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| **Clouts, Sydney (1926-1982)** |
| **Clouts, David** |
| Sydney Clouts was perhaps the most modernist South African poet of his generation. Though his published oeuvre remained small, including a single published volume, *One Life* (1966), he was highly regarded in poetic circles; he won both the Ingrid Jonker and Olive Schreiner prizes for poetry in 1968. He lived largely in Cape Town, whose natural environs fundamentally inspired him; a permanent move to England in 1961 radically diminished his capacity to produce and complete new poems. Though his more accessible poems, such as ‘Dawn Hippo’ and ‘Hotknife’ – adopting a Cape Coloured patois – are regularly anthologised, his work became increasingly lapidary, almost aphoristic, and elusive of meaning. |
| Sydney Clouts was perhaps the most modernist South African poet of his generation. Though his published oeuvre remained small, including a single published volume, *One Life* (1966), he was highly regarded in poetic circles; he won both the Ingrid Jonker and Olive Schreiner prizes for poetry in 1968. He lived largely in Cape Town, whose natural environs fundamentally inspired him; a permanent move to England in 1961 radically diminished his capacity to produce and complete new poems. Though his more accessible poems, such as ‘Dawn Hippo’ and ‘Hotknife’ – adopting a Cape Coloured patois – are regularly anthologised, his work became increasingly lapidary, almost aphoristic, and elusive of meaning. Because most often he wrote sensually of the particulate natural world – birds, sea, rocks, pools, trees being common emblematic elements – he was accused of being both apolitical and too Romantic. He was more deeply informed, however, by modernists such as Wallace Stevens and Eugenio Montale; he said he ‘wanted to write like Mondrian’. His finest poems, such as ‘Residuum’ and ‘Dew on a Shrub’, consist of spacious single-line statements of high metaphoric density, constructions analogous to Cubism. Throughout he strove to weld this essentially European sensibility to southern African landscapes and realities. List of Works *One Life* (1966)  *Collected Poems*, edited by Cyril and Marjorie Clouts (1982). Cape Town: David Philip. |
| Further reading:  (Sydney Clouts Special Issue)  (Goddard)  (Watson)  (Wylie) |