

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this research paper is to trace the patterns of development in the work of Sistren Theatre Collective. A description of the genesis of the organisation is given to provide a background for an appreciation of this development and for analysis of the work.

A second purpose is to document briefly the development of the Sistren method of play-creation. The collective is the only theatre organisation in the English-speaking Caribbean to have, over a relatively long period, consistently worked at the development of a method of collective creation which can be studied or patterned.

A third purpose is to analyse the plays as dramatic literature. In doing so, the problems that beset the collective as a purveyor of 'message' theatre are observed. The conflicts between the demands of the art form and the political objectives of the works are discussed and some attempt is made to indicate the degree to which the collective has been able to blend the two or, as occurs in some of their best work, to use the latter to make the former more powerful. Of the theatre organisations in the region that aim to produce 'protest' drama Sistren is one of the few that have been able to consistently create satisfactory (and sometimes excellent) artifacts. As a genuinely 'experimental' theatre group, each of their plays tests the art form in some way, in a search for more effective methods of presentation.

The plays are also examined as works which give a particularly feminine perspective on issues. While the plays do not present a consistent position on matters that are of major concern to feminists, the perspective is constantly feminine. On the other hand there is consensus and consistency on a number of issues that are not particularly gender-related, but more class-oriented.