

ABSTRACT

Melodrama and Vulgarities in Contemporary
Jamaican Commercial Theatre

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This research paper describes some elements of traditional melodrama, and points to where they, or adaptations of them, appear in some modern Jamaican commercial "roots" plays. There are elements such as young lovers (representing the wholly "good"), disapproving adults, a villain (representing the wholly "evil"), and a simple-minded person sympathetic to the lovers. The interaction of these characters informs both the plot and the exaggerated, melodramatic action of the plays.

The paper also attempts to show that vulgarity in plays has precedents in theatre of past eras and is an aspect of realism in modern theatre. It seems also to reflect a trend in the Jamaican society.

On the basis of Jamaican "roots" plays she has seen, the writer identifies elements of melodrama, and considers the purposes of vulgarity in the plays. Interviews were conducted with playwrights, directors and producers, and with three psychiatrists.