deprivation, the chorus is so much that even the mourners in the funeral parlour joined in this celebration of life.