

## Summary

This BA thesis, partly a work of sociological theory and partly of literary analysis, discusses the crisis of masculinity in the society, placing an emphasis on the American milieu. As a starting point it uses the dramatic pieces of the contemporary American playwright David Mamet. Mamet is in his works generally attracted to the world of men, and we can only find a handful of female characters in them. Additionally, he frequently places his men, who usually share the typically masculine characteristics and behavioral patterns, into traditionally male environments – for instance on a boat or into a ruthlessly competitive real estate agency. Thus he prepares his ground to be able to fully explore one of the most prominent American social myths – the myth of masculinity.

The second chapter focuses in its sociological opening part on the concept of masculinity as such. In the beginning, a historical overview of the development of human understanding of masculinity is introduced. It is apparent that it was only with the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of feminism around the turn of the century that the society saw the drastic change which, as we may understand it, led to the crisis of masculinity. Later, Judith Butler's theory of the performativity of masculinity is discussed, and Matthew C. Gutmann's triple division of masculinity, according to which either everything is manly which men think or do; or everything they do to be men; or everything that is simply not feminine. R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, with which David Mamet frequently operates, functions then as a sort of dividing line between the sociological and literary part of this chapter. On the characters of Bernie from his *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, Teach from *American Buffalo* and others, features typical for hegemonic masculinity are demonstrated – e.g. sexual objectification of women and their dominance by men, physical and sexual prowess, lack of emotionality, little communicativeness, and violent behavior. The chapter is

concluded by a passage, contemplating the very crisis of masculinity itself, be it real or merely imaginary, and its reflection in Mamet's work.

Whereas the second chapter places its focus on masculinity on the level of individuals, the third one broadens its scope to whole groups, and discusses the theme of homosociality – intentional seeking and preferring the company of people of the same sex. In the theoretical part of this chapter, the concept of homosociality is further developed. Its role in forming of masculinity is mentioned as well as its relationship with homosexuality, and finally also the varying ways it helps hegemonic masculinity to maintain its dominant position. Among these we may count for instance the formerly mentioned sexual objectification of women, or emotional detachment, or escalated competitiveness. Regarding David Mamet, his approach to the motif of friendship is first analyzed in the chapter. Friendship is depicted in his plays as exceedingly unstable and fragile, mostly owing to men's excessive competitiveness and to women. Consequently, the relationship between friendship and business is examined, more particularly their mutual exclusiveness caused once again by male competitiveness. In conclusion, it is pointed out that the homosocial world seems to be as unstable as that of masculinity.

The fourth chapter inspects a topic which is not only closely associated to both masculinity and homosociality but also indispensable if we want to effectively define both of these terms – the topic of homosexuality. Homosexual masculinity, according to Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity being a subordinate variant to other forms of masculinities, offers heterosexual men a platform against which they can position themselves, which they can condemn by conflating it with femininity, and thanks to which they can thus strengthen their own position in the patriarchal society. The theoretical part of this chapter then not only discusses in detail this conflation of homosexuality with femininity but it also uncovers possible causes and functioning of homophobia. Even though David Mamet does not really

concern himself with the issue of homosexuality per se, tracing the occasional remarks and hints to it in his work, it is possible to notice a clearly defined trajectory in his attitude. While his early plays show clear signs of homophobia, his position shifts over time toward the eventual peacefulness. In his later plays, homosexuality ceases to be used only in slurs and becomes an ordinary part of human life, almost not even worth mentioning, and Mamet himself starts to introduce his first gay characters.

The fifth chapter focuses on the relationship between masculinity and femininity, and on the clash between the sexes. The very definition of hegemonic masculinity postulates that femininity is understood as an inferior (and in relation to the male identity even undesirable) characteristic. This belief has to do with the presumption that both genders form a sort of binary opposition, and that all character features and behavioral patterns, etc. may be neatly divided into one or the other category. Not only is this presumption in its very essence wrong, but it is nowadays even believed that the gender differences are slowly lessening, and that the male population is becoming emotionally ever more feminized. The rise of feminism is widely considered to be one of the main causes of this crisis of masculinity. The theoretical part of this chapter is concluded by distinguishing between three types of men's reactions to this feminizing effect: the Antifeminist, Masculinist, and Profeminist one. Owing to his depiction of women, David Mamet is frequently labeled a misogynist. This is not surprising since most of his female characters either function as elements of disturbance in otherwise peaceful and friendly male friendships, or by their hunger for power destroy the male world equilibrium. Mamet's men also largely make use of feminizing words which, due to women's subordinate position in the society, function as deprecatory expressions or pejoratives. To understand Mamet's handling of his female characters as misogynistic would be, nevertheless, erroneous for the point of his interest lies predominantly in his depiction of the dissimilarity of the sexes, in their inability to find understanding for each other, and in the omnipresent

sense of distrust and threat. This unbridgeable gap between the sexes is reflected in Mamet's work also on the level of the language, more particularly in his use of the so-called genderlects.

In conclusion, it is apparent that men appear to be unable to find assurance not only in themselves but also in their relations with their male friends and with women. This overall confusion, incurred according to many of Mamet's characters by the rise of feminism, may therefore be considered one of the main causes of the apparent crisis of masculinity. Mamet's drama, albeit not political in the truest sense of the word, allows audiences to look under the mystical veil of sociology and helps them to better understand their selves, so as to grant them the ability to achieve the kinds of social changes for which they may not even know they yearn.