

InsideOUT

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GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS

By David Mamet

Directed by Marco Barricelli

Oct 10 - Nov 22

The Ricketson Theatre

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Synopsis

LEVENE: *That's "talk," my friend, that's "talk."
Our job is to sell. I'm the man to sell.*
—Glengarry Glen Ross

In 1980s Chicago, four men work for the same office to sell undeveloped land in Florida to gullible clients. The land has seductive names such as "Glengarry Highlands" and "Glen Ross Farms" but is utterly worthless. The salesmen—Levene, Roma, Aaronow and Moss—seek to keep their jobs and make money, largely at each other's expense. In addition, Murray and Mitch, the unseen company directors, have introduced a system that puts the salesmen at war with each other under the direction of their office manager, Williamson. Their device is a sales competition in which the winner will get a Cadillac, the runners-up a set of steak knives and the losers will be fired. Realizing their livelihoods are threatened, the 50-ish Levene, a former hotshot salesman, is forced to beg and then bribe Williamson for some good "leads" (sales contacts) while the wily Richard Roma turns a friendly conversation into a carefully orchestrated sales pitch to an unsuspecting prey.

In the funny and quick-witted interaction between the salesmen, we see a microcosm of a capitalistic society that has become so competitive that individuals need to fight to survive.

ROMA: *It's not a world of men. It's a world of
clock watchers, officeholders. Dying breed. Yes it is.
We are members of a dying breed.*
—Glengarry Glen Ross

The Playwright

1947 - David Mamet is born on November 30 in Chicago, Illinois, son of attorney Bernard Morris and teacher Lenore June Mamet.

1963-65 - Works at *Second City*, an improvisational comedy troupe in Chicago, as a busboy, while in high school.

1968-69 - Attends Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre in New York City studying acting as a residency component of his college degree.

1968 - Writes his first play, *Camel*, fulfilling his thesis requirement in English.

1969 - Graduates from Goddard College in Vermont, earning a B.A. in English Literature.

1970 - *Lakeboat*, a one-act (the play will be produced as a film in 2000).

1971-73 - Artist-in-residence at Goddard College.

1972 - *Duck Variations*, a one-act.

1973 - Founds the acting ensemble, St. Nicholas Theatre Company, in Chicago, and serves as artistic director through 1976. During his time there, Mamet also acts as a playwright, screenwriter, director and producer.

1974 - *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (the play will earn an Obie award for Best New American Play and a Joseph Jefferson Award.)

1975 - *American Buffalo* (the play will earn the Joseph Jefferson Award, an Obie award for Best New American Play and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play).

1976 - Children's Theatre Grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. Rockefeller Grant. Awarded a Columbia Broadcasting System fellowship in creative writing. Teaching Fellow at the School of Drama, Yale University. Marries actress Lindsay Crouse, whom he later divorces.

1977 - writes *Dark Pony* and *Reunion*, two one-acts often produced together; *All Men are Whores*; *A Life in the Theatre*; writes and directs *The Woods*; *The Water Engine: An American Fable*, first produced as a radio play, and later adapted for the stage; gets Outer Critics' Circle Award for contributions to the American theatre; *Mr. Happiness*.

1978 - Associate Artistic Director of the Goodman Theatre in Chicago.

Lone Canoe or The Explorer, a musical, with music and lyrics by Alaric Jans.

1978-79 - *The Sanctity of Marriage*, a one-act.

1979 - *Shoeshine*, a one-act; *A Sermon*, a one-act; *Donny March*.

1981 - *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, a screenplay adaptation of the novel by James M. Cain; *Edmond* (the play later earns an Obie award for playwriting); *The Verdict*, a screenplay adaptation of the novel by Barry Reed (the film is nominated for an Academy Award in the category of Best Adapted Screenplay).

1983 - Society for West End Theatre award for *The Disappearance of the Jews*, a one-act; *The Dog*; *Film Crew*; *4 A.*; *Glengarry Glen Ross* (the play earns the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in the category of Best American Play, the Joseph Dintenfuss Award, the Elizabeth Hull-Warriner Award, a Dramatist Guild Award and is nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play).

1984 - Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Glengarry Glen Ross*; *American Buffalo* earns a Tony Award in the category of Best Reproduction of a Play; *Vermont Sketches: Pint's a Pound the Word Around*, *Deer Dogs*, *Conversations with the Spirit World* and *Dowsing*; *Warm and Cold*, a children's picture-book.

1985 - *The Shawl*; *Prairie du Chien*; *Vint*, a one-act based on a short story by Anton Chekhov. Originally produced with six other one-acts based on Chekhov's short works.

1986 - *Three Children's Plays: The Poet and the Rent: A Play for Kids Seven to 8:15*, *The Revenge of Space Pandas or Binky Rudich and the Two Speed-Clock* and *The Frog Prince*. American and Institute of Arts and Letters Award for Literature.

1987 - *Writing in Restaurants*, a collection of Mamet essays; writes the screenplay for and directs the film *House of Games* (the film is nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay); *The Untouchables*, a screenplay based on the television series (the film is nominated for a Writers Guild Award for Best Screenplay based on material from another medium); *The Owl*, a children's book.

1988 - *Speed-the-Plow* (earns a Tony Award for Best Play); *Where Were You When It Went Down?*; becomes Associate Professor of Film at Columbia University; writes *Things Change*, a screenplay.

1989 - *We're No Angels*, a screenplay.

1990 - *Five Television Plays: A Waitress in Yellowstone, Bradford, The Museum of Science and Industry Story, A Waster Weekend and We Will Take You There*; also writes *The Hero Pony*, a book of poems.

1991 - Marries actress Rebecca Pidgeon. Writes *Oleanna*, a play; *Homicide*, a screenplay.

1992 - *Hoffa*, a screenplay. Writes *On Directing Film*, a book. Writes the *Glengarry Glen Ross* screenplay adaptation of his play.

1993 - Produces the motion picture *A Life in the Theatre* based on his 1977 play.

1994 - *A Life with No Joy in It, and Other Plays and Pieces*, a collection including *Almost Done, Monologue, Two Enthusiasts, Sunday Afternoon, The Joke Code, A Scene, Fish, A Perfect Mermaid, Dodge, L.A. Sketches, Joseph Dintenfass*, and *No One Will be Immune*. Writes the *Oleanna* screenplay adaptation of his play. *The Village*, a novel.

1995 - *The Cryptogram* (earns an Obie Award for best new play); *Passover*, a children's book.

1996 - *American Buffalo*, a screenplay adaptation of his play. *The Duck and the Goat*, a children's book. *Make-BelieveTown: Essays and Remembrances*, a collection of Mamet's writings.

1997 - *Wag the Dog*, a screenplay based on the novel *American Hero* by Larry Beinhart (the film is nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay). Writes *The Old Religion*, a novel, and *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, a collection of his essays.

1998 - *The Old Neighborhood: Three Plays: The Disappearance of Jews, Jolly and Deeny; Three Uses of the Knife; On the Nature and Purpose of Drama*.

1999 - *Boston Marriage*. The play premieres at the

American Repertory Theatre directed by Mamet. It stars his wife, Rebecca Pidgeon, as Claire.

The Chinaman, poems. *Henrietta*, juvenile fiction. *Jafsie and John Henry*, essays. *The Spanish Prisoner*, original screenplay. *The Winslow Boy*, screenplay adaptation of the 1946 Terrence Rattigan play. *On Acting*, a book of essays.

2000 - Writes the screenplay and directs the film *State and Main*. *Lakeboat*, a screenplay, based on his 1970 one-act of the same name. He writes the screenplay and directs the film *Heist*. He writes *Wilson: A Consideration of Three Sources*, a futuristic, fictional documentary.

2002 - Moves to Santa Monica, CA, after residing in Vermont.

2001 - *Hannibal*, a first draft of a screenplay.

2003 - *Diary of a Young London Physician*, a screenplay.

2004 - *Spartan*, a screenplay.

2005 - *The Voysey Inheritance* based on Harley Granville-Barker's 1905 play. Writes *Romance*, a satire.

2006 - Creates *The Unit*, a TV series about a secret military operation. *Edmond*, the film version. *The Wicked Son*, 37 short pieces about self-loathing Jews and anti-Semitism.

2007 - *Bambi vs. Godzilla*, a selection of essays on the movie business.

2008 - *November*, a political comedy debuts on Broadway. Announcement of a musical based on *A Waitress in Yellowstone*. Writes and directs the film *Redbelt*.

Courtesy of the study guide for *Boston Marriage*, Minneapolis, Guthrie Theatre, 2004. Jo Holcomb, ed.

Nadel, Ira. *David Mamet: A Life in the Theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Historical Context of the Play

LEVENE: *It's cold out there now, John. It's tight.
Money is tight.*
—Glengarry Glen Ross

The 1980s in American business was a time of corporate raids, leveraged buyouts and hostile takeovers. Frequently, these takeovers were funded by high yield debt “junk bonds,” a device first proposed by Drexel Burnham Lambert executive Michael R. Milken. Those engineering the takeovers reaped rewards in the tens of millions of dollars. Assets of the target companies were pledged to repay the principal of the junk bonds, which yielded 13 to 30%. Milken later went to prison for insider trading practices, racketeering and fraud.

Ronald Reagan was elected president of the United States in 1980 and in 1981, began a series of tax and spending cuts. Reagan, with the counsel of his economic advisor, David Stockman, cut the top tax bracket from 70% down to 50% and then down again to 28%. These cuts were part of the “trickle down” theory of economics or “Reaganomics” which were perceived to benefit the wealthy and then “trickle down” to the middle and lower classes. The perception is that the top income earners would invest more into the business infrastructure and equity markets, thereby creating more jobs for the rest of the population. Reagan also signed Social Security legislation that delayed cost-of-living payments and increased payroll deductions.

In dealing with foreign affairs, the Reagan administration was steadfastly anti-communist, employing a foreign policy of “peace through strength” which played a major role in ending the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States in 1991. Reagan met with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev four times, aiming to shrink both the US and the USSR’s nuclear arsenals.

Proponents of the Reagan administration stated that American morale had been restored and the Cold War largely ended. However, critics noted that the national debt had quadrupled at the end of Reagan’s terms; unemployment rose to more than 12 million in the US and claimed that the Iran-Contra affair, a political scandal involving administration officials, lowered American credibility. Nevertheless, Reagan left office with a 64% approval rating, one of the higher approval ratings of departing presidents.

In 1980s Chicago, Envirodyne, Inc. shut down Wisconsin Steel on the southeast side of the city. It did not offer the employees any buyouts or notify them of their intentions to close. As a result, 3,000 people were out of work in one day. More layoffs and plant closings followed and, by the end of the 1980s, Chicago’s steel industry had been decimated.

In December 1983 Chicago motorists began talking on cellular telephones in their cars; the phones cost \$3,000 and the monthly service was \$150. The phones quickly became essential business tools.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local>

http://rationalrevolution.net/war/trickle_down

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trickle=down_economics

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reagan-administration>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Milken

Brun, Bernard, ed. *The Timetables of History*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.

Galens, David and Lynn, Spampinato, Eds. *Drama for Students, Vol. 2*. Detroit: Gale Research, 19098.

Themes of the Play

We have it somehow in our nature, Tolstoy wrote, to perform horrendous acts which we would never dream of as individuals, and think if they are done in the name of some larger group, a state, a company, a team, that these vile acts are somehow magically transformed and become praiseworthy.

—David Mamet, *Writing in Restaurants*

The major theme of *Glengarry Glen Ross* is business and by extension, capitalism. As Mamet says, “This play is about a society based on business—a society with only one bottom line: how much money you make.”¹ In it he shows the salesman striving to survive by his wits in this system and how the stress damages and drains his own humanity. In the published play, Mamet includes a quotation from the Practical Sales Maxim: ‘Always Be Closing.’ If one is always making a sale, everything becomes business, even personal relationships.

The American Dream of getting ahead through honest hard work is undermined in this play. These salesmen are selling worthless land to people who dream that purchasing that land will somehow provide them with huge profits when they resell it. No one mentions building on or developing the land; it is always referred to as an investment opportunity. For these salesmen and their clients, at least, the only measure of success is material gain and the only way to succeed is to sell.

All of the characters suffer loneliness and alienation both from nature and other people. They are unfamiliar with the land they sell; they refer to it as “crap” or a commodity. They are alienated from their customers whom they see as weak and stupid and from each other because they are in competition. They do share a common bond in despising the unfair system under which they work, but when friendship is involved, it is just another scam. For example, Moss seems to commiserate with Aaronow but is setting him up for a burglary; Roma seems to be having a friendly conversation with Lingk but is just disarming him for a sales pitch. Finally, Roma suggests that he and Levene work as partners only to figure in his betrayal a

short time later.

Deception and illusion is at work on every level. Lying and fantasy is a way of thinking and operating as there seems to be little truth to anything anyone says to anybody. “The salesmen are seen as living in an illusory world,” says critic Tony Stafford, “creating a phony reality and using false appearances as a sales technique so that in the long run they deny their own reality, their client’s reality, and the reality of the real world.”² The most explicit example is in the office when Lingk comes to cancel his contract. Roma and Levene put on an elaborate improvisation in which Levene pretends to be an important executive with American Express who has invested in the land Roma is trying to sell. All through the play the characters turn to deception when they are in a tight situation—which is most of the time.

Success and failure are easily measured in the world of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and by extension in the larger world of American capitalism. To succeed is to make money; to fail is not to get it. It is not only the salesmen who measure success monetarily; their customers also believe if they buy the land they can sell it for a huge profit and thus, get something for nothing. For the salesmen, selling is not just their job but a persona; it is who and what they are. “A man’s his job,” says Levene, which suggests he has become a mere extension of his livelihood and the world outside the office has ceased to exist.

Though some writers have noted that *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a “morality play,” there is no mention of morals, morality, or even business ethics in the play.³ They are just not part of the operating procedure. In Roma’s discourse to Lingk, he says that he does “that today which seems to me correct today.” If there is an absolute morality, Roma declares, “And then what?” In the absence of morality, not one of these characters is troubled by conscience. Again Roma tells Lingk, “You cheated on your wife. You did it. Live with it.”

According to Hersh Zeifman, “The sole criterion of worth here is machismo.”⁴ Levene boasts he is the man to sell and Roma’s concept of manhood is

sleek, heartless, devoid of compassion—a machine to make money. Customers are treated as less than human and the bosses’ treatment of the sales force is viewed as slave-like. It is Williamson, the office manager, who receives the most abuse because he sits behind a desk and has never tested his manhood in the arena of sales.

Another major theme in this play is the corruption of the function of language. A salesman must become an expert in linguistic technique, but in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Mamet’s salesmen spill out their chatter to anyone, “but at the heart of their manipulation lies aridity and emptiness,” says Anna Dean. “Behind the foul-mouthed incessantly macho bravado lies a desperate bluster, a show of power by men who are only too aware of their powerlessness. They may live by victimizing their colleagues and clients, but the most abject victims of their trade are themselves.”⁵

In this cosmos of vicious competition devoid of morality and friendship, all the characters operate out of anger and hatred. They are angry at Williamson for not producing more productive leads; they are angry at each other because the success of one is the failure of another. They are caught in an unfair system; they know it but can’t escape. At the end of the play Aaronow states openly what all of them must feel: “Oh God, I hate this job!”

Carroll, Dennis. *David Mamet*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987.

Dean, Anne. *David Mamet: Language as Dramatic Action*. London: Associated University Presses, 1990.

Galens, David and Spampinato, Lynn, Eds. *Drama for Students*, Vol. 2. Detroit: Gale Research, 1998.

Kane, Leslie, ed. *David Mamet: a Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992.
Zeifman, Hersh. “Phallus in Wonderland.”

Kane, Leslie, ed. *David Mamet’s Glengarry Glen Ross: Text and Performance*. New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1996.
Stafford, Tony. “Visions of a Promised Land.”

1. Dean, p. 192.
2. Stafford, p. 186,
3. Galens, p. 38.
4. Zeifman, p. 129.
5. Dean, p. 194.

The Salesmen’s Terms

B list—a list or group of names not as desired, admired or saleable as those on the A list.

Board—a device used for listing top sellers in a real estate or insurance office.

Close (closing) —completing a transaction: when the deal is made; when a piece of real estate changes ownership.

Cold calling—process of approaching prospective customers, typically via telephone, who were not expecting an interaction.

Kick out—when a previously signed customer gets out of a contract.

Leads—parties of interest who could be sold; qualified prospects.

Plats—a map, drawn to scale, showing the division of a piece of land.

Sit—to hold a session with a prospective buyer.

Soft sell—the use of suggestion or gentle persuasion in selling rather than aggressive pressure.

Stiff—a member of the working class.

Sales Techniques

These tips are basic guidelines that most salespeople try to follow:

- *Listen to the emotional side of your prospect or client:*

Emotions are tied into almost everything we do even if we don't realize it. Your clients may mention off-hand that they are really stressed-out about a particular project they are working on (even if it doesn't relate to what you're selling them). Make a note of this and see if there is anything you can do to assist them. You may have another client who had a similar dilemma and found a good solution. Make those connections and help wherever you can. You'll be rewarded with loyalty from all of your clients.
- *Focus on your prospect or client's needs:*

We've talked about it before, but it's worth mentioning again. You may be tempted to sell your client your top-of-the-line model gadget when they really only need the mid-line model. By selling them more than they need, you may be cutting off future relations with them. Once they realize (and they will eventually) that they don't need most of what you sold them, they'll feel bitter and resentful toward you for wasting their money and not looking out for their best interest. They'll see you as a "salesperson" and not as a resource.
- *Use language that focuses on your prospect or client:*

Simply changing the way you speak may also make a difference in how you are received by your prospect. Using "you" and "yours," or "you'll find..." rather than "I think" or "Let me tell you about," brings your message a little closer to home and may grab their attention more quickly.
- *Help your prospect see the bottom line:*

If you know your product can help clients save money, or increase profitability, then make sure they understand that. Your product may have an edge in that it includes features that save time. Time is money as the saying goes, and if you can save time you can often sell your product.
- *Find out your prospect's priorities:*

You can save yourself a lot of wasted time and effort by simply knowing how important your product and its benefits are to your prospect. If you've listened to them and determined the need, but still aren't getting anywhere, find out if there are other elements of their business that are taking priority and pushing your sale aside. If you know they have to implement a program before they can spend time considering (or funds purchasing) your product then you can schedule a call back at a later date that may stand a better chance of getting some attention. To do this you have to ask the questions because the information is not always volunteered. (Again, the key is focusing on the needs of your prospect, and having an open relationship already in place.)
- *Know your prospect:*

Find out as much as you possibly can about your prospect before your appointment. This will not only help you anticipate their needs ahead of time, but will also show them you've done your homework and have an interest in their business other than just selling your product. When talking with them, let them do most of the talking. People usually love talking about their businesses and its successes. For example, you might bring up the fact that you saw they won an award at a regional meeting then let them proceed to fill you in on the details. You might also compliment them on the efficiency of their production system or the quality of their products. This will also open the door to more conversation and the opportunity to learn more about their needs and how your product will fit those needs.

- *Focus on why they should buy - not their objections:*

The idea here is that while you are building up the benefits associated with using your product, they will be minimizing their resistance to it. By focusing on what you know the prospect likes, you are building up the importance of the positive and reducing the importance of the negatives. You've heard this one before, but it is worth repeating. In most cases, you're not selling your product, you're selling the benefits the product will produce. In other words, you're not selling digital phones, you're selling the ability to communicate from anywhere. You are selling freedom to leave the confines of the office and still be accessible. You're selling the ability to have a more flexible work schedule. You're selling peace of mind for long trips. You're selling security. Get to the emotional or financial benefits and you're on to something!

- *Never rush the sale or the customer:*

Remember the section about building a relationship with your customers? This is a very important step. It can help give the prospect the right perception of you and your company. Rushing them instead of letting them come to their own decision to buy can create hostilities that can't be overturned. It can make the difference between getting the sale and creating a loyal customer, and having to start over with another prospect. In the competitive climate of many markets, you definitely don't want to risk losing a qualified prospect who needs your product.

- *Know your products, as well as the market - be a RESOURCE:*

In order to be seen as a valuable resource for your clients, you have to demonstrate that you not only know and understand your products and the market, but can assist them in making good decisions and provide them with tools to improve their business. If you don't have these skills and knowledge, get them. You'll be rewarded over and over by loyal clients who trust your opinions and advice, and buy from you frequently.

- *Follow through with promises:*

If you do nothing else, do this. Always follow through with what you say you are going to do. If you say you'll send a quote by Friday - DO IT! If you say you'll check with someone else in your company about an issue that's come up - DO IT! Don't forget. Use the technology available to you (even if it's a sticky note on your dash board!) and make sure you follow through with your promises. There is no surer way to lose the faith of a prospect (or existing client) than to forget to do something you tell them you will do. If something comes up that forces you to have to delay, call them and give them a heads up. They may have a meeting arranged to present the information you're supplying them with, and if they don't have it you'll both look bad.

- *Focus on your client's success:*

Not to beat a dead horse, but there is *tremendous* value in being a resource for your client. If you can help them to succeed then they are more likely to help you succeed. Be a coach for your clients (at least in your areas of expertise). You have the unique perspective of seeing how many different businesses operate. Gather this knowledge and share it with your clients or prospects. Make sure they understand that you want to see them succeed, not just sell your products.

- *Use explanations rather than excuses:*

If you *do* have to explain to a customer why there is a problem with his or her order, repair, service, etc., explain why the problem is there in the first place, rather than using an excuse. For example, if you provide health care services and you're having difficulty meeting the scheduling needs of the customer, you might explain it like this, "With this being a particularly bad allergy season we have had more emergency calls due to asthma (or

whatever the case may be) and these patients can't wait for a scheduled appointment. Our staff is behind schedule, but we are addressing the problem now by bringing in temporary help for these critical need times. So we should be able to schedule your service on 'x' date." Understanding the problem may help alleviate some of their frustration. Verbalizing the cause may also keep you more aware of the potential problems so you can be more prepared the next time around.

www.Howstuffworks.com.

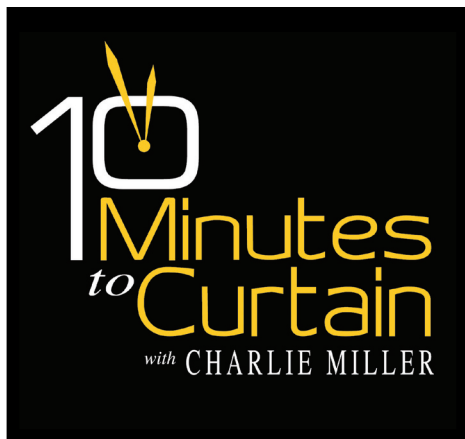
Buyer's Remorse

Buyer's remorse is an emotional condition whereby a person feels remorse or regret after a purchase. It is frequently associated with the purchase of higher value items such as property, cars, computers, jewelry, etc. The common condition is brought on by an internal sense of doubt that the correct decision has been made. With high-value items such as a property, this is exacerbated by the fear that one may have acted without full and complete information, for example, the property was not fully surveyed or that (perhaps) one harbors doubts about the veracity of the surveyor. An equally common source of disquiet is a sense that one cannot actually afford the item or that it represents more of a want than a need, despite any protests to the contrary.

In most states consumer products are covered by 3-day Right to Rescind (buyer's remorse) laws.

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buyer's _remorse](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buyer's_remorse)

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“10 Minutes to Curtain” launches Oct. 7 at www.youtube.com/denvercenter.

Women in *Glengarry Glen Ross*

Men generally expect more of women than we do of ourselves. We feel, based on constant evidence, that women are better, stronger, more truthful than men. You can call this sexism, or reverse sexism, or whatever you wish, but it is my experience.

—David Mamet¹

If Mamet feels women are more truthful than men, they have no place in the sales office of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Whatever is said by the salesmen about women in general is dismissive and degrading, such as “some broads” or “little girls.” However, the specific women mentioned in the play all have a defining function in the attitudes of the all-male cast and play a part in the sales game.

Harriet Nyborg, co-signer of the contract for eight units of land, is a victim of seduction in Levene’s tale of the couple’s conquest. In his macho sexual storytelling, Levene uses “the kitchen, the territorial locale of the mother and the wife” to assert his dominance.² Where Harriet should be the queen, she becomes the subservient and silent slave in Levene’s tale. Though she serves crumb cake at the end of the close, Levene belittles it as coming from the grocery store. For him, Harriet is “the invisible and unheard sex.”³

Jinny Lingk cooks Roma a fantastic meal but comes out of her kitchen the next day with a strident resolve. She demands that James tell Roma she wants their money back, the deal cancelled or she will call the consumer’s bureau. While James Lingk continually repeats, “It’s not me, it’s my wife”, Roma tries to pacify the shaken man with remarks that it’s the woman’s prudence reacting. Upsetting the whole deal and Roma’s chances of winning the Cadillac, Jinny Lingk has defied the masculine dominance theory and become “the intruder into the male domain of business deals.”⁴ Asserting the power of the female voice, she reveals the swamp that the real estate office really is.

Early in the play Levene mentions his daughter; Williamson ignores his remark as another sales ploy, another artifice. Levene falters as he speaks of her. C.W.E. Bigsby explains that “Levene’s anxieties are exposed and that he has so thoroughly plundered the language of private need that [he] no longer has access to words that will articulate his feelings.”⁵ He and the rest of the salesmen have fallen victim to their own lingo. Levene’s daughter is a reference to the feminine that Mamet writes of in the

quoted paragraph: women are too good to be contained in the denigrating world of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. “This community of men acknowledges the identity of Harriet Nyborg, recoils from the determined voice of Jinny Lingk, and momentarily goes mute at the mention of a female child. Something revelatory is gained.”⁶

The Denver Center has produced two Mamet plays in which women have prominent roles. In *Oleanna*, the battlefield is academia where John the professor holds the power by using language to define the relationship between himself and his inarticulate student, Carol. By Act III the tables are turned because Carol has become resourceful and gained a feminist institution of her own—and a language. The play could be interpreted as being about political correctness and/or sexual harassment, but it is really about the use and misuse of language in which two characters become inhuman and inhumane.

The ladies in *Boston Marriage* are sexy, intelligent and lesbian in 19th century Boston. They “use language to create their own reality and to annihilate Victorian pretension and hypocrisies.”⁷ But they are also playing out two of Mamet’s favorite themes—deception and miscommunication. Anna is having a heterosexual affair; Claire is carrying on with a younger woman, and both are deceiving and defying conventional society. To secure their own interests in a strict society, they get what they want by using language—sometimes as a ruse—for their own purposes.

Zeifman, Hersh. “Phallus in Wonderland.”

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5. Bigsby, p. 123.
6. Jacobs, p. 120.
7. Brucher, p. 1.

MAMET SPEAK

In my family, in the days prior to television, we liked to wile away the evenings by making ourselves miserable, solely based on our ability to speak the language viciously. That's probably where my ability was honed.

—David Mamet, interview with John Lahr, theatre critic of *The New Yorker*, 1997.

Mamet's dialogue is so unique that it has become known as "Mametspeak." He has said the main emphasis of his dialogue is on the rhythm of the language and the way rhythm and action are identical. Jack Shepard, the actor who played Roma in the first production of *Glengarry Glen Ross* said: "The rhythms are slick, fast and syncopated, like a drum solo."¹ The playwright appreciates the potential of ordinary speech, yet, "as he has made clear, [he] does not merely record what he hears around him, but manipulates it into free verse."² Mamet sets out to tell the truth in his plays and we hear it in the fear, panic and desolation of the salesmen's arias and duets in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. The result is often wonderfully funny, sparse, clipped dialogue that keeps all the chaos of ordinary conversation.

Through his characters' use of a debased form of communication, Mamet exposes what he sees as an unjust social system. In order to dramatize these inequities, Mamet's characters are working class or those who live on the fringes of society. In their banal and sometimes incoherent conversation, "Mamet can make transparent their over-verbalized as well as unspoken emotions."³ He realizes that most conversations seldom move logically from point A to point B, so he uses linguistic scraps, repetitions, interruptions, hesitations and a litter of words from Jewish, Italian, Spanish and African-American origins.

"Mamet's characters speak a language that accurately reflects the cultural abyss into which this country has fallen."⁴ Thus, they have become emotionally distanced from a society in which they can no longer communicate or be heard. Because his characters are frustrated in social inter-action, they resort to outbursts of obscenity and profanity. Mamet makes no apologies for this speech because it's an important means of depicting character, exposing emotional response and creating tension. Nevertheless, the particular obscenity must fit into the rhythm of the line.

Mamet's influences in playwriting are Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett who pared down their plays and gave few stage directions. Mamet, too, writes with extreme economy of expression. One of his favorite maxims is "KISS—keep it simple, stupid."⁵

What I write about is what I think is missing from our society. And that's communication on a basic level.

—David Mamet.⁶

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2. Dean, p. 17.
3. Dean, p. 25.
4. Dean, p. 32.
5. Dean, p. 37.
6. Dean, p. 33.

David Mamet and the Movies

"I always thought the real violence in Hollywood isn't what's on the screen. It's what you have to do to raise the money."

—David Mamet

Since the early 1980s David Mamet has established a parallel career in film. The movies with which he has been involved can be divided into three categories: 1) screenplays he has written; 2) movies adapted from his stage plays and 3) the series of films he has written and directed.

Mamet's first screenplay for which he was given credit was *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981). Based on the James M. Cain novel of 1934 and directed by Bob Rafelson, it starred Jack Nicholson as Frank, the Depression Era drifter who is hired on by Nick Papadakis (John Colvos), the owner of a truck-stop café. Very soon Frank is involved with Nick's young wife Cora (Jessica Lange) with whom he plots to murder Nick. Despite its somewhat sentimental ending, it was a good start for Mamet.

The next screenplay was *The Verdict*, set in a gloomy, wintry Boston. The plot centers on the redemption of the alcoholic ambulance-chasing lawyer Frank Galvin (Paul Newman) and his involvement with a blue-collar couple that is suing a Catholic hospital for negligence after the administration of the wrong anesthetic has left a sister a vegetable. With various twists and a taste for melodrama, the film, directed by Sidney Lumet, garnered five Oscar nominations and established Mamet's reputation as a screenwriter.

The Untouchables (1987) was inspired by the TV series and directed by Brian de Palma. It was a box office hit, made Kevin Costner a star and restored the flagging career of Sean Connery. It also featured Andy Garcia as a fledgling cop and Robert De Niro as the ruthless Al Capone. "Apart from the central thrust of a US Treasury agent bringing down America's most formidable gangster, the story is largely fictitious."¹

We're No Angels (1989) starred De Niro again and Sean Penn as two minor crooks who take

refuge in a monastery disguised as priests. Most critics labeled it as a labored sentimental comedy awkwardly directed by Michael Curtiz.

Hoffa (1992) was a direct biopic of Jimmy Hoffa, head of the corrupt Teamsters' Union. Directed by Danny De Vito and starring Jack Nicholson, the film skirted Hoffa's personal development and family life and fudged the political and industrial context of a 41-year career.

The Edge (1997) was a film suggested by a friend Art Linson who needed a hit for 20th Century Fox. The plot revolved around a fight for survival in the Alaskan wilderness where a billionaire business tycoon, Charles Morse (Anthony Hopkins), confronts a photographer, Robert Green (Alec Baldwin), who is having an affair with Morse's wife. The movie failed to make a profit.

Wag the Dog (1997) satirized the connection between show business and Washington, D.C. The movie was topical because it debuted as the Monica Lewinsky affair exploded in Bill Clinton's White House. Robert De Niro starred as a political spin-doctor and Dustin Hoffmann as an unscrupulous Hollywood producer who try to distract the public from a presidential sex scandal by creating a diversionary war. "The result was rarely more than mildly amusing—low on genuine insight into the political process."²

Mamet's next two assignments were lucrative but not involving. *Ronin* (1998) starring De Niro was so insignificant that Mamet used the pseudonym Richard Weitz as his screen credit. His next attempt was *Hannibal*, the third novel by Thomas Harris about the nefarious Hannibal Lecter. Mamet wrote the first draft, but Steven Zaillian wrote the final script.

Mamet was closely associated with *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994), the final film by French director Louis Malle. The film purports to be an observed record of a run-through in rehearsal clothes of a version of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*.

The first David Mamet play to be filmed was *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. Retitled *About Last Night*— (1986), it was directed by Edward Zwick and featured Rob Lowe, Demi Moore, James

Belushi and Elizabeth Perkins. The movie was less bleak, bitter and abrasive than the play.

Glengarry Glen Ross (1992) was directed by James Foley. The play was slightly opened up but the setting was still the claustrophobic real estate office. A new character was added, an emissary from the head office named Blake (Alec Baldwin). The film featured a triumph of ensemble acting with Jack Lemmon as Levene, Alan Arkin as Aaronow, Ed Harris as Moss, Al Pacino as Roma and Kevin Spacey as Williamson.

American Buffalo (1996) was directed by Michael Corrente. Dustin Hoffmann played Teach, the minor criminal who schemes with the middle-aged storeowner Don (Dennis Franz) and his gofer Bob (Sean Nelson) to steal a valuable coin. The film was deemed low-key and underpowered.

Oleanna (1994) was directed by Mamet himself and featured William H. Macy as John, the university professor, and Debra Eisenstadt as the disturbed student, Carol. The play was first produced less than a year after the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill Congressional hearings, so that political correctness and sexual harassment were still very current topics.

Edmond (2006) addressed sex, racism and urban violence in the account of a middle class white man who chooses to renounce his placid life for one of danger and destruction. Directed by Stuart Gordon, it featured Mamet regulars William H. Macy, Rebecca Pidgeon and Joe Mantegna.

In the late 1980s Mamet made his debut as a writer/director. *House of Games* (1987) was about the milieu of con men in a witty, stylized thriller. Lindsay Crouse (the first Mrs. Mamet) played Dr. Ford, the female caught up in the schemes of con artist Joe Mantegna.

Things Change (1988) is another elaborate con game featuring an old man (Don Ameche) as Gino, a dead ringer for a Mafia hit man.

Homicide (1990) featured Joe Mantegna as Bob Gold, a decent, seasoned detective and William H. Macy as his Irish partner. Pursuing an African-American drug dealer and finding the killer of an elderly female Jewish shopkeeper are the basics of the plot.

The Spanish Prisoner (1998) was about a working class inventor Joe Ross (Campbell Scott)

who finds himself the victim of an enormous conspiracy that begins in the Caribbean and ends in New York. The movie featured Ben Gazzara, Rebecca Pidgeon and Steve Martin.

The Winslow Boy (1999) was based on Terence Rattigan's play about a 14 year old boy who was expelled from a Naval College after being accused of forging a signature on a postal order. "Mamet was attracted by the affinities between the evasive language of the Edwardian middle class and that of his Chicago low-lives."³ Nigel Hawthorne was cast as Arthur, the boy's father; Jeremy Northam as the boy's advocate, Sir Robert Norton, and Rebecca Pidgeon (Mamet's second wife) as Catherine Winslow, an early Feminist.

State and Main (2000) was about a movie crew on location and featured a plethora of stars in a film about the making of a film.

Heist (2002) concerned an ingeniously planned robbery that goes dreadfully wrong and a game of double cross. Starring Gene Hackman, Danny DeVito and Delroy Lindo, it was the highest grossing Mamet movie to that time.

Spartan (2004) focused on a Special Operations Unit dealing with the kidnapping of the President's daughter. Val Kilmer was the major star.

Redbelt (2008), dubbed a "thinking man's martial arts movie" stars British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor.⁴ It is another elaborate con game involving Mamet's latest interest, Brazilian jujitsu.

*But there is a community in this country of
moviegoers. As a country, we go to the movies,
and they are our theatre.*

—David Mamet. *David Mamet in Conversation*

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David Mamet's Thoughts on Theatre

“The life of the play is the life of the unconscious, the protagonist represents ourselves, and the main action of the play constitutes the subject of the dream of myth. It is not the theme of the play to which we respond, but the action.” p. 8.

“We are driven into the theatre by our need to express—our need to answer the questions of our lives—the questions of the time in which we live. Of this moment.” p. 19.

“Is God dead?” and “Why are there no real movies anymore?” are pretty much the same question. They both mean that our symbols and our myths have failed us—that we have begun to take them literally and so judge them wanting.” p. 35.

“And so art, the social purpose of which is to create, has been pressed into service as a censor, whose purpose is to control.... This trend expresses our deep wish to deny. The trend silences ferment, stills inquiry, and, at no point, allows the purpose of true art, the purpose of which is to create. The absence of the urge to create is decadence.” p. 59.

“Perhaps if we went to the theatre more we might learn to regain our faith in words. If we went and watched and listened and made some demands.” p. 68.

“We expect less of our actors today because we expect less of ourselves.” p. 127.

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