



Weasels and Wisemen: Ethics and Ethnicity in the Work of David Mamet

Leslie Kane

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Winner of two Obie Awards, a New York Drama Critics Award, and the Pulitzer Prize, David Mamet is widely considered to be one of the most prolific and powerful voices in contemporary American theatre. A seminal figure whose reputation as an innovative playwright and filmmaker demands an appraisal of his thought and the evolution of his craft, Mamet's commitment to the dynamic of ethics and ethnicity heavily informs his work. *Weasels and Wisemen* is the first major study of Mamet's work to investigate the moral vision and cultural poetics upon which this playwright's vision is founded. Tracing the development of Mamet's canon over a period of twenty years from his early unpublished play *Marranos* through his most recent work, Leslie Kane examines the subtle link between the moral vision and ethical behavior that distinguishes Mamet's theatre and film. In addition, Kane uniquely highlights the significance of Jewish values and cultural experience that have been insufficiently acknowledged in Mamet's canon. Mamet's commitment to the dynamics of ethics, ethnicity, betrayal, loss, and survival are explored within his work as are his sensitivity to language, precision of social obligation, metaphor, and brilliant sense of comedy along with the pedagogical relationships and ethical contracts that characterize his entire body of work. All of Mamet's major works and several of his shorter and lesser known plays, sketches, and monologues are addressed, exposing the reader to some of his most demanding writing. Highly original in its interdisciplinary approach, *Weasels and Wisemen* illuminates the sources and scope of the work of one of America's foremost playwrights and immeasurably enhances the reader's understanding of his artistic expression.

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