

Without The Parenthetical Man: A Critical Analysis Of Glengarry Glen Ross

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Abstract –

This article aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of David Mamet's work Glengarry Glen Ross in its many forms, from the perspective of Guerreiro Ramos' ideas. The analysis encompasses various elements of the work, such as the complexity of the narrative, carefully crafted settings, language used by the characters, and the development of their personalities. The connection between these aspects and key concepts of Critical Theory and the symbolism of consumerism is explored. The research is based on the intrinsic exploration between literature and society, with Candido's vision as a reference, allowing for deeper discussions on the liquidation of human existence and the implications of instrumental reason in shaping the parenthetical individual. Through this critical approach, fundamental questions are raised about the influence of social engineering present in organizations, shedding light on the dynamics of work relationships within them. The relevance of Mamet's work as a backdrop for analysing Guerreiro Ramos' ideas is emphasized, providing a rich and comprehensive context to understand the concepts and reflections proposed by the author. Through this investigation, the article seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the complex interactions between literature, cinema, society, and Guerreiro Ramos' ideas, offering a fresh perspective on the significance of 'Glengarry Glen Ross' and its connection to contemporary Organizational Studies reflection.

Keywords: *Guerreiro Ramos; David Mamet; Parenthetical Man; Social Engineering; Critical Theory.*

Date of Submission: 01-02-2023

Date of Acceptance: 10-12-2023

I. Introduction

Glengarry Glen Ross (1992) is an American film with a screenplay adapted by David Mamet (1994) from his play with the same title, winner of the 1984 Pulitzer Prize and directed by James Foley. The film is quite faithful to the original play - except for the character Blake (Alec Baldwin) who is purposely included in the script to further aggravate the almost helpless despair of four real estate salespeople when they discover that only the two best ones will continue working at the end of the week (Mamet, 1994).

The dialogues have a raw, rude and cynical tone, being notable for the use of swear words that reveals the constant state of animosity and competition in which the characters find themselves and impedes or at least greatly hinders the viewer - or the reader of Mamet's play - of finding something beyond the apparent one-dimensionality of the characters or their reality, perhaps this is the only possible criticism about a movie, otherwise, complete in all aspects (Epehrmanesh&Ehsanmamet, 2014; Mamet, 1994).

There are no records that Mamet was familiar with the work of Guerreiro Ramos, or for that matter, that he has any sociological knowledge that goes beyond the criticism of Show Business (Encyclopaedia, 2020; Mianani, 2019); However, the piece seems to have been written with the purpose of didactically exposing several of the concepts created by Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989, 1983) throughout his studies and observations on the society of organizations, human nature, power relations, as well as the symbols and myths that surround every form of human interaction. These studies, which in the light of modernity, besides being liquid are also post-digital (Longo, 2016, Bauman, 2001), prove to be timeless and serve as guidelines for any analysis that seeks to understand the reality of the society of organizations and new patterns of behaviour. that the digitalization of human relationships continually imposes on us.

Guerreiro Ramos and Mamet address topics related to work and the dynamics of human relationships in professional contexts (Gerreiro Ramos, 1996, 1989, 1983; Hudgins 1999; Dean, 1990). Although they are different in format and context, it is possible to identify some conceptual similarities and lessons that can be perceived in both works.

This article intends to present Glengarry Glen Ross (1992) as an opportune platform to point out and analyse the axes of correlation between Mamet and Guerreiro Ramos' key ideas, analysing the film based on

fundamental ideas developed by the Brazilian thinker, observing the narrative, the scenarios, the language and characters from both Mamet's original script and the theatrical and film adaptation. This analysis could become a starting point to reinforce the debate on the importance and relevance of Guerreiro Ramos for the study of management and, also, for the development of a management philosophy that overcomes the purely marketing shackles presented by Mamet, serving as a guide in a complex and unpredictable time.

II. Theoretical Reference

It is possible to argue that both the work and the film *Glengarry Glenn Ross* can be critically analysed in light of the idea of sociological reduction (Guerreiro Ramos, 1996, 1989, 1983). Simplifying the characters as people driven solely by the pursuit of profit and success can make the motivations and social interactions in play less complex. This can result in a limited view of the business world, ignoring social structures, power dynamics and deeper ethical issues that can affect human behaviour (Bigsby, 2018).

A critical analysis of *Glengarry Glenn Ross* in light of the ideas of Guerreiro Ramos must, therefore, explore the effects of sociological reduction on the social dynamics portrayed and the representation of the characters. It would be important to ask whether the simplification of characters into one-dimensional archetypes (BIGSBY, 2018) makes it difficult to understand the complex social relationships, hierarchies and power structures that permeate the work environment portrayed in the film.

The Behaviourist Syndrome is defined by Guerreiro Ramos (1989, p. 52) as “a socially conditioned disposition, which affects people's lives when they confuse the rules and norms of operation peculiar to episodic social systems with rules and norms of their conduct as one all”.

It is, therefore, the loss of autonomy of the individual who becomes just a cog in a model of the world that despite unavoidable limitations, ends up becoming the central reference in the lives of many. Guerreiro Ramos (1989) perceives these characteristics as pressing in a market-centred society, which imposes as its main elements the fluidity of individuality, values and norms – in the very sense of liquidity described by Bauman (2001) – as well as the loss of substantive references, perspectivism – a kind of pragmatic relativism, which justifies distortions of the social order in the name of efficiency; formalism – in which form takes on the appearance of content; and operationalism – the focus limited to the continuity of the economic model.

For Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989, 1983), this syndrome is the product of a historical effort to model the social order with criteria of *economicity*, consumerism and individualism, distorting the substantive notion of human conduct and culminating in “a historical experience, at this point already three centuries old, which attempts to create a never-before-seen type of human life associated, ordered and sanctioned by self-regulating market processes” (Guerreiro Ramos, 1989, p. 52).

There is a clear correlation between the behaviourist syndrome and the background in which *Glengarry Glen Ross* takes place (Epehrmanesh&Ehsanmamet, 2014; Mamet 1994). We see in the film the portrait of a reality corrupted by the effort to commodify human relations, the maximum dysfunction of the American dream, as old as the founding of America itself, which goes back to immigrants, exhausted by the tyrannies and suffocating limitations of the old world, who thought in the new continent as the land of opportunities and redemption of their dreams (Mianani, 2019).

The behaviourist syndrome even seems to disconnect man from his present reality, he lives in a vacuum between the falsely glorious past and the falsely promising future, a dream that does not materially come true, it is in these unattainable times that he imagines finding true form, meaning and vision beyond the inevitable decline of its existence (Gianetti, 1997; Guerreiro Ramos, 1989). In *Glengarry Glen Ross* we clearly perceive this disconnection as a result of the behaviourist syndrome, the characters are deprived of any human warmth and compassion and are constantly immersed in an atmosphere of fear, greed and cruelty: the greater the pressure, the lower the ethics that in no way moment becomes more than just an instrumental aspect to be taken into consideration in the decisions made by the characters (Epehrmanesh&Ehsanmamet, 2014; Mamet, 1994).

The most emblematic phrase in the film, “*coffee is for closers only*”, used *ad nauseam* by many sales executives who started their careers in the mid-90s (Morris, 2012), magnificently summarizes the behaviourist syndrome (Guerreiro Ramos, 1989) because even the simplest attitudes, such as having a coffee in the office, need to be subjected to a relentless market logic, there is no room for any dimension of human existence, other than the economic dimension (Mamet, 1994).

Coffee, which symbolizes momentary rest and re-energization of the individual (Verma, 2013), is the privilege of the strong (Sephehrmanesh& Ehsan, 2014). The film's characters, as well as the setting in which the plot takes place, are sterile, rainy and gloomy (Mamet, 1994), symbolizing men devoid of parentheses to deal with the haunting reality of human disposability.

Criticism of cognitive policy is another central point in the studies of Guerreiro Ramos (1996; 1989), for the author, the practice of cognitive policy arises from a simplistic view of the human being, the only possible view within a society centred on the one-dimensionality of the human being. Marketplace.

The author points to rhetoric, one of the main resources of cognitive politics, rhetoric is a central

instrument of self-deception, something that individuals end up accepting and even being grateful for, as Gianetti (1997) points out, since it allows, even if superficially, overcome the constant cognitive dissonance generated in the process of adapting the individual to a reality that strips them to the core through rules imposed by the media and the educational system. In other words, the individual tends to be reduced to the only possible expression of existence, becoming a purely social and economic being who has no motivations other than those inherent to competition, private interest and the cold calculation of gains (Gambaro, 2012; Guerreiro Ramos, 1989).

This policy, although delimiting, encompasses almost the entirety of existence and certainly influences the science of Management, as criticized by Guerreiro Ramos (1989). Essential concepts of existence such as trust, authenticity, self-realization and belonging seem to be exclusively part of the organizational space and the market.

Glengarry Glen Ross demonstrates how all human relationships are reduced to commercial transactions, the inevitable corollary of which is the lack of morality elevated to the condition of cleverness and talent (Mianani, 2019; Sepehrmanesh & Ehsan, 2014). In the film, the salesmen practically commit robbery under the guise of free enterprise, as their primary function is to persuade unsuspecting customers to buy worthless land in Florida. However, they never see themselves in the role of thieves, but as men of vision, bold and resourceful (Mamet, 1994).

The motivational instruments used by the firm reflect a cognitive policy of commodification of all aspects of human life: Mitch & Murray, the company's bosses, have declared a sales contest whose prize for first place is a Cadillac, second place wins a set of steak knives (Mamet, 1994). Now, the distance from the awards makes clear a cognitive policy in which there is no gradation in success, the degrees of distinction necessary for human existence beyond a dichotomous state are purposely ignored, the second place winner is aware that he is worth very little and this vision is promoted as positive, dynamic and constructive. The last two placed will simply be fired, which demonstrates the disposability of human relationships when simply based on economic elements and the immediate usefulness of individuals (Mianani, 2019; Mamet, 1994).

The cognitive policy that Guerreiro Ramos (1989) talks about prevents the Organizational Theory taught in schools and universities from being, in fact, composed of critical knowledge, which raises people's awareness and elevates them beyond their immediate reality. In part, this is the result of the import of exogenous concepts, from rich and more advanced countries in terms of marketing, which they see packaged in an aura of superiority, which closes their eyes to the original historical assumptions and sacrifices critical sense.

Guerreiro Ramos (1989) pointed out a series of conditions so that an Organizational Theory is not just an uncritical reproduction of utilitarian concepts. Among these points we can highlight:

- Identify human nature beyond the behavioural syndrome.
- Recognize that, given their ontological limitation, formal work environments are not suitable for human updating.
- Overcoming the market view in which human value is restricted to its exchange value.
- Understand that organizational communication is restricted to an instrument for maximizing productive capacity, thus always needing to be contextualized.
- Understand the correlation between motivational policies and cognitive policies – which, even with apparently positive pretexts, are dehumanization projects.
- Distinguish the real from the manufactured, valuing substantive rationality as a guide for an organizational design.
- Recognize and do not seek to transcend the limits of the formal organization at the centre of human existence.

The main aspect of the organizational discipline harshly criticized by Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989) and which condenses the aforementioned points is the marked lack of distinction between substantive and instrumental rationality, in which being and essence are exchanged for function and utility, based on the mechanomorphic vision of human activity.

In the film, we clearly see this mechanomorphic expression, when in training Blake (Alec Baldwin) summarizes the structure of communication in the acronym AIDA (Mamet, 1994). This acronym shapes most commercial communications, confusing the idea of communicating with the simple act of selling. The fluidity of the speech was largely replaced by the premeditation of the sales *pitch* (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999).

It is important to emphasize that, despite his blunt criticism, Guerreiro Ramos' thought is not anti-market *per se*, but merely contrary to market centralism, the author sought to renew evaluation criteria for what constituted the development of a nation beyond the market interests, he did not seek to replace it (Guerreiro Ramos, 1996; 1989).

Market-centred civilization is just an expression of human rationality, or rather, one of its dysfunctions, when a part is taken as a whole (Gambaro, 2012; Bauman, 2011). There is, for Guerreiro Ramos (1989), an eagerness to attribute to the market an importance and strength that it truly does not possess, coming to be seen

by many as the central aspect of the conduct of human life, as the natural propensity for exchange and commerce is transformed into an ultimate foundation, a universal rule and even a categorical imperative in which everything that cannot be commodified has no reason for being.

Economic actions, like a series of other actions are symbolic, reflect the primary perception of existence and, in a certain sense, the unity of human nature. The great dysfunction lies in the fact that economic symbolism is structurally determined, that is, production reflects the general scheme of society centred on economic relations, distancing the individual and other symbols and myths essential to their existence, as the cultural ethos is inflected by this dominant point (Baudrillard, 1996; Guerreiro Ramos, 1989).

We see in Glengarry Glen Ross the impossibility of man's existence beyond the market, family relationships are reduced to a consolation prize, the last refuge of the defeated (Mamet, 1994). In the confrontation between the parenthetical man and the *homo economicus*, according to Guerreiro Ramos (1989), existence is transformed into resistance against brutalization, mental routinization, alienation, standardization of conduct and the annulment of freedom itself.

III. Methodology

The analysis of this work was based on Cândido (2006) and his intrinsic exploration between literature and society, following his precepts on critical analysis and academic essays, based on the assumption that literature cannot be separated from the social context in which it is produced, a context explained by Mamet (1994), including its dramatic language, sociocultural context and theatre theory (Bigsby, 2018), in addition to reflecting the critique of American cultural nationalism and the portrayal of capitalist competition and the search for success in contemporary America (Mason& Gainor, 1999).

For Cândido (2006), literary works show the divergences, beliefs and conflicts of society. Thus, to understand the relationships between the work and its political, cultural and historical context, the critical analysis of literature must take into account the social dimension, as explored so well by Mamet (Hudgins 1999, Dean, 1990).

Thus, this analysis adopts an integrated approach (Cândido, 2006), not only focusing on the formal and stylistic aspects of the work, but also considering its ideological dimension and the social themes it addresses, as literature has the power to express and question social structures, revealing conflicts and representing different perspectives.

Using this approach is relevant, as there is a rich dialogue between the works of Antônio Cândido and Guerreiro Ramos. The interest in understanding how literature and cultural production impact society is something that both authors share. Guerreiro Ramos talks about the relationship between culture and society, which includes literature, art and intellectual production (Guerreiro Ramos, 1989, 1996) whilst Cândido (1996) focuses on the critical analysis of literature. Both authors recognize the value of contextualizing cultural works and taking into account the social issues that permeate artistic creation.

IV. Analysis of Results

Glengarry Glen Ross offers an interesting opportunity for a critical analysis from the perspective of Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989, 1983) and an approach based on Cândido (2006). The work portrays a group of real estate salespeople facing the pressure of achieving goals and dealing with fierce competition in the workplace. The film exposes the tensions between individuals and the capitalist system, showing how social and economic relations can affect human conduct, presenting a reflection on the power structures present in society and how they shape work relations (Mason& Gainor, 1999; Dean, 1990). The pressure to achieve results and competition between salespeople are elements that can be analysed in light of Guerreiro Ramos' theories, which highlight the importance of considering social structures and power relations in the critical analysis of culture and work (Guerreiro Ramos, 1989). This representation raises questions about the values and social norms present in the world of work and their implications for the conduct of individuals, (Guerreiro Ramos, 1996), since the characters portrayed in Glengarry Glen Ross are placed in situations of moral conflict, forced to make difficult decisions and face the consequences of their actions, but without delving into the one-dimensionality of their personas (Epehrmanesh&Ehsanmamet, 2014; Mamet, 1994)

It is possible, from this analysis, to portray the organizational culture, hierarchy and distribution of power within the real estate company, based on manipulative and unethical strategies as a consequence of an organizational system that emphasizes the financial result above other social or ethical values. (Mason& Gainor, 1999, Dean, 1990). It is clear that Glengarry Glenn Ross does not address the interaction between social, cultural and political dimensions in the workplace, portrayed based on the dominant paradigm (Guerreiro Ramos, 1996), disregarding the impact of these dimensions on interpersonal relationships, group dynamics and in decision making.

Through Guerreiro Ramos, especially in *The New Science of Organizations* (1989), it is possible to establish an innovative perspective for the study of organizations, proposing a critical and interdisciplinary

approach that seeks to understand the complexity and social dynamics present in these structures that tend to emphasize technical, economic and functional aspects, neglecting the social, cultural and political dimensions that permeate organizational relationships, disregarding subjective, symbolic and historical aspects that influence human behaviour in the organizational context.

Guerreiro Ramos was deeply influenced by Husserl (2008) who, by focusing on the analysis of consciousness, proposed his method to 'unravel' the phenomenon: phenomenological reduction, that is, suspension of judgment regarding things; thus determining that it is essential to put the world 'in parentheses, in the process of apprehending the phenomenon, suspending our natural attitude with which we relate to things and phenomena, thus ignoring prejudices, theories, and social roles (Martins, 2006) . The concept of Parenthetical Man by Guerreiro Ramos (1989) is the translation of Husserl's phenomenology (2008) into Organization Theory, an essential contribution of Brazilian thought to the world. The parenthetical individual is capable of putting reality in parentheses, separating themselves from their immediate environment to the point of critically examining it. The imperative of the market does not, therefore, overcome critical and distanced individuality.

However, is it possible the reality of a parenthetical man who overcomes and transcends this brutalization of existence through instrumental reason? This is the main question that this article proposes, paving the way for more in-depth analyses.

Man in the society of organizations even seems to be the ultimate expression of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* – Zarathustra glorifies the *Übermensch's will* to give meaning to life on earth and demands that his audience ignore those who promise a supernatural achievement to take them away from the earth (Nietzsche, 1985). In the same way, modern organizations, despite being a recent innovation, embodied in the depths of the industrial revolution (Drucker, 2001; Guerreiro Ramos, 1989), encompass everything, and are thus the ultimate source of meaning in a liquid society in which the consumption even becomes a strategy of distinction, the only possible and desirable individuality (Gambaro, 2012; Bauman, 2001; Guerreiro Ramos, 1996). This explains how consumption has become a strategy of distinction, the formative element of all practices, inherent to individual taste, ends up being similar among all members of the same class, defining the lifestyles of social classes, becoming the guiding thread that gives substantiality to a liquid reality, centred on the market (Gambaro, 2012; Bauman, 2001).

However, it is likely that this individual exists, not as the exception that confirms the rule, but as the threshold of a magnified human nature that goes beyond immediate economic relations and that does not allow Manuel Bandeira's saddest verse – “The whole life that could have been and that was not” (Evangelista, 1986) – to become an inevitable epitaph.

The concept closely akin to the Parenthetical Man, as posited by the current author, appears to draw inspiration from Frankl's seminal work (2006). That author, reflecting on his first-hand experiences in a concentration camp during the Second World War, observed that even in the most harrowing circumstances, individuals exhibited an extraordinary capacity to seek purpose. Through the profound ability to place their immediate reality within parentheses, they resisted, not allowing those dire circumstances to define their essence.

Unfortunately, this perspective is not reflected in the film *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Hudgins 1999, Dean, 1990). Ricky Norma's striking phrase, talking about the need to live so as not to regret what was not done (Mamet, 1994) is not about seeking to live without fear and overcome one's own limiting conditions, it is just a message of low motivation to another salesperson who finds himself sinking into inevitable failure.

We then find ourselves at an impasse, a problem in the purest sense as described by Ortega Y Gasset (1976), that is, the awareness of a contradiction; If, on the one hand, people want increasingly individualized consumption experiences, on the other, individualism is only allowed to exist in the plurality of the market, crowning appearance to the detriment of essence and generating a new form of market alienation.

It is at the heart of this philosophical contradiction that the study of Organization Theory transcends market imperatives and becomes the study of the confrontation between human individuality and the tools of social engineering, highlighting the weight of Guerreiro Ramos' work and his vision of the future.

V. Final considerations

When analysing *Glengarry Glen Ross* in its most diverse forms (Mianani, 2019; Mamet, 1994), through the perspective of Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989, 1983), it is possible to show several key points of his work that reverberate in the context of the narrative.

Firstly, there is the criticism of unbridled competition and competitiveness. Both Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989) and Mamet (1994) discuss competition at work and its negative effects. Guerreiro Ramos criticizes the capitalist mentality that prioritizes profitability over the well-being of individuals, emphasizing the importance of a more collaborative and fraternal approach in organizations. The film shows salespeople in an extremely competitive environment, where pressure and rivalry can lead to harmful and unethical actions. Both authors question the effectiveness of a system that encourages unbridled competition.

Secondly, dehumanization can be seen in the work environment. Both Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989, 1983) and Mamet (1994) discuss the dehumanization that can happen in the workplace. Guerreiro Ramos studies the hierarchical structures and power relations that can divide employees, diminishing their independence and dignity. The narrative shows salespeople who are treated just like numbers and components of a machine, ignoring their humanity for the sake of profits. Both authors emphasize the need for a more human and people-centred approach to the world of work.

Finally, ethics and morality at work are also observed, as both Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989) and Mamet (1994) discuss ethics and morality in the workplace. Guerreiro Ramos talks about the need for a work ethic that goes beyond the profit objective and considers the social and human effects of professional activities, while Mamet addresses issues such as manipulation, corruption and lack of ethics in sales. Both authors emphasize the value of a moral and responsible attitude in the workplace.

This article sought to show not only the relevance of Guerreiro Ramos in modern Organization Theory, but paves the way for other efforts that aim to integrate Organization Theory and Art. Based on the precepts of Candido (2006), Guerreiro Ramos (1996, 1989, 1983) offers us a valuable lens for analysing cinema, theatre and perhaps other forms of expression such as music, in order to understand the influence of the sociocultural context, social relations power and the dominant paradigm, in the discourse underlying art and in the perpetuation of structures of power and manipulation.

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