Professor David Peimer - The Theatre of David Mamet Myths and Reality in Urban American Culture

- All right, well, welcome everybody and welcome back, David. Lovely to see you. Hi, Judes. Over to you. We're going to be doing David Mamet today.

Visuals are displayed throughout the lecture.

- Okay, we're going to look at David Mamet and his theatre. And this is a picture of young Mr. Mamet, obviously, and I just wanted to show it because it shows not only the, I suppose, you know, the wonders of youth, but also something about, you know, him and his attitude, which is pretty unique, I think, amongst a lot of contemporary playwrights, certainly and other writers, not only in terms of America, but in the world. I think there's quite a unique vision, and some people say it's very dark, some people say it's witty. Some people say it's anti-male, it's anti-female, it's anti-race. It's just anti-everything. Anti-PC, he's been accused of so many things, and yet he has written plays which have been performed endlessly in many parts of the world, translated, performed, staged. And his influence has gone way beyond the shores of America. And I think that there's, what I really want to get to is that there's something about the voice of this writer and this guy that is a voice of dissent regardless of what the ideology of the times may be or the rules, the structures, the so-called social norms or the mores.

There's something in him that is fundamentally to go against the grain. And I don't think it's for the sake of it and just merely gratuitous. I think what is fascinating is that there's something profound in valuing the voice of the dissenter and all through history, going back obviously to the Greeks and to many of the others, whether they were thinkers or writers or artists, musicians who, you know, had a passion, or a compulsive need to go against the grain of some kind. Some of the things which may come out today, and I want to say this upfront, please, they may shock, they may surprise, they may entice, they may enlist, they may provoke anger or pleasure. But one thing that cannot be denied is that his is a literary and dramatic voice that has endured for nearly 50 years and endures today in an extraordinarily but absolutely mainstream way, marginal in terms of dissent, but absolutely mainstream in terms of extraordinary popularity. He's also one of the very few playwrights in the last hundred years to have made it equally as a successful film writer and film director, especially screenwriter. And that's an extraordinary achievement because very few have made that transition. And also very few that still packs people in, absolutely packs people in to come and see the plays.

So, controversial figure, absolutely. And what I want to do is try and tease out some of the ideas that I think make him so endearingly fascinating and controversial. And therefore for me, you know, wonderful. Just to say that at the beginning, there's two connections that I want to just mention, which are a bit personal about Mamet. My father knew of one play, besides obviously some Shakespeare. He'd seen Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." And he'd often refer to that. You know, don't procrastinate, don't hang around, don't wait, you know, Godot, you remember the play, da, da, da. You know, great advice for a kid. The other thing, my father would always say,

everything is a negotiation in life. Everything is a transaction. Everything is a negotiation, no matter what. The personal to the political, to the business, wherever. And one of many of that and other Chinese cookies I get that I got from my father was that, and I remember at an older age telling him about the theatre of Mamet and his eyes lighting up a little bit. So there's something interesting and a personal connection.

Then the second was, there's obviously something about that, you know, his ideas on human culture, human society and human relationships spoke to him from what I was telling him about. He never saw a play about Mamet. The other thing was that when I had the chance to be the first English speaking director in Vaclav Havel's Theatre in Prague, which was an extraordinary experience, 'cause it's a theatre, which is absolutely, it's riveting and flooded with history. You know, that's where he organised the Velvet Revolution from in the late '80s and into the, you know, the early '90s. Havel and all the theatre people, actors, directors, writers, you know, it was hookum they were all sent out all throughout the old Czechoslovakia into different parts of the country with messages as to what to do, who should do it, who shouldn't what, et cetera. Because obviously Havel was a playwright, first and foremost, extraordinary plays, fascinating plays, brilliant, friend of Harold Pinter, friend of Arthur Miller and many others, very close friends. And to able to direct him in his theatre, and the first play that was suggested by the director, the artistic director of the theatre, and in fact myself was Mamet.

And it was fascinating that that was the first one that came to choice. Partly because the language is pretty simple, direct English. So one doesn't have to worry about second language, obviously, that much. But more than that, the dramatic action moves. It's something profound about the West, for me, about human nature and the tensions within the West, not only in America, and it was fantastically, in a sense, it triggered a fantastic response. People love or hate Mamet, but people came and couldn't resist in some way. And a huge challenge to direct it for obviously for people for whom English was very much a minimal third, fourth language perhaps, you know, obviously mostly Czechs in the audience. So, and then with the American ambassador, it was just a weird situation and yet an extraordinary moment. And the play that came instinctively to mind was Mamet's play "Edmond" for that moment. So that's the personal connection which I share. And together with Shepard, I think he and Shepard are probably the two most influential playwrights of the last 50 years of the previous century going into our century now that have stood the test of time, that have endured, and how this guy still is endlessly provocative. We can see it in his eyes, can see the cheeky, charming, fascinating, inviting, alluring look in this young guy's eyes, you know?

And I think he's kept some of that, call it arrogance, call it confidence, self-assurance, whatever, it's there. Okay. What I really like about Mamet is what I'm going to get at is how he challenges us talking from last week on Harari's idea on myth and reality, and when myth becomes a dead issue, and how that becomes a projected fantasy for an individual or a group, you know, a fantasy of what they'd like to be imagining. It's linked to a myth, but it ain't. You know, as Shepard would say, you know, the West, the true West, it's a dead issue. The myth is a dead issue and it becomes a fantasy. And how that changes the individual's persona, you know,

they're living their own total illusion, which doesn't actually have a connection to the collector fiction as Harari would say, the collective imagined myth that holds or bonds the society together. Okay?

For me, Mamet is about challenging those fantasies and those myths in America and the West. And throwing in the question, is it human nature or are there fantasies or myths, or is it something so deep in human nature? And that's what his writing for me provokes. In a way, it goes a little further than Shepard. And Shepard is also very much part of rural America, and a fantastic poet of rural America. Shepard for me, and Mamet is a writer, I would call him a poet of gritty, urban, tough, big city America. And that could obviously be gritty, tough, big city, Johannesburg, London, Paris, wherever in the world. And that's his allure. And I think, and it contrasts and compliments Shepard in an extraordinary way. For me, Mamet is, it's all about competition, but in the profound sense of the human condition, obviously in business, which is one of his main obsessions. You know, to understand how does business really work as a human relationship phenomenon really?

Kafka said, you know, everybody thinks the office is such a boring, stupid place. It's not, it is a place of fantastical opportunity artistically. And that insight of Kafka is referred to by many writers from Pinter, Mamet, many, many others. Fantastical. The best translation from the German I can find. Because there's war, there's love, there's hate, there's compassion, there's jealousy, there's forgiveness, there's betrayal, there's ambition, there's competition, there's murder, et cetera. Happens in the little office that we all know. Okay, so for me, this is the vision of, part of the vision of Mamet is that when he talks about business or he talks about competition, it's going deeper than the obvious sort of, I suppose, quick headline. Winning, losing, fighting, power. All of these things are so deep inside human condition qualities we all accept and know. Question is how are they played out in our times and in Mamet's writing in particular. Human nature or fantasies which have arisen from inherited myths which are now dead and fantasies in people's minds.

And I'm reminded of Roosevelt's great comment with the land lease agreement with Churchill, you know, saying, well, imagine, you know, I'm sure everybody knows this, but you know, if your neighbor's house is on fire, it's in your interest to take the hose and give him some water and put it out because your house could be next. It's a brilliant way of Roosevelt or his speech writer to encapsulate, you know, what Harari would call a myth appropriate for that time. Not only to think of myself, the individual all the time, but my neighbour also. And as far as I understand, he used this as a myth to generate in American culture to help get huge public support for the land lease programme. And this is what I want to look at is in business and in mythology, when is it that competition is actually turned and made appropriate in a culture that it really helps human progress and human endeavour, which is a necessity of the time?

And it's a, for me, Roosevelt's example shows what Mamet would, I think, feel is an enchanting addition to something which may be called a dead issue, a dead myth, but is, you know, has become a value, which is not distorted, but it comes from within the culture of individualism,

Western individualism, individualist capitalism. His vision is of the hustler, the conman, the con artist. I said urban and gritty, power and money. The ruthlessness of competition, not only in business, but in daily life. You know, it's at school, at university, in the job, in the work. For him, for Mamet, it would be in the family, in the dating world, wherever. Its competition is so powerful and deep, going back to Harari where his 30 monkeys, and they each have, and, you know, a couple of monkeys bring in a whole lot of 30 bananas, but if we each have one everybody can have and everybody will be utopian happy, you know, naive or not. Or what if the leader has five, the leader of the monkeys has five bananas, number two has maybe three or four and et cetera, et cetera, you can imagine.

And it gets parcelled out like that. How are they going to work out? And from there, and obviously monkeys are not going to do that. But humans and Harari's example of monkeys and bananas is how are we going to deal with competition as a myth and therefore capturing a value in our own lives? And this for me, I think is what Mamet looks at. He's trying to understand power, competition, ruthless, utter self-interest, enlightened self-interest, compassionate self-interest, and all these things. Okay? So what I would say is that it's not just the law of the jungle, to use that terrible jargon. For me, it's rather these deeper questions of how do these a aspects of human nature or inherited values become, play out in our times? Ultimately, survival. What do we need to survive? And the contest for me is between what may be human nature, what may be dominant values in a society, or the endless rich conflict between the two. The con artist for Mamet knows the game and controls the rules. So the trick is to become the con artist and not to be the conned. And what do those mean in terms of competition and power?

And what is fascinating is how he finds it in the hustler, in the gambler, in the con artist, in the street criminal. He finds this way of understanding instead of the tiresome jargon of criminality. He understands it in an entirely different way with these kinds of words. I want to give you a couple of phrases from Mamet before coming onto these ones here. When he was hired to work on other people's Hollywood films when he was still young, before he had made it, in the very early days of his career, he said, "Being a writer in Hollywood is like going into Hitler's eagle's nest with a great idea for a bah mitzvah festival." The wit is Jewish, remember, and comes from a very rigid, very Jewish family. The wit, the twisting of phrases, the putting together of ideas is classic Mamet. And you know, that's what I like so much, is that it's always with wit, it's always with charm and humour. And so many of his characters I think are misunderstood. If you act them seriously and over earnest, it's a mistake.

Got to find the comic, got to find the satire and the humour, just the sheer wit in a phrase like that, disturbing and horrific. But wit, it's classic satire, classic satire, okay? So he uses in his language, as I said, one of the reasons for doing it in Prague at that time, he strips language of literary niceties. He robs plot of decoration, which can sometimes tame theatre. His plays, although they're absolutely rooted in an urban, gritty, tough, big city America are fables of modern times. They're satires, they're fables. Similar to when Kafka always said that all, you know, for him, all writing was parable and fable. And when you look at his, you know, his novels, et cetera, they're fables. They're not literal and realistic and naturalistic and so on. His language

is terse, it's vicious. There's a brutal wittiness, there's a, how he orchestrates words and ideas, which are for me, endearingly captivating.

One of his great successes, which I'll come to you in a moment, was "Wag the Dog," which I'll talk to you a bit later as a screenwriter with Robert De Niro and Dustin Hoffman. I'm sure many people know, it's one of the great classics. Another phrase from which Mamet often quoted was from the great jazz and blue singer, Lead Belly in America and Lead Belly once said, "You take a knife, you use it to cut bread, so you'll have the strength to work. You use it to shave, so you'll look nice for your lover. And then when you discover your lover with another partner, you'll cut out your lover's heart with the same knife."

And it's that perception of life and that vision, a knife to cut bread, a knife to shave and look good for somebody else, and a knife to cut out the heart of a person who's betrayed you. You know? So everything has multiple meanings. Competition, business, power, everything has many meanings within Mamet. It's not reducible to one naive binary, you know, well, he's all provost and his anti that in the plays themselves. They're far too sophisticated as parables and satires. I think in Mamet, there's a sense of not belonging, as I said, because for me, he is a voice. He's a classic dissenter voice, which goes way back to the trickster. We see the fool in Shakespeare, but the fool in Shakespeare and the theatre up until the 20th century, the fool, the trickster character, the dissenter voice, never has agency, never has the power to make a decision to influence the main characters. The fool is always a comic character on the side, narrating, commenting, and influenced by until Dario Fo and until the great comedians, Groucho and many of the others, Chaplin and so on, who took the trickster and the comic character and made that the centre of the play or the film.

And that for me is what Mamet has done, developing that whole line. And Daria Fo does it brilliantly in "Accidental Death of Anarchist" in theatre where the trickster, the conman, the hustler, the playful, the mischievous, the only allegiance is to hisself, but absolutely aware of destroyed compassion, destroyed human feeling, and got to survive and got to make good and win in society of ruthless competition. In the 20th century, that character becomes so central. And it's a fascinating development in theatre and literature because it happens in literature as well, where that character becomes so central. And I think it reflects something very powerful of our own times. Okay In the face of authority's lies. The imperative to speak art, to speak as a dissenting voice. Whether one loves or hates Mamet, he does speak art and he's not scared. And it comes from this sense of not belonging. Okay, "People may say, may or may not say what they mean, but they always say something designed to get what they want." See how he just gets right to the point in two lines? It doesn't matter whether we evasive, as Pinter would say, we use language to evade honest communication. That's Pinter's great phrase. Mamet, and they were great friends. And Mamet would say, doesn't matter, somewhere hidden is always you can pick up what a person wants. "It's only words, unless they're true."

The irony, call it Jewish or call it not, whatever. It's just ironic, okay? Play with words what he does all the time that are, you know, memorable. "Every fear hides a wish." One of the opening

lines in the play, "Edmond," you know, you can sit and look at that and imagine, is this complete nonsense? It's given by a fortune teller in the play. You know, Edmond goes to see a fortune teller, right, in the very first scene of the play. Is it nonsense? Is it fortune teller? Is it image? Is it complete garbage? Is it horoscope newspaper stuff? Is it real, isn't it? You know, I have to, I still think about this a lot. Even having directed this and all the rest of it. "Accepted nowhere, belonging nowhere, The Human Ant is forced to roam the world, half-ant, half-cow." It's a joke. He's trying to do almost like a Marx Brother's twist for himself. The irony, the wit, the humour, accepted nowhere. Note he starts with accepted nowhere and then belonging nowhere. It's the old story of Shylock, assimilate, try to be accepted, see what happens. Can you ever really be accepted? Not only if you're a Jewish writer like Mamet, but if you're a writer and you go against the grain, or an artist, or a composer, whatever, are you accepted nowhere?

Can you ultimately be accepted if you're somehow deemed to be a little different to the dominant inherited myths of your society or the dominant beliefs of a society? We know the Jews, obviously in the history, et cetera, but obviously many other races, religions, genders, you know, but it's the word accepted that it fascinates me that comes first. Usually so many theorists and writers would always talk about belonging. And then the human ant roaming the world. It's not the image, you know, tiny little ant, well, it isn't an ant hill, but you know, roaming, et cetera. It's ridiculous, this image. It's parody, it's satire. Okay, then I spoke about Harari. Judy, if we could go on onto the next one, please. Thank you. This is Mamet on the left, you can see, you know, a cheerful, joking, witty, fun Mamet. And then on the left on your screen, and then next to it is John Malkovich. And I put this here because Malkovich has acted in a lot of his plays and films, and he's one of the ideal Mamet actors for his theatre in a way.

That sardonic you know, reserved circumspect, observant, insightful wit and thought, which just cuts to the chase, cuts to the bar, cuts to the bone, and yet be kind of sardonic and witty and mischievous and cheerful. You know, it's got all those, for me, charming qualities. And then another picture of Mamet next to him with a French beret, God knows why. And then there, this is his studio where he works. Thanks, Judy, if we go to the next, please. Okay, I'm going to look at some of the key players and films, but before, just give a very brief bio. He's won the Pulitzer Prize. He's won Tony nominations for "Glengarry Glen Ross," 1984. That's regarded as his great play, film was made of it. "Speed the Plough," a movie was also made of that. "House of Games," he wrote and directed. "Spanish Prisoner," he wrote and directed. "Heist," his biggest commercial success, 2001. He wrote the screenplay for "The Postman Always Rings Twice," Jessica Lange acting. He wrote for the screenplay for "The Untouchables," you know, about Al Capone and the IRS following his taxes, Kevin Costner character and the Sean Connery character.

Anyway, following the taxes of Al Capone, in order to finally bring Capone down, he wrote "The Untouchables" for that. And then in 1997, "Wag the Dog." Which had an Academy Award nomination. "Oleanna" in 1992, one of the most controversial of all was a play and a film. He also wrote something called "The Old Religion," which was a novel about the lynching of Leo Frank, separate story. He wrote "Five Cities of Refuge: Weekly Reflections on Genesis, Exodus,

Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy" in 2004. He wrote a Torah commentary with Rabbi Lawrence Kushner. He wrote "The Wicked Son," 2006, A study of Jewish self-hatred and anti-Semitism. This guy, and he's written books on theatre, on playwriting, which are studied endlessly all over the world in drama schools and read secretly or not by everybody in theatre and film. "Writing in Restaurants," one of his great books about his own process to writing. And is writing films, directing, writing plays, books about theatre, books about Jews and history. The five books of Moses, Jewish self-hatred, et cetera, "Wag the Dog."

An extraordinary, extraordinary treasure of artistic output and material. In my opinion. He just doesn't stop, you know? And I think once he had realised his voice, once he had decided on his signature approach, it became compulsive and relentless. He was born to Lenore, his mother was a teacher in Chicago in '47. Father Bernard was a labour attorney and they were sort of upper middle class, middle class Jewish. And his grandparents on his father's side were Polish Jewish. And he grew up in quite a religious Jewish family, or at least very strongly culturally and historically Jewish, very aware of his own family history and legacy. Secular, but also I think, from what I understand, fairly religious. So "House of Games" won the 1987 Venice Film Festival, Film of the Year. It won the London Film Critic Circle Award. He directed "Catastrophe," which is a remarkable player by Samuel Beckett. And it had Harold Pinter and John Gilbert acting in it. I give this because I want to show this guy is not just this lone, crazy, misunderstood, masculine writer out there, but completely connected with the literary and artistic circles of his time and theatre circles, you know, the London film critics, the New York film critics, et cetera.

And accorded accolades by society, however, provocative and upsetting his work has been to a lot of people. He has an interesting idea in one of his books "Directing Film," where he asserts that directors in theatre and film should focus on getting the point of a scene across, not just simply follow the main character's journey. That's a huge shift in thinking about directing. Focus on what is the meaning, what is the idea in this scene? How am I going to effectively communicate it to an audience? And that's what guides the directing, the staging, the set, the costumes and music, everything. Not only following the main character. And that's a huge shift and change in a thinking about directing. So, you know, he's not only interested in intriguing shots, beautiful visuals, he's interested in what is the idea that I'm trying to get through here and then move on, get the action going onto the next scene.

He's contributed as a blogger to the Huffington Post satirical cartoons about political strife in Israel, political strife in America in the West. In 2008, he wrote an essay for "The Village Voice," "Why I Am No Longer A Brain-Dead Liberal." The wit, you have to laugh, you have to see it. No matter whether you're liberal, conservative, in between, whatever. And the whole essay is about rejecting political correctness for him. "Why I Am No Longer A Brain-Dead Liberal." It's something highly controversial. And I wasn't sure whether to share this today or not. And I had to think a lot about it. But I'm going to, and I'm merely sharing 'cause I've tried to draw the context of where he comes from, the remarkable other writers and theatre and film people, de Niro, Dustin Hoffman, so many others he worked with, respected, you know, he's part of that whole world and generation. Pinter, Beckett, Peter Brook, the National Theatre in London,

everywhere. I'm trying to draw that picture because that's the allure. When he was interviewed about a book that he had written and he was promoting it and he was interviewed by "The New York Times." And he said, and I'm quoting, "The British have a taint of anti-Semitism.

Why do they want to give Israel away to some people whose claim to it is a bit dubious?" Now that's a quote, and I know it's highly provocative, but I felt it was important to share it because he's also written a book about the self-hating Jew. He's also written a book about antisemitism. He's also written these extraordinarily popular films and theatre and is connected, as I say, it's a voice of a dissenting artist and writer. And I think, as Arthur Miller would say, attention must be paid, whoever the dissenting voice is. And in the same interview he went on to say, quote, "There are famous writers in the UK whose works maybe have some little touches of anti-Semitism." End quote. Mamet refused to give examples 'cause he didn't want to be sued under the British libel laws. The interview was carefully done in New York City with his lawyers. He's profoundly pro-Israel. He's profoundly pro-Jewish. He's a man of many qualities. Fascinating contradictions, fascinating visions and passions. And I think to deny a voice like this would be to be reducing, would be to play into, you know, the naivety of censorship and the damage it can really, really do. He's not calling for anybody to kill people.

He's not calling for people to storm the Bastille, you know, shake this up or go and, you know, blow up whatever. He's giving a comment about other writers. But of course he's scared of defamation, but he doesn't mention their name. Okay? There's a cynical streetwise, street smart edge to his writing. It's crafted for that effect. He's not interested in the kind of pretty and poetic nuance of lyrical poetry and lyrical theatre. When asked about how he developed his writings, his dialogue. The snappy, quick, it's really, a lot of it comes from Groucho and many others. And he said, "In my family, well, we were Jewish," this is quoting, "In the days before television, we like to wile away the evenings by making ourselves miserable based solely on our ability to speak the language viciously. That was my family. That's where my ability was honed." And then as his sister Lynn said, "We lived," yeah, Lynn Mamet, "We lived in an emotional hurricane. That was our family upbringing. We were Jewish." That's his sister. They were descended from Ashkenazi Jews. Okay. He dedicated "Glengarry Glen Ross" to Harold Pinter, who was instrumental in it being first staged at the National Theatre in London. One of his biggest, most controversial plays and films was "Oleanna," the one at the bottom.

I'm not going to go into that in detail, but merely mention. The one I'm going to go into a bit more detail is "Glengarry Glen Ross." And in that play, it's a professor, a female student who fails and comes asking the professor for a higher mark. I'm sure everybody has seen it, actually, so I'm not going to go into it. And it results in a sexual harassment claim and all the rest of it between the professor and the female student. There was a group in Milwaukee who tried to change it to make it an all male cast so the professor would be male and the student would be male. And Mamet refused permission. So what I said, competition, war, the inherited beliefs, political correctness, all these things of a society. What is the myth? What is the reality? What is the role of the writer even? The writer becoming a myth on his own accord. You know, the dissenter, the kind of Hyde Park corner voice. But it's actually given a voice, a position of privilege, status,

power, and money in a society precisely by being, you know, the trickster, outsider, dissenter.

The ironies just pile up on each other. So "Oleanna," everybody knows. And in fact, one of the early productions of it in America, and literally couples were screaming at each other by the end of the play, coming out at each other's emotional throats. For a play in our times to still provoke a response like that, I think it's extraordinary. I think it's almost unheard of that a play can still provoke such emotional, intense argument, discussion, debate. I mean, how many people see theatre? A few hundred thousand in the world. It's so tiny. It's so small. And yet theatre punches so huge for me in the global and national imaginations, not only of the West, of other countries. And the writers and the artists too. It's extraordinary. And it's one of the myths of our times. Who knows? I don't know if it goes back to the storyteller in prehistoric times, or it goes back to the shaman or whatever, the religious figure. But there's something there.

And for it still to provoke, I find it really, it's tough for me to believe. Okay, going on to "Wag the Dog." So as I've said here, it's set just before an election and a spin, I'm not going to go into detail 'cause I'm sure many have seen it, the spin doctor and the Hollywood producer, and that's the, the spin doctor is the de Niro character. And the Hollywood producer is Dustin Hoffman. And they worked to fabricate a war to cover up a presidential sex scandal because the guy's standing to be re-elected as president. "Wag the Dog." And it's so funny, it's witty, it's quick, it's sharp, it's the best of Dustin Hoffman and de Niro in their wittiest best. And trying to show, not only there's, it's not just about emasculinity, it's about the planes of competition and power. Who's conning who? Who's the hustler? Who's the con artist?

It's showing the liar, not only in a moral way, but as an endearingly fascinating, the con artist, the hustler, the gritty, the grime, the player, the trickster, you know, all of these inherited myths, again, from not only American, but Western culture. People often talk about how, you know, one of the fascinating myths for me in England in the UK is that sort of history and legacy of the pirates and the buccaneer spirit. It's still there somewhere. Is it a myth? Has it become a dead issue and a fantasy in England? A buccaneer swashbuckling free spirit to go out and conquer the world, you know, get on the ship and sail out there? Or is it real or is it a fantasy? Is it part of a myth or a fantasy for Brexit. I merely throw out the ideas that Mr. Mamet provokes in me. "Wag the Dog." It's a fake war to help reelect this guy, the president, and to cover up. So to do a distraction, classic politics 101, do a distraction from the main issue of the sex scandal.

And they create it and they set it up and then the Hollywood producer gets carried away completely. And he wants, this is his greatest production. This is going to make him so famous, so popular. It's his ultimate. 'Cause he's done a lie, a spin job on the whole culture, on the whole of the West, America and the West. And he gets caught up with hubris and his own sense of pride and power. The de Niro characters, whoa, chill buddy, back out. It's just a game. It was a con. We're con artists. We make, you know, imagined fictions of nonsense. But you know, we make fake news, we're just playing games. And when does it spill over and become too much too far? It's one thing to spin and it's one thing to play and create the lie as is "Wag the Dog" and fabricate a false war, fake news, false wars. And I'm not only talking about Trump, by the

way, you know, this happens in any culture.

And Goebbels was the absolute master, as we all know. Fabricate, you know, the attack on the little Polish radio station as a kind of so-called invitation to invade the whole of Poland. And, you know, war. So, and it goes all the way through history, obviously Alexander the Great, many others. So here, and Mamet captures it. Now, this is written so long ago, and yet it's so ancient and so much part of our times. And that's why I think he understands power, he understands the lie, the great lie, how to play it, how to spin it, how to con, how to be the hustler. And then of course, you know, in the great tradition, the Hollywood producer gets so caught up in his own pride and glory and fame. He's famous and huge. He's made the ultimate Hollywood movie. What could be better? It's become a reality and it's a complete lie and fake. And the reality based character of de Niro, you know, tries to chill him down, can't, and you can imagine the end. Okay, I want to go on a bit. Mamet spoke about for him and his writing came from his family that he mentioned, the sort of terse, gritty urban use of streetwise language from Chicago. And he says the Chicago literary tradition is not born from the universities. It's born out of the sports desk and the city desk of his newspapers. And Hemingway revolutionised English prose.

For him, Hemingway's, "For me," this is Mamet talking. "My inspiration, Hemingway's inspiration was the telegraph and Western Union taught every word cost something. Chicago literature came from the newspaper. And its purpose in those days were to tell people what happened, truthful or not, exaggerated or not, tell 'em what happened. I believe one might theoretically forgive somebody who cheats at business, but fascinatingly, one never forgives one who cheats at a game of cards. For business, adversaries operate at arms length. We cheat, we lie, we deceive, we betray. The card player is under strict rules of the game. Where I wonder, does the human love relationship stand?" He always tries to find, for me, it's interesting 'cause yes, these are popular icons of culture that he's putting together, but it's a fascinating way of twisting them with wit to, it forces a double take to just think on it. Then he goes on, and for me, this is a, he talks about his own, the qualifications for political writer. He talks about his political epiphany and he talks about what is fake to some and real to others.

What's a myth to some and what's fantasy to others, what's real and what's fantasy? And it reminds me of the great quote from Disraeli, what is virtue to some is vice to others. And the insight into human nature and how to play with social values, for me, speaks directly. And I'm making a huge link to myself and to Mamet here. It's one of the qualifications for a political writer, for me, from Mamet and Mamet's argument, the inability, he says, "The ability to be either an aspiring critic or the inability to write for the sports page." Okay. Every scene in theatre should have two questions. Who wants what from whom and what happens if they don't get it? For me, this is a metaphor for his vision of competition and power mythologized through business. Transactional and want in the West. And the more he shows it, but it's with the wit and the sharp quick humour and the story that moves and resonates is not just a simple polemic meaning. The more he sets that up, the more the great irony of his theatre emerges and dawns on the audience slowly. Human empathy is shipwrecked in our times.

It's there, but it's drowning. For me, it's in his plays. We feel it as we laugh. We follow the competing human animals, the human ants that roam all over the place in the fantastical office scene. We long for the human empathy, but it's a shipwreck in a drowning sea. Mamet talks fascinatingly about "Superman" comics and that they're a fable, not of strength, but disintegration. They appeal to the child because deep inside Superman, there are two personalities, the wimp and the hero, and only kryptonite, when that green kryptonite shows from his youth, from his home, his family, that's when he's reduced to be honest, I'm wimp and I'm hero, and I'll become wimp again. The split personalities. And he links it to being derived from the extreme ruthless, competitive ethos. What is the kryptonite? The kryptonite is the remnants of childhood, the shards of a messy or an upsetting childhood. The remnants. Superman can only be wimp or hero. When he goes back to his childhood and his past in Krypton and the kryptonite is there, he shrinks back to being the terrified child caught up with those messy shards, even though he's an adult man.

And it prevents him from taking on the hero. The fear of childhood prevents him from being integrated as a man later in life. And it's a fascinating understanding of a fable, you know, and how it works. And for me, why it's so popular in the West read by kids everywhere. Far from being invulnerable, Superman is the most vulnerable of all. His childhood is destroyed and he's terrified for it to come back. It'll keep him from being the heroic man of his fantasy, of his own mythology. An allegory of our times, not only about man, I think woman, many, many people, cultures, I think, torn between different understandings of the past and the memory and their role in contemporary life. The past, the memory of values, beliefs, and understandings when they are set entirely in the contemporary post-truth, post-modern world of reality TV, which is not reality at all. It's totally manufactured, edited, acted, scripted, lit, designed, everything. It's "Wag the Dog." So the essence of another thing I have to mention here is one of his comments. You know, he changed from being a liberal and he said, this is Mamet, "I examined my liberalism and I found it like an addiction to roulette." That image.

You know, it's different from a poetic image, it's endearing and it goes straight in. But it forces, for me, thought and endless thought. What? Liberalism is like an addiction to roulette? Well, the odds are clear in roulette, there's certainty, 99.9% certainty you're going to lose. But there's always the hope and it is playing with the illusion that comes into the fascination with roulette. It's the card game, the con game, the hustler game, the gambling, the gamble in life. All of these iconic characters and qualities which come out of fascinatingly rich culture of America in the 20th century. All these things in Mamet, and he's finding, for me, much deeper resonant meanings. In the way I mentioned, the pirate, the buccaneer spirit out to go out there and explore and conquer the world, I think for me was very much the English of the previous century and before that. So all of this he tries to understand in some deeper meaning, and I'm linking it to his plays in the same way about competition and business. So to go quickly onto the plays, I'm going to just do the others briefly and then but little bit more on "Glengarry Glen Ross." And "Edmond" is about a man who leaves his wife, big city, upper middle class, but doesn't have a clue what real street life is about. It could be New York, it could be Chicago.

And he just decides one night, he goes, sees a fortune teller and she says, "You know, every fear hides a wish," and he feels unfulfilled. This sort of empty middle class cliche of the hole in the soul, you know, a bit vacuous spirit, you know, what's the meaning of life is this what his life has been all about? Where's it going? You know, his wife, you know, they've been together for years, you know, 20 years, et cetera. Soulless, you know, on a desperate search for soul and a desperate search for meaning, humanity in some way. And the experiences he goes through, he meets a pimp, he meets a prostitute, he meets killers on the street. Eventually he gets picked up for, you know, for a killing that he kills of a prostitute. And he eventually ends up in prison and it's just one night of the streets. And the idea is from this cocoon comfortable world of wealth and achievement and success in the bourgeois sense, the aspiration.

He's reached the aspiration of Western individualism. Not only in Western individual capitalism, but Western individual. He's reached it, he's achieved it, and yet feels so empty, middle class crisis, all that jargon. And what happens, he ends up in prison, and obviously ironically finds, not really meaning, but understanding. In the great tradition of theatre, you know, you have to go through an enormous amount of tourists and hustle and nightmare in order to come to a simple understanding. Like "King Lear." The arrogance and the hubris. You know, I'm the king, I own the land. My daughters, I'll decide who gets what. I'll decide your, you know, your husbands and this and that. I'll decide everything. I couldn't give a damn about you kids, you know, it's, I'm the king, et cetera. And then the crash when he discovers that the kids have outwitted him, completely outflanked him on every level and the kids and the daughter's husbands and all the rest of it goes through this crazy mad thing on the heath, you know, his only buddy is the fool.

And at the end, you know, he's there with a dying Cordelia and he realises compassion, bit of compassion and love, the only two things of real value in life. He'd have to go through the whole journey to realise something he knew at the beginning, but his hubris prevented him from seeing. And that's classic brilliance of drama. That is the ultimate dramatic irony of how true great drama works. It was there in the beginning, but he was blinded like Oedipus, blinded like King Lear, blinded. He can't see and has to go through all of the and the tragedy and the pathos and the comedy and the wit to see what was always there. It's a great dramatic irony of really true theatre. Macbeth has to go through all this stuff of ambition and vaulting ambition and kill Banquo and kill Duncan and Banquo's sons and the king's and prove to his wife, he's not the human look of human kindness. Prove that he's the tough cookie in the, you know, of all the generals. To finally realise he ain't as ruthless and ambitious a general that he thought he was at the very end. Life's but a poor shadow.

He struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. That is at the end of Macbeth. He understands everything that was there in the beginning, but his hubris, ambition drove him in another direction to not see what was right there. And that is one of the great, how great theatre uses irony at the end when you see something that was always there. And we know this in life, and we always use the word ironic. Anyway, that's what great theatre does, in my personal opinion. Okay. In "Speed the Plough," there's Hollywood producers who have a bet, you know, it's a similar story and they're desperate to have, it's all gamblers. They're betting, it's

gambling, it's betting, it's the con artist. It's the player within business and competition. All these contemporary icons that I think we all love. We love movies with all these characters in. We admire them somewhere because they're trying to figure out a way to survive and be cunning in the true sense of the word. Anyway, these are Hollywood producers.

They've got the deal for what's going to be a sure fire hit. And then along comes the very attractive secretary to the one producer. And she says, basically has said to the guy, "Look, I want you to make this really meaningful for, you know, about the environment and other things." Anyway, so he has a bet with his other producer. Well, I'll still seduce her and I'll still come back and we'll still make the smash hit film. He goes, he seduces her that night, but comes back and tells his buddy, "We're not going to make the smash hit movie anymore. We're going to make my secretary's movie." And the buddy is furious and angry and everything. And then he says, "Okay, but I'll take you, , one question." And he asked the secretary to come in and she says, "Yes, of course I seduced him. Of course I seduced him.

And I said, if I'll seduce you, but the deal is in return, you'll make my, you know, my meaningful environmental another film." So it's Machiavelli within Machiavelli. It's nuanced. It's playing, you know, with irony and betting and conning. Who's outwitting who, who's out flanking who, who's out transactioning who? Who's maybe got a hint of empathy and who ain't? It's satire, even though it's completely cutthroat. It's again, a parable for me. It's not literal. Okay, "Glengarry Glen Ross," briefly. I'm sure everybody knows this was his great, for me, the finest player of all, which is really, if I can have a few minutes, you all know it, I'm sure everybody's seen it and it's, you know, force, it's a couple of salesmen. And the basic deal is, thanks, Judy. If we could show it.

Video clip plays.

- Let me have your attention for a moment. Put that coffee down. Let's talk about something important. 'Cause we're adding a little something to this month's sales contest. As you all know, first prize is a Cadillac El Dorado. You want to see second prize? Second prize is a set of steak knives. Third prize is your fired.

Video clip ends.

- Thank you. Okay, thanks. We can hold it there. If we could go into the last slide, please. Okay, so I'll come to "Glengarry Glen Ross," "Speed the Plough." "It's lonely at the top, but it ain't crowded." It's the wit of Mamet. "Life in the movie business is like the beginning of a new love affair; it's full of surprises and you're constantly getting fucked." "Glengarry Glen Ross," look how he writes it with a punctuation. "Put. That coffee. Down. Coffee's for closers." The way to act it is written in which we just saw the Alec Baldwin character. So the inciting incident in the play, in the film, first prize is Cadillac. Anyone want a second prize? Second prize is a set of steak knives. Third prize, you're fired. In that sentence, the inciting incident of the film, the play, is set up and the rest of it is a playing out of that. They're terrified they're going to lose their jobs,

they're not going to have money. How are they going to live, how are they going to survive, how are they going to put food on the table for family? The boss has the power to do this. It's a fable, but it's satire, but it's ruthless and it's about competition, obviously business and power and how they then try to outwit, out flank, how they steal the leads, how they sell property, which is worthless property and they sell it knowing it's worthless, knowing it's got complications on the land, trying to sell it to people. It doesn't matter.

It's a bit like Arthur Miller's play where the father is selling intentionally faulty parts of an aeroplane during the Second World War. More aeroplane crashes, more business 'cause more planes will be, you know, bought and, you know, "All My Sons," the Arthur Miller play and the same here, selling land, which is worthless and meaningless, but if you, long as you can get the lead, long as you can sell. So the whole idea of what it is to sell, what it means when the persona of the human becomes sale. Going beyond Arthur Miller's tragedy, "Death of a Salesman." He's asking, yeah, 'cause Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman" is beyond, he's already in another realm of defeat, of almost accepting defeat. And he's drowning. Here these characters are trying to con, outwit, hustle, find a way to come back and survive and anything to destroy the competition and not be the one who gets the third prize of being fired. And that means take each other on, fight each other, battle it out in the office, on the phone, you know, meeting potential sellers. Becoming the best salesperson.

To sell is the persona. Humane values and humanity has to be sacrificed to keep the job. What do you do if you don't do the job? So he makes it into a fable, but, for me, takes it beyond Arthur Miller, develops on Arthur Miller. Everything is business, everything, personal relationships. These are buddies working in the office together, worked for years, but suddenly the boss comes in and unknown bosses who do this in many parts of the world, you know, whether they're doing it to play or as they say, you know, push as hard as you can, see who will push back in contemporary jargon. So it's transactional. Who's going to win, who's going to fight? And all that Mamet is bringing in addition to take Arthur Miller further, is that the sales, you have to do anything to sell. And that becomes the entire persona. And then what of all other humanity values and dreams of life are corrupted, are shrunken, are drowned in this drive. And that that the bosses have the power to dictate it. Terrifying when one person or a couple of bosses can have so much power. Everyone is so terrified. They'll believe, is this a lie he's talking about? Third prize is you're fired? Is it a game? We're never quite sure in the play. Is it a lie? Is it a game? But the power lies with those individuals who are the boss and others are so scared to stand up, speak out, you know, the imperative to at least speak out and say, "Listen, this is madness. Let's all go together. Tell the boss it's bullshit." They can't.

They succumb, they collude with their own domination and they give in and they allow themselves to conform to what they didn't want to. The system forces them to use their God-given human talents to do anything to survive and to win. The result of ruthless competition. Anything to survive and win. Unlike Willy Loman. The characters are quick witted, audacious, cunning, treacherous, portraying a tenacity. This is the trickster of all great comic characters, the kind that I've been talking about to survive and win. That's the great comic

character of the 20th century. You know, the ones I mentioned, Groucho, Chaplin, Abbott and Costello, and many others. Mamet if I may say, our civilization is convulsed and dying. And it has not yet gotten the message. It's sinking, but it has not sunk into complete barbarity quite yet. I often think that the nuclear war exists for no other reason than to spare us that indignity of that barbarity. The wits, the playfulness of all of it is there. And I guess what I would like to finally say is what I admire about him, of being an individual dissenting voice, not being prepared to be PC, not being prepared to just echo sort of sentiments of the time, but trying to put together all these iconic contemporary myths in a way that make us look at it again, make us throw out the question, is it all human nature? Is it something that is so part of our society?

Is it something that is so far gone in the way that we live, that we don't even think about it anymore, that it's a fantasy or not? And I guess that, for me, what he's interested in the end is finding metaphors for Western culture and Western ways of living with the ironies that we have at the end. And I personally feel we're always going to need these kind of writers, the voices of dissent from the so-called norm. Thanks so much. And sorry it went over a couple of minutes.

- [Judy] Thank you, David. David, do you have any, do you have time to do a few questions?

- Yes, sure.

- [Judy] We'll keep it open for a few minutes. If you want to just look on the Q&A, if there's any questions that you are able to answer.

Q&A and Comments:

- Okay. Thank you. From Dra. Can you please expound your last week's wonderful lecture. We spoke about relationship between fantasy and myth. Just in essence, for Shepard, the cowboy myth, the independent free spirit character who can roam, who's independent of social norms and society's rules. That's the myth of the cowboy spirit come down through obviously American culture in the West. Fantasy for Shepard was when that is a dead hit, in his words, in the play, "True West," that is a dead issue, it's a nonsense. It belongs to historical films, doesn't exist anymore in contemporary culture. And all that happens is the fantasy of constant self invention that has come out of the cowboy myth, constant self invention. He gives Bob Dylan as an example, and you can self invent with reality TV, with social media, everything, you can constantly self invent in any way. And as long as you get enough people to buy into your constant lie of self invention, you're fine. So it's the link between fantasy and the myth. And where's your own human reality in that.

Q: Is it known and often used by psychoanalysts in every fear?

A: Is it, I don't know. Great question. I don't think so. I haven't found a reference to that. I know that he spent a hell of a lot of, Mamet spent a long time coming up with that line.

Q: Hillary, will you be talking about his virulent misogyny?

A: I've purposely tried to, Hillary, thank you. It's a great question. I purposely tried to not go into that because he has been accused absolutely of virulent misogyny. But trying to draw the picture of all these writers and artists, actors that he's always been engaged with and have absolute respect. You know, Pinter and Mamet had some of the greatest respect for each other and many others, and Beckett. For Beckett to allow somebody else to direct his play, that's extraordinary. That's huge. And so many others. And yet, and he is a total committed Jew. Let's never forget, you know, there are many aspects. I think these things are complicated. And what I've tried to draw is that these humans are human in the bigger sense of the word. I'm not trying to justify or duck the question, but to only focus on that, I think we'd spend hours just debating that.

Ron. Mamet's a great supporter of Trump. I didn't know that. Okay. It's interesting.

Q: Do you think it's because they share the value of the words should be used to promote one's further irrelevance of truth?

A: There's a great art of German propaganda of the '30s, McCarthyism of the '50s. Okay. That's a huge question. And if he is a supporter of Trump, I don't know why, I haven't read it. I don't know yet. And I'll certainly research and I'd love to engage in a discussion about that. And I'd write to Mamet and I'd ask him. But I think that's a whole huge discussion.

Cecil. I struggle with the language. I couldn't complete "Glengarry Glen Ross" 'cause of all the swear words. Yep. I know the swear words are inappropriate. I agree. You know, the use of swear words is endless in Mamet. But I just know, you know, when people are, okay, maybe 'cause I came from a crazy wild Durban in South Africa and very militaristic high school and other things and all the rest of it, you know, swearing is endless and swearing in the army was endless. Swearing in culture just everywhere. I'm not glorifying it or valorizing, but I think to ignore it is just ignoring something that's there. We may not like it, but it's there. I just don't think we should ignore, push things under the carpet. I'm not saying swear, but acknowledge.

Lee. Saw "Speed the Plough," loved it. Could not get over the demands and the actors. It's so intense and moving. Yep. Thank you. That's how he writes.

Were his wives not Jewish? what he said about Mamet, that's from Monty. Yeah, but he brought, you know, he is so imbued with Judaism, his whole family, the Arctic. I mean, he's the most pro-Israel writer playwright in the world, I think almost. And he's not scared to go for it. You know, his whole book on self-hating Jews, all of that. I mean, it's fascinating. All I want to suggest is that there's a Hyde Park corner for an artist, a writer like this.

Rosalind. Please tell me about the "Boston Marriage," which I saw done more in London. It was different from the other plays. It was a period play, I thought it was brilliant. Thanks Rosalind, it

was brilliant and a totally different play in the same way as "The Untouchables" as a movie. You know, the movie about Jimmy Hoffa that he wrote as well, you know, Gene Hackman and Danny DeVito and so many others. There's such a range in a "Spanish Prisoner." Such a range in this guy's writing. Not only, you know, misogyny or gender warfare and all of that stuff. There's so many things he takes on, which to me, are huge.

The timing of "Wag the Dog" relative to Clinton from Tommy. Yes. I'm sure it was influenced. Did you know that he said that Trump was a great president? Was he being ironic or not? I don't know, Carol. Supported his reelection. I'm not saying this is good, merely pointing out he's not afraid to go against the grain of his liberal Hollywood friends. Thanks, Carol. I didn't know this. I'd have to research that. And if he's being ironic or not about great president, it'd be a fascinating debate and argument to have with the guy, you know, 'cause I would certainly disagree with him. Absolutely. But I'm entitled to my own dissenting voice as everyone.

- David, not all of Hollywood was liberal.

- Exactly.

- Not all.

- Exactly.

No, exactly. David, doesn't Judaism have a tradition of supporting the minority opinion, i.e., study of Talmud? Well, I would say absolutely, David, and from our very limited insecure knowledge of the Talmud.

Thank you. Marcia. Thanks so much and thanks for your emails, Marcia, really appreciate.

Q: There is much to be said but his arrogance and disdain, have you seen him in a live interview?

A: Yes. You saw him in London. Not cheerful and charming. I agree. He ain't at all. And sometimes Pinter as well. Pinter is so anti-Israel and so anti, so pro the PC line of the English ruling class of the time, you know, of the Blair years and whatever time. But, you know, Pinter was also anti-Israel, you know, and Mamet pro. You know, and Pinter also comes across arrogant and just, I think that cranky, maybe I'm being too accepting of a writer and foibles and human foibles and human folly. But I don't think these guys or anybody are saints, male or female. There's arrogance, which I have. We all have disdain, other things and I agree, there's nothing charming or cheerful. But you know, somehow they, Picasso was one of the most arrogant, misogynist people you can imagine. But that's the painting, you know, and I'm not justifying, I'm just saying that we are all multi-faceted. Cecil, when you compare humans to ants, remember four things about ants. They're not roaming aimlessly. They're looking for food. They're bringing food to the nest. Okay, this is great. Thanks so much.

Okay. Isn't "Edmond," from Robert, isn't Edmond similar to Sherman in "Bonfire of the Vanities"? Absolutely. Thanks, Robert.

From Ron, I wonder if he will write a play based on Trump's life. I'm sure. As he did with "Bitter Wheat," based on the life of Harvey Weinstein. Yeah. And it's fascinating what he did about the Weinstein story and the Weinstein character. You see, he's not scared to take on contemporary icons because he sees, in my opinion, they represent the icons of culture, therefore values and myths and fantasies of culture. What they represent about us more than him, the writer. You know, why did the majority vote for Trump in the beginning? Why did so many vote for him now? Why are so many still believing in the lie, won't impeach, all the rest of it. "Something's going on and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones," Bob Dylan. Lawrence. Plot outlines the value of theatre. It's unmistakable. Reflection of the angst in the world outside, the key similarity of Mamet to the writing of his lines. Great. Okay.

Why have I not quoted any of Mamet's writing? I was going to, but I thought, a lovely question, Lawrence, thank you. But I wanted to give a sense, not just of the writing, because for me it's so caught up in reading the whole play. I want you to get a sense of him as a writer, the context in which he's writing, how he links to me with Shepard and other American and Western playwrights and a context for the extraordinary breadth of his plays and film. But great point. Thank you.

Q: Bobby, did Mamet write any works of a different perspective? The triumph of the honest, fair dealing person?

A: Fantastic question, Bobby. I don't think so. It was probably the best con artist. The best hustler. The best grifter, the best con. Yeah. But what you come out with after a play is the extraordinary feeling of empathy and what human beings just lack. They're so busy fighting, they're so busy in transactional relationships on every level, on the personal, on the family and the business and life, children, everything. You come out craving human empathy. And I think that's absolutely intentional in Mamet.

Howard, all right, my cousin Howard. Thank you, sorry I haven't got back to you, Howard. My apology. Hope you're will.

Q: What you describe of Mamet's and the West and human relationship resonated. It seems unidimensionally negative.

A: Okay. Is it? That's what he's been accused of, Howard. But my feeling is to, what I've tried to do today is to go deeper and push to show what is, is it human nature, power, competition, ruthlessness? Is it part of the legacy of what we have set up in our own societies. Were societies around the world always like that? Will we always be? I think he throws the deep dilemma of is it human nature or is it the values which have become the collective fiction

believed by most people of our times to be so ruthless and transactional and competitive, you know, and dog eats dog.

Neville, thank you. As you emphasise, thank you for your book as well. Okay. The characters undo themselves 'cause of their hubris and self importance. Absolutely. Okay, thank you. Okay, Neville and then, Chya, thank you again. Seen D. Mamet in different light. I'm ready to tackle his works again. I'm faced with exactly the same. I have a love hate relationship, but I cannot deny, I wonder how people responded to Oscar Wilde of his time when homosexuality was so ruthlessly denied, crushed, destroyed. I wonder when Blacks were first writing, performing and how they were crushed and pigeonholed and polemicized Jews, we know the history so well. What do we do when we can't, you know, I suppose I'm coming at it from that kind of a spirit of, you know, of races, of genders, of peoples who've been crushed because of some dissenting voice. Mamet's not calling for revolution.

He's not calling for, you know, mass attacks. He's not falling for killing. He's writing plays. He's trying to be complex. He's trying to show human nature, dilemmas and so on in the way that Picasso, whatever, writers, Picasso can do the Guernica and be, you know, a bastard to to women. What do we do? I'm just trying to throw out the questions of complexity that art gives us, I think. And I'm pleading for a voice, a Hyde Park corner of voice of these kind of writers and thinkers because they're operating in that realm of art and we accord that its own mythic status 'cause it reflects something for us, you know, and makes us argue for or against and debate and think.

Okay, Robert, thank you for your comment there.

Bobby, thank you again for your comment. COVID-19, thank you. O

kay, Tipperman, where does "American Buffalo"? I wish I had time. No time to go into "American Buffalo." Fantastic play and movie. The other thing by the way we have to ask is why is his stuff so popular? And the "Postman Always Rings Twice" to all the others.

- Let's do it, David.

- Okay. Let's invite Mamet to a discussion.

- Absolutely. Why not?

- Yeah, that'd be great. Okay. Sharon, you've mentioned a few times Mamet's test dialogue. Can you discuss the effect of his unique and frequent use of immediately repeated phrases, short sentences. That style comes directly. Great question, Sharon. Thank you. It's very influenced by Beckett and Beckett beginning this very quick, short, brief sentence repetition, the so-called theatre of the absurd tradition, which Pinter and other writers in Europe took up. And Mamet is part of it. And that's where he refers to Hemingway, the short, brief sentence, cut all the literary

niceties, the poetry of Shepard and many others and just cut to the chase and repeat phrases. What did you say? Where, why, what? Huh? What? Pinter, the pause, the repetition endlessly. For Pinter, he's trying to show how people evade honest communication.

And I think for Mamet, he's trying to show, are people speaking without listening? Are they talking to each other? Are they talking at each other? Are they listening, speaking, talking, listening? Become much more powerful when you have short, brief phrases, punctuated sentences, punctuated quick questions, comments, phrase, and you come out, is there human communication going on? You know, and what is actually in the subtext of what is being communicated? Who wants what from who? And so much is hidden in the subtext. And Mamet would say it's, you know, competition and ruthless, fight for power survival. Jonathan, is "American Buffalo," absolutely. Not worthy of mere mention? Absolutely. I just didn't have time to put so much in.

Okay, Guido, interesting thought. Very interesting. Thank you. I don't think he's a huge supporter of Trump, but he's not willing to hate Trump enough to satisfy liberals. It's a fascinating thought.

Thank you. Angela, thank you for your comment.

Anita, thank you.

Thelma, thank you so much. J

oan, thank you. I can see there.

Ruth Ellis, Ruth. I thought it was Lana Turner in "The Postman Always Rings Twice."

No, it was in the movie Jessica Lange, who of course ends up marrying Sam Shepard and hence the link Shepard and Mamet and all that whole world.

Hillary, you dodged my question. The fact that many male theatre professionals admire him is besides the point. Hillary, thank you. I appreciate, call me out at anytime.

Okay, if there was time, we'd go back onto it. Appreciate. Stephanie, thanks for an, Thank you again.

Okay, and Ron.

Just jumping here, Mitzi, I think he takes the position of the pariah Jew and stands up for it. It's a fascinating thought, Mitzi, thank you. That he takes the position of a pariah Jew and stands up. Yeah. What are the Jews who really stood outside? What are the Irgun, what did Begin, blowing up the British, et cetera. Where do we stand on all of that? Interesting thought. The pariah Jew. Francine, is there a younger playwright similar to Mamet? Fantastic question. There are quite a

few up and coming playwrights in England that I know of. And some in America who are as tough and witty, urban and gritty and hugely influenced by Mamet. Joe Penhall to some degree, a whole lot of others. Lucy Prebble, male and female influenced by Mamet's writing obviously and Pinter's writing as well. Sarah Kane, perhaps one of the most, and one of the most extraordinary playwrights for me of the last 20, 30 years. British, incredible playwright and I think she brings together some Mamet, some Pinter, some Caryl Churchill and many others for me and dying so young and for me the most fascinatingly brilliant playwright from England over the last 30, 40 years that that emerged. And I think she brings a lot of these things, the short, quick, witty, fiery, urban, gritty kind of writing. And the themes are so brutal. She's so brutal in the writing, the way her, and her vision of humanity. Sarah Kane. Okay. Elaine, thank you. Okay, I think that's most of the questions.

- Thanks, David. Brilliant.

- Thank you so much, Wendy. Thanks, Judy. Okay. Sorry for the last minute thing about it, Judy, really appreciate.

- I think we can have part two. It's fascinating. I like all the...

- It's provocative and you know, we have to, I think, come on. We know so many artists and painters and writers in their own time were seen in the same way. You know?

- And what a broad perspective, you know? It's not right, wrong, black or white, you know, liberal or, you know, or or extreme right. You know, there's shades of grey.

- Exactly.

- And different possessions. Anyway, as we said, we are living in interesting times. So thank you. Thanks a million.

- Thank you so much, Wendy. Okay, appreciate.

- And we will chat during the week and thanks to everybody for joining us. So it is to say good afternoon and good night.

- Thanks very much.

- Thanks, David, bye.