

"Always Be Closing": Competition and the Discourse of Closure in David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*

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The language of David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* obstructs immediate entrance into the action. The characters interrupt each other, leave sentences unfinished, complete others' sentences, and use abbreviated jargon that frequently employs expletives and invectives. Such language has been criticized for creating characters that are dulled by their sameness in speaking "an endless stream of vituperation."¹ However, the characters' discourse reveals subtexts in their relations. Dennis Carrol notes that the play's language, especially in the first act, does not so much further a plot as suggest a "pattern of interactions" among the characters.² The pattern is that of the salesmen closing themselves off from one another in their drive to close sales. Mamet's business office prevents any sense of community by producing a competitive discourse of closure.³

The office of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, as with any system, compartmentalizes discourse as either acceptable or unacceptable; each social situation constructs its own form of discourse. For example, Mamet's real estate office is a system that does not value people as individuals, but only as resources for profit; likewise, competitors are viewed as obstacles to be exploited or eliminated. Consequently, the language employed by the salesmen reflects and reinforces these attitudes. In Mamet's real estate office, the most powerful commodity is not land; it is language.⁴ Therefore, we can interpret the relationships among the characters by examining how language and categories of business behavior produce each other in Mamet's fictitious real estate office.

An examination of the language utilized in the characters' interactions reveals two primary patterns of discourse, which I will call "Discourse of Community" and "Discourse of Competition." The discourse of community is transactional, comprised of speech acts that communicate and invite responses. It is a language of mediation, negotiation, and cooperation--an open discourse. On the other hand, discourse of competition is adversarial, the language of manipulation, deception, and self-interest. Whereas communal discourse is interactive, participatory, multidirectional, and communicative, competitive discourse is interjectional, oppositional, monodirectional, and obfuscatory.

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Whereas communal language treats others as members of a community, competitive language isolates others as opponents or obstacles. In Mamet's business world, it is the latter form of communication that prevails, because for the salesmen to succeed, they must subdue both customers and other salesmen; their primary means of domination is verbal. Utilizing military metaphors, one critic notes that the salesmen "deploy language as a tactic, a weapon, a shield, a facade."⁵ Similarly, another critic observes that in the real estate office, "aggressive selling has become a means of defense and attack, of self-identification and of being" and this equivocation between selling ability and self-worth is accomplished through the play's dialogue, which presents the transformation of speech "from a means of communication into a grinding, almost unstoppable machine for onslaught."⁶ Use of communal rather than adversarial language may result in verbal defeat by the machine of competitive discourse. To these salesmen, discourse of community is passive, submissive, weak, gendered as feminine, and associated with buying. Discourse of competition, however, is active, dominant, strong, masculine, and associated with selling. Since closing sales with clients requires closing each other off from competition, the salesmen utilize the competitive discourse of closure. In the sales office, dominating others monetarily requires dominating others linguistically.

Using the division of discourse into communal and competitive as a paradigm, it becomes possible to understand the dynamics between the salesmen. Interactions are not fueled by a desire for fair exchange, but by the drive for advantage over others. Each scene is a locus of persuasion, and the subtext of a salespitch conditions (or informs) every interaction.

Scene One presents a declining salesman, Shelly Levene, attempting to convince the office manager, John Williamson, to give him good leads so that he can get on the sales board. Levene is caught in the mechanistic structure of the company, wherein those with the best sales are rewarded with the best leads, the worst leads going to those with low figures. In this scene Levene attempts not to break from the structure, but to master it; he would perform again as a well-tuned "machine," according to the reputation of his nickname. Thus, Levene must enact a series of rhetorical strategies to convince a man who is younger and much less experienced.

Levene, in effect, speaks a foreign language every time he attempts to get Williamson to empathize, for Levene lacks the credentials to be heard by Williamson. As an employee, particularly one whose position with the company has descended to probationary at best, his statements of self-defense are simply inadmissible. In other words, since he cannot sell land to customers, he lacks the status to sell language to Williamson.⁷ His rhetorical strategy thus attempts to

solicit empathy from Williamson, an objective for which he adopts language from a communal perspective:

Those guys *lived* on the business I brought in. They *lived* on it . . . Give me a chance. That's all I want . . . I need your help.⁸

"Want," "need," "give me," and "your help" are all communal terms that are indicative of Levene's inferior status. Although Levene apparently believes that Williamson communicates in communal language, such discourse does not persuade Williamson. (Levene's misjudgement of Williamson foreshadows the play's ironic conclusion when Williamson reveals his duplicity against Levene: Williamson takes advantage of Levene's inaccurate discourse in Scene One.) The only way for Levene to have his discourse taken seriously is to speak the correct discourse. However, since Levene is an experienced salesman, it is feasible to question whether his emotional pleas are actually part of a competitive strategy that blurs the boundary between communal and competitive discourse. For example, we will see in Roma the possibility of utilizing communal language with a competitive subtext, when direct adversarial language may be too harsh. Since Levene was Roma's mentor, and since Levene will use communal discourse when closing the sale with Bruce and Harriet Nyborg, it is possible to conclude that Levene's human side is just another aspect of his sales pitch.

Nonetheless, this approach fails, so Levene transforms his language into a mode that Williamson can comprehend:

Levene: I'll give you ten percent. (Pause.)

Williamson: Of what?

Levene: Of my end what I close.

Williamson: And what if you don't close.

Levene: I *will* close.

Williamson: What if you *don't* close . . . ?

Levene: I *will* close.⁹

Levene realizes that he must argue in monetary, not humanistic, terms, for Williamson cannot be charmed, he can only be bought. This exchange of dialogue also implies a gendered aspect to the sales pitch. Levene has moved from a passive position to an active one, affirming his potency as he reiterates, "I *will* close." Williamson responds to this repeated assurance with: "What if you *don't*? Then I'm *fucked*. You see . . . ? Then it's *my* job."¹⁰ Williamson interprets failure in his job literally in terms of finding himself in an emasculating position, just as Levene is in a position viewed as passive or feminine by being

at the bottom of the sales board rather than on the top. Levene's insistence is an assertion not only of his vitality in sales, but also of his virility as a male; however, by refusing to be sold on Levene's idea, Williamson tries to maintain his own masculinity, because being sold to is equated with being in a passive position. For these men, the act of selling is masculine; closing a sale is a closing of discourse—a position of power. Thus, Levene can persuade him only by promising a kickback, for by receiving money for his service, Williamson can maintain his power.

As early as the opening scene, therefore, Mamet exposes the power relationships that propel all the characters by virtue of the revelation that Levene is a pitiable example of what all other salesmen must fear. Levene discovers that he is not considered worthy as an individual, but only in terms of what he can produce. His nickname—"The Machine"—illustrates how the company values him. Originally the name was a compliment, given to a man who was an unstoppable selling machine. However, machines age, wear down, and are discarded; Levene will be objectified and displaced.

Such a corporate system poses an insurmountable force over the salesmen. They must play by demeaning rules or risk exclusion from the sales force. Unfair as the sales contest is, they can do nothing to alter the situation because they lack the status to invoke change within the corporate structure. None of the salesmen are part of the rule-creating apparatus; even Williamson answers to higher forces. Like the salesmen, his job requires that he perform according to a strictly adversarial model, or he too will face dismissal. He argues:

I'm *hired* to watch the leads. I'm given . . . hold on, I'm given a *policy*. My job is to *do that*. What I'm *told*. That's it.¹¹

With this argument, Williamson is able to evade a sense of responsibility because he operates only according to what he is permitted to do. The forces over him are the owners, Mitch and Murray, who never appear but are referred to consistently. These bosses are inaccessible, leaving the salesmen to perform with no possibility of negotiating their grievances. Nevertheless, they are a presence, as illustrated when Williamson reinforces his position with statements such as, "Murray said" ¹² Because they exist only in the speech of the salesmen, Mitch and Murray function as a transcendent, yet purely locutionary, form. Their names, taken together, form a signifier for impersonal power.¹³

In Scene Two Moss considers transgressing their power. He and Aaronow express frustrations at the unfairness of the rules, which enable Moss to feel justified in constructing rules of his own. He plans to burglarize the office of all the leads, and then sell them to a competitor, but he wants to convince someone

to burglarize the office for him, so as to deflect suspicion. Like Levene in Scene One, Moss exercises a sales pitch on Aaronow. The dialogue of this scene seemingly begins in communal discourse, but is actually communal with a competitive subtext. Moss supposedly empathizes with Aaronow's situation:

Moss: Polacks and deadbeats.

Aaronow: . . . Polacks . . .

Moss: Deadbeats *all*.

Aaronow: . . . they hold on to their money . . .

Moss: All of 'em. They, *hey*: it happens to us all.

Aaronow: Where am I going to work?

Moss: You have to cheer up, George, you aren't out yet.¹⁴

Moss and Aaronow share a competitive discourse by attributing their own failure to their customers' ethnicity. Due to his declining sales, Aaronow fears expulsion from the office, which would make him a foreigner like the Poles and Indians he derides. This scene parallels Scene One in that an individual's ability to sell is equated not only with sexuality, but with inclusion in the sales community. The fear of losing sales is a fear of losing identity, of becoming a sexual and cultural outcast.

The discourse of Scene Two parallels Scene One in another respect. Scene One depicts a division between communal and competitive, but also shows that the latter can use the former. Like Levene, Moss uses communal discourse as part of his rhetorical strategy to convince Aaronow to participate in the burglary. Consequently, this scene further blurs the boundary between the two types of discourse, demonstrating that as morality becomes transgressive, language becomes slippery as well.

The scene opens with Moss and Aaronow voicing frustration with the exploitive rules governing the sales board:

Aaronow: You're on this . . .

Moss: All of, they got you on this "board . . . "

Aaronow: I, I . . . I . . .

Moss: Some *contest* board . . .

Aaronow: I . . .

Moss: It's not right.

Aaronow: It's not.

Moss: No.¹⁵

By being "on this board," they are metaphorically pieces on a gameboard, with the omnipotent Mitch and Murray as the players. To become players themselves, Moss suggests and finally proposes that they must objectify the employers in an act which, though illegal, appears to have the sanction of morality since it is borne by the desire to right an unfair situation. The consequent verbal exchange expresses frustration with the power that works against their efforts to earn a sound commission, a frustration illustrated by the profusion of pauses (ellipses), stresses (*italics*), and repetition of phrases, all of which are rhetorical markers that indicate an inability to find a potent language:

Moss: . . . you find yourself in *thrall* to someone else. And we *enslave* ourselves. To *please*. To win some fucking *toaster* . . . ¹⁶

In one of the most graphic passages of the text, Moss argues that the system emasculates. He describes how an employer ought not behave:

Look look look look, when they *build* your business, then you can't fucking turn around, *enslave* them, treat them like *children*, fuck them up the ass . . . ¹⁷

Moss also feels like a slave, possessed and humiliated, as though he were an object. These passages suggest that the system not only confines the men; it also attacks their emotional security. To strike back, then, would seem to be an act of self-defense.

Striking back, however, is illegal and would bring economic harm to the other salesmen (though neither one addresses this factor). Thus, Moss proceeds cautiously, permitting the language to defer closure by meandering into secondary meanings without committing himself to those meanings. Mamet's writing in this scene is masterful, as each character tests the intentions of the other by uttering statements of double-intention, and then checking the reactions of the other.

Moss: I want to tell you what somebody should do.

Aaronow: What?

Moss: Someone should stand up and strike *back*.

Aaronow: What do you mean?

Moss: *Somebody* . . .

Aaronow: Yes . . . ?

Moss: Should do something to *them*.

Aaronow: What?

Moss: Something. To pay them back. (*Pause.*) Someone, someone should hurt them. Murray and Mitch.

Aaronow: Someone should hurt them.

Moss: Yes.

Aaronow: (*Pause.*) How?

Moss: How? Do something to hurt them. Where they live.

Aaronow: What? (*Pause.*)

Moss: Someone should rob the office.¹⁸

In this exchange, Moss speaks ambiguously, planting cues (with the vague pronouns "somebody," "someone," and "something") which invite Aaronow's requests for clarification (the interrogatives "Yes . . . ?" "What?" "How?"). Moss's language appears to be communal discourse, for it solicits Aaronow's voice; however, it is a competitive discourse, for its ulterior purpose is to make Aaronow a participant. Moss accomplishes this purpose, for the specific objective—"Someone should rob the office"—appears to emerge only because of Aaronow's questions, thereby making Aaronow appear to be a co-creator of the idea. Thus, success in competitive discourse depends upon the ability to blur the boundary between communal and competitive discourses so that the target of the sales pitch remains unsure of which discourse in which to respond.

Moreover, Moss keeps Aaronow uncertain by his careful choice of pronouns. He subtly shifts from the innocuous "somebody" to the specific "we":

Aaronow: What could somebody get for them?

Moss: What could we *get* for them? I don't know. . . .¹⁹

Aaronow follows his lead in this pronoun shift, as illustrated by the passage below, which is a representative example of how the two characters manage to speak in a verbal no man's land by making the words slide between meanings to suggest general implications without specifying any course of action:

Aaronow: Yes. I mean are you actually *talking* about this, or are we just . . .

Moss: No, we're just . . .

Aaronow: We're just "*talking*" about it.

Moss: We're just *speaking* about it. (*Pause.*) As an *idea*.

Aaronow: As an idea.

Moss: Yes.

Aaronow: We're not actually *talking* about it.

*Moss: No.*²⁰

The difference between "talking" and "speaking" is quite problematic, but in performance the actors may present non-verbal nuances that move the dialogue to the point that Moss directly proposes stealing the leads. However, for a while Moss permits Aaronow to believe that it is his intention to steal the leads himself. He gradually guides Aaronow from the pronoun "you" to the pronoun "me":

Aaronow: You're going to steal the leads and sell the leads to him? (Pause.)

Moss: Yes.

Aaronow: What will he pay?

Moss: A buck a shot.

Aaronow: For five thousand?

Moss: However they are, that's the deal. A buck a throw. Five thousand dollars. Split it half and half.

Aaronow: You're saying "me."²¹

It becomes apparent that Moss' "talk" in this scene has had a subtext: he wants Aaronow to commit the crime. Moreover, another subtext emerges: he is cheating Aaronow, even while speaking with him as a friend:

Aaronow: What is the five grand? (Pause.) What is the, you said that we were going to split five . . .

Moss: I lied. (Pause.) Alright? My end is my business . . .²²

Here, Moss shifts from his earlier transactional speech to a dominant position with adversarial language. He intimidates Aaronow, threatening to implicate him as an accessory if he does not cooperate. Moss explains what Aaronow's crime has been:

Moss: Well, to the law, you're an accessory. Before the fact.

Aaronow: I didn't ask to be.

Moss: Then tough luck, George, because you are.

Aaronow: Why? Why, because you only told me about it?

Moss: That's right.

* * *

Aaronow: And why is that?

Moss: Because you listened.²³

The real crime, as it is construed among these salesmen, is that by listening, Aaronow has placed himself in a passive, or feminine, position. Aaronow failed to master and perform the discourse of competition.

By contrast, the master of competitive discourse is Roma. Scene Three matches him with the least effective practitioner of competitive discourse, Link. Like Moss in Scene Two, Roma erases the boundary between communal and competitive discourse by utilizing the participatory mode of speech to seduce a sales prospect into a business transaction. Roma addresses Link with observations on life and work:

I say *this* is how we must act. I do those things which seem correct to me *today* . . . the *true* reserve that I have is the strength that I have of *acting each day* without fear.²⁴

He generalizes these pragmatic and assertive values for all people, following the speech by introducing himself to Link and presenting a map of the Glengarry Highlands. Apparently, the opportunity Roma has been speaking of is Link's opportunity to listen to him and purchase the land:

Roma: Listen to what I'm going to tell you now:²⁵

At this point, the sales-pitch-proper begins. Both Link and the audience have been fooled into thinking that they were listening to a man's reflections rather than a sales routine. However, the word "listen" and the colon at the end of the line both indicate much forthcoming information for Link to listen to, implying that Roma's previous meditations were used to prepare Link to take the inferior position of listening.

Roma shows that he is the craftiest salesman in the office, for he knows best how to use language to his own advantage by creating fictions for others as a means of serving his own interests. C.W.E. Bigsby observes that in the play, observations about spiritual needs are always preludes to a sales pitch.²⁶ This sales strategy makes an important point about the use of language in business. In a short essay, Mamet remarks that people want words to be "magical and powerful unto themselves," capable of establishing a desired reality through their very utterance.²⁷ He asserts that this childhood desire turns to disillusion once children discover language's capacity for deception. The desire for a language of possibility constitutes the language of business.²⁸ Mamet is accurate because products cannot sell themselves; they need salespeople to speak on their behalf. To bridge the gap between product and consumer, salespeople use a seductive language that is formulated to give customers a sense of control while convincing them that the product will complete their ideal conceptions of themselves. In effect, the salesperson tells stories, just as Levene and Moss weave narratives in

previous scenes. Roma is a skilled salesman because he understands the role of fiction in sales: he "recognizes that what he is selling is not real estate, but hope" and to close the sale "he presents himself as a huckster for truth."²⁹ Mamet makes the salesman an artist-figure. Like the novelist, poet, or playwright, the salesman's economic success depends on his narrative ability. Economic exchange depends on an exchange of language.

Roma calls upon his ability to fabricate with language again in the second act when Lingk returns to nullify the sale upon the orders of his wife. A salesperson must displace or transform a customer's needs, desires, and doubts; thus, Roma cues Levene to cooperate in a play-within-the-play that will help Roma overcome Lingk's cancellation. Two factors undermine such seeming cooperation: Levene has stolen the leads, a violation of Roma's future sales figures; Roma will make a deal with Williamson to give himself a percentage of all of Levene's sales. Yet they work together, with Levene appearing to enjoy their "play" as an exercise in control over a client.

As Bigsby observes, Lingk appears to have a will to believe the fictions Roma tells him.³⁰ Roma initially disarms him by introducing him to "D. Ray Morton" (Levene), and complimenting Lingk's wife's cooking (it is ironic that Roma refers to her in a stereotypically feminine role, because she will turn out to be a formidable power). Then Roma shows Lingk that he is trustworthy by demonstrating that "Morton" trusts him:

Roma: Yes. Is this something that I can talk ab . . .
Levene: Well, it isn't coming *out* until the February
 iss . . . *sure*. Sure, go ahead, Ricky.³¹

The appearance of confidence and the familiar term "Ricky" suggest comradery. Since Lingk is controlled by his wife, Roma and Levene play on his need for male comradery,³² making Lingk feel that by negating the deal he will exclude himself from the fraternity which Roma and "Morton" have permitted him to enter.

Nonetheless, driven by his wife's insistence to defer closure of the deal and of the salesmen's language, Lingk persists. (The omnipotent and impersonal power of Lingk's wife over her husband is similar to the power of Mitch and Murray over the salesmen.) When he reveals that his wife has consulted a consumer agency, Roma appears (or tries to appear) genuinely surprised and offended; "Why did she do *that*, Jim?"³³ Now that his office has been exposed as in poor standing, Roma makes a final effort by arguing that Lingk still has time to withdraw from the sale. Obviously he wants to stall for a few days, which will prevent Lingk from cancelling the deal, thereby ensuring that he will be awarded a Cadillac for ending the sales contest at the top of the board. But as he and Lingk count days (they even discuss whether the weekend days count), it is obvious that Lingk's wife has made their minds up for them. The appearance of Detective Baylen, who brings Levene in for questioning, exposes

to Link the disorganization and dishonesty of the office. Thus, Roma falls back upon the rhetoric he knows best; he launches into a communal discourse, seemingly putting aside business to show friendship:

*Forget the deal, Jimmy. Forget the deal . . . you know me. The deal's dead. Am I talking about the deal? That's over. Please. Let's talk about you. Come on . . . Now I want to talk to you because you're obviously upset and that concerns me . . .*³⁴

Given Roma's previous behavior, we suspect that this kind of speech is not genuine, but another preface to a sales pitch, as we have seen above. Like Levene in Scene One and Moss in Scene Two, Roma blurs the boundary between competitive and communal discourses. By keeping the target of the sales pitch unsure of the discourse, the salesmen prevent their listeners from responding; similarly, by shifting to communal speech, the salesmen can disarm a customer from aggressively resisting the sales pitch. Thus, Link does not detect Roma's strategy of duplicity, and rises to go out with him.

The "play" device concludes as Williamson, trying to role-play along with Roma, reveals to Link that his check has already cleared and the deal is finalized. This is a fiction of Williamson's, his own attempt at being in the same fraternity with the salesmen; however, this story contradicts Roma's "play," and Link flees the office in a panic. Roma then unleashes rage against Williamson in a full exhibition of the brutality of competitive discourse. With a string of vituperative and invective insults, he aims at striking Williamson down until he understands his position in relation to the sales force:

Where did you learn your *trade*. You stupid fucking *cunt*. You *idiot*. Whoever told you you could work with *men*?³⁵

Roma equates Williamson's weak story-telling/sales ability with an assault upon his masculinity, alienating him. The invectives demean both Williamson and females, clearly implying that the sales office is no place for what would be perceived as the inferior capabilities of women. Roma continues berating Williamson, referring to him not only as a woman, but in homosexual terms:

I'm going to have your *job*. . . . I don't care *whose* nephew you are, who you know, whose dick you're sucking on. You're going *out*, I swear to you, you're going . . .³⁶

This graphic, abusive passage not only emasculates Williamson, but also accuses him of having been rewarded his position from knowing or sleeping with the right people, rather than from any talent for the work. In this respect, Roma's tirade continues to point out that Williamson's job is to assist the salesmen,

to help *men* who are going *out* there to try to earn a *living*. You *fairy*.
You company man . . . ³⁷

Again Roma attacks Williamson's sexuality, but in this passage he makes a further distinction between Williamson's safe and passive position in the office, as opposed to the more masculine position of the salesmen, who fend for their survival in a corporate jungle. Finally, Roma delivers a last blow: "You fucking *child*."³⁸ This is "the ultimate epithet for incompetence in the business world";³⁹ Roma uses it to close off Williamson from any claim to the discourse of competition.

Levene punctuates Roma's tirade by emphasizing to Williamson that his knowledge is obtained only in an office: "You have to *live* it . . . you don't belong in this business."⁴⁰ However, Roma and Levene have inadvertently been good teachers for Williamson, for by observing them, he has developed a capability for the discourse of competition. He surpasses Levene by detecting, during Levene's condescending lecture, that Levene is guilty of the burglary. When Levene, reduced again to a pitiable position, tries to argue that he can make up the damage, Williamson reveals that he gave Levene bad leads—the sale will not stick:

Levene: Don't.

Williamson: I'm sorry.

Levene: *Why?*

Williamson: Because I don't like you.⁴¹

From this dialogue, Williamson surprisingly "emerges as the play's most calculating and least sympathetic character."⁴² His adversarial actions are the result of sheer malice; possibly he sees in Levene everything that he fears becoming, that is, a man who is at the end of his career and no longer in control. Or possibly Williamson's motive is to rise to the challenge of competitive discourse, for he demonstrates his prowess in the discourse by showing that his "deal" with Levene in Scene One was a fiction of his own. Consequently, Williamson, despite Roma's and Levene's insults, demonstrates that he can be as competitive and corrupt as they strive to be.

Levene makes a final plea, completely in the discourse of community, for Williamson not to turn him in to the police. He uses communal discourse because he is not in control. Williamson, because he has power, responds completely in the discourse of competition:

Levene: John: John: . . . my *daughter*.

Williamson: Fuck you.⁴³

This is, I think, the most significant moment of the play. Until this episode, Williamson has avoided brutal expletives against another person. By adopting

their discourse, Williamson demonstrates that he now holds the qualifications to be included in the same, masculine, competitive group as the other salesmen. Like the salesmen closing a sale, his invective against Levene illustrates his ability to dominate Levene by closing the discourse.

The characters are clearly divided into those who are verbally dominated (Levene, Aaronow, Lingk) and those who are able to master the discourse of competition, particularly by utilizing (and corrupting) the discourse of community (Williamson, Moss, Roma). Mamet's salesmen use a rhetoric of closure to terminate any receptivity to other language; the system that controls them necessitates such discourse. They turn to transgressive behavior and adversarial discourse out of a drive to survive in a system that annihilates autonomy. Indeed, in the play's conclusion, Roma laments the demise of the pioneering spirit that has been a traditional characteristic of the American ethos, but which modern culture has structured into a socially deterministic context:

. . . it's not a world of men, Machine . . . it's a world of clock
watchers, bureaucrats, officeholders . . . there's no adventure . . .⁴⁴

Stanley Kauffman articulates an accurate metaphor for the salesmen's morality in comparing them to the frightened occupants of a tank speeding into battle.⁴⁵ They fight to survive within a system they do not control, a situation that necessitates aggressive language. They exercise free will, but within a structure that limits their choices. Just as the system and its discourse construct each other, the system and its human subjects create each other. Since both system and subjects share blame, these salesmen do not warrant contempt so much as they deserve pity.

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Notes

1. Douglas Watt, "A Dearth of Honest Salesmen," rev. of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, in *Daily News* 26 March 1984, Rpt. in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews* 45.4 (1984): 335.

2. Dennis Carrol, *David Mamet* (London: MacMillan, 1987) 41.

3. The assumption behind this analysis is paralleled by Foucault's thesis that a system is the sum of discursive configurations which produce and are produced by the system. A system produces and encloses its own discourse and expels any nonconformative utterances by "determining the conditions under which it [the discourse] may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else." See Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972) 224.

4. Foucault's assertion—that language is not just a vehicle for thought, but an object of desire and power in itself—describes the salesmen's use of language: "Speech is no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination . . . it is the very object of man's conflicts." Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" 216.

5. Michael Billington, "Mamet Turns to the World of Salesmen," rev. of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, in *New York Times* 9 October 1983: Sec. 2, P. 6.

6. Stanley Kauffman, "American Past and Present," rev. of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, in *Saturday Review* 10.39 (1984): 59.

7. This clash between two discourses illustrates how a structure creates its own version of truth and expels all others in order to maintain itself. Foucault notes that each system has "the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements . . . [and] the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true." Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, trans. Gordon et al., ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1972) 136.

8. David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1982) 22.

9. 23.

10. 23.

11. 19.

12. 20.

13. For further examination of the roles of Mitch and Murray, see Philip C. Kolin, "Mitch and Murray in David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*," *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, 18.2 (1988): 3-5.

14. Mamet, *Glengarry* 28.

15. 31.

16. 35.

17. 36.

18. 37-38.

19. 38.

20. 39.

21. 41.

22. 46.

23. 45-46.

24. 49.

25. 51.

26. C.W.E. Bigsby, *David Mamet* (London: Methuen, 1985) 117.

27. David Mamet, "Capture the Flag, Monotheism, and the Techniques of Arbitration," *Writing in Restaurants* (New York: Viking, 1986) 3.

28. Mamet, "Capture the Flag" 4.

29. Bigsby, *David Mamet* 119.

30. Bigsby, *David Mamet* 114.

31. Mamet, *Glengarry* 80.

32. Carrol, *David Mamet* 44.

33. Mamet, *Glengarry* 84.

34. 93.

35. 96.

36. 96.

37. 96.

38. 97.

39. Carrol, *David Mamet* 39.

40. Mamet, *Glengarry* 97.

41. 104.

42. Carrol, *David Mamet* 43.

43. Mamet, *Glengarry* 104.

44. 105.

45. Kauffman, "American Past and Present" 59.