



American Voices: Five Contemporary Playwrights in Essays and Interviews

Esther Harriott

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Sam Shepard, Lanford Wilson, David Mamet, Charles Fuller, and Marsha Norman were born within ten
years of one another. While they are not linked to a particular movement or school, they are fellow members
of a generation of writers, one that has come to prominence during a turning point in American theater: From
the mid-seventies to the late eighties, emphasis on the written word returned after a decade dominated by
"nonverbal" theater that subordinated language to the visual. Each of these playwrights has regarded the
written word as the center of a theatrical production. All have received the Pulitzer Prize for drama. The
contexts of race, religion, region, class and gender from which they write are very different, yet each is
"typically" American in some way. Through interviews with Wilson, Mamet, Fuller, and Norman and critical
study of works of all five, Harriott examines their disparate voices and their distinctive images of America.



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