

MAMET IN HIS OWN WORDS

I've been making a living writing for close to 50 years and I've never met a stupid audience.

It's not the actor's job to embellish the play but to do something more worthwhile and difficult: to resist embellishing it. It's when one resists the impulse to help that the truth emerges. The great actors I've seen in movies or on stage are capable of being quite still, and letting their uncertainty, fear and conflicting desires emerge rather than trying to cover them up with their ideas.

(Jean-Luc) Godard said every movie has to have a beginning, middle and end but not necessarily in that order. And that's why French movies are so boring.

A movie is a juxtaposition of images. We don't need dialogue in a movie. Never. How do we know? Because when we're on the airplane we're looking across at the other guy in the next seat watching a movie and we get fascinated. We can't hear the dialogue, so what good is dialogue? Not very much good at all.

The first time I met Tennessee Williams he showed up at a party in Chicago with two beautiful young boys who were obviously rough trade. He looked at them and then he looked at me and he said, "Expensive habit". So that's kind of how I feel about liberalism. It's a damned expensive habit.

My idea of perfect happiness is a healthy family, peace between nations and all the critics die.

Somebody said that the reason that we all have a school dream - I've forgotten to do my paper! I've forgotten to study! - is that it's the first time that the child runs up against the expectations of the world: the world has expectations of me and I'm going to have to meet them or starve, meet them or die. And I'm unprepared.

We live in an illiterate country. The mass media - the commercial theatre included - pander to the low and the lowest of the low in human experience. They, finally, debase us through the sheer weight of their mindlessness.

(1) Alec Baldwin in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992)
(2) Chiwetel Ejiofor in *House Of Games* (1987)
(4) Patrick Stewart and Joshua Jackson, star in *A Life In The Theatre* at the Apollo Theatre, London (2005)
(5) On the set of *Heist* (2001)

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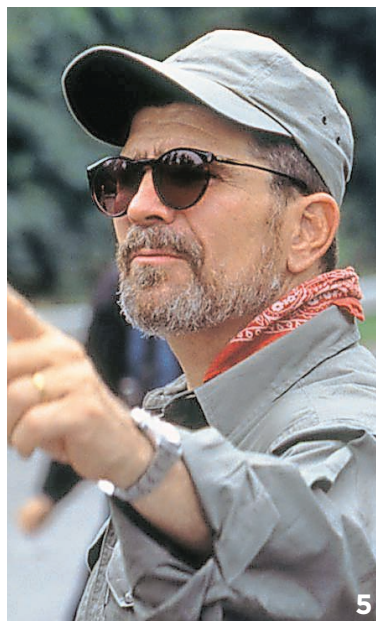
Best Film and Best Screenplay at the Venice Film Festival in 1987. Add in his screenplays for *The Untouchables* and *Hannibal*, to name just two and it's clear Mamet's talents extend way beyond the stage.

There have been novels, books of essays and even children's stories: a quick top-up lists 36 plays, 29 screenplays, 17 books and 11 film directing credits, an extraordinary legacy of polymathy by one of the most prolific writers of any generation. He even wrote an episode of *Hill Street Blues*.

While there have been few indications of his powers waning as he approaches 70, Mamet did raise a few eyebrows in 2008 when he announced in a newspaper article he was no longer a "braindead liberal" and embraced conservative thinkers and thinking.

A book followed in 2011, *The Secret Knowledge: On The Dismantling of American Culture* that seemed the antithesis of everything that had gone before, brimming with rambling, unsupported generalisations that sounded more barstool ideologue than one of the most incisive minds of the modern era.

Mamet was in the news again this summer when it emerged licences for performing his plays were being issued only with the caveat that there be no post-show debates, talks or Q&A sessions within two hours of the performance on pain of a \$25,000 fine. Many theatrical hands flew to cheeks at the news, but it's an affirmation of what Mamet has always tried to achieve, even with *The Secret Knowledge*: making the audience think for themselves. "For me, to talk to the audience is like the audience wanting to know how a magician does the trick," he once said in an interview. "The magician can't tell them because if he does it ruins the trick."



It's something he learned sitting in the Oak Street Book Shop, losing himself in Beckett and Pinter.

There were no discussions there, no panels of experts and blowhards among the shelves, just the words and their effect on the imagination of one of the modern era's most extraordinary writers.

In the online masterclass in dramatic writing he unveiled earlier this summer Mamet reveals arguably the key to his success and longevity, characteristically in just five words.

"One rule," he says. "Don't be boring."

■ Charlie Connelly is a writer and the New European's literary correspondent

A PITHY HISTORY OF THE WORD ORANGE

PETER TRUDGILL traces the clockwork progress of the word 'orange' from southern India to northern Europe, and finds the odd detour



The Democratic Unionist Party are having difficulty coming to terms with the official use in Ulster of Irish Gaelic, the indigenous Celtic language of Ireland. They also have a predilection for the colour orange.

Belfast is a long way from Andhra Pradesh, but the Indian subcontinent is where we need to start if we want to explain the attraction this colour has for certain Irish Protestants.

Oranges seem to have originated in southeast Asia. Our modern English word *orange* probably goes back very many centuries to one of the Dravidian languages of southern India like Tamil or Telugu: the modern Telugu word for orange is *narinja*. The ancient Dravidian word for this fruit eventually made its way north into the classical North Indian language Sanskrit as *naranga*. It then travelled on across the mountains of the Hindu Kush into Persian as *narang*, and from there it made its way into Arabic in the form of *naranj*.

Oranges were probably first introduced into Europe by Portuguese traders - the Greek word for orange is *portokali* - but English speakers most likely acquired the word for the fruit via the language of the maritime Venetians, who called it *naranza*, or the Spanish, where it was *naranja*. The word then travelled north into France, where it passed into French as *orange*: the initial *n* went missing as a result of *une norange* being re-interpreted by speakers as *une orange*.

Some time around 1400, orange came into the English language from French, having of course made the 5,000 mile journey from southern Asia to our island along with the fruit itself.

The first known usage of the word as the name of a colour dates to about 1600. Prior to the arrival of oranges on these shores, the colour was most often regarded as a kind of red: the 'red' breast of the European robin is often actually closer in hue to what English speakers these days would most likely label 'orange' in other contexts.

Orange is also the name of a town in the Vaucluse, in southern France. The town was the centre of a principality which in the 16th century passed into the ownership of a branch of the Dutch aristocratic dynasty, the House of Nassau. That led to this particular branch of the family being known as the House of Orange.

In the following century, the Dutch aristocrat William of Orange married Mary Stuart, the Protestant daughter of James II & VII, the Catholic King of England, Ireland and Scotland.

After James was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, William and Mary became joint monarchs of the three kingdoms. James then attempted to regain his crown by raising an army in Ireland, but the victory of William's army over James' forces at the Battle of the Boyne in northern Ireland in 1690 established William as a champion of the Protestants.

This led to the name 'Orangemen' being used to refer to members of anti-Catholic groups in the north of Ireland who regarded him as a hero. They also came to adopt the colour orange as a symbol of their group membership; the

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tricolour flag of modern Ireland still has orange as one of its colours to represent the Protestant section of the island's population.

But it is of course a complete and utter coincidence that the English-language word for the colour (and the fruit), and the name of the town in southern France, just happen to be identical.

And there is also an irony here which anti-Gaelic-language members of the DUP may not be aware of. It is true that the originally Dravidian word for the citrus fruit came into English via French.

But the original Latin word which the name of the French town of Orange descends from, *Arausio*, came into Latin from ancient Celtic, where it was the name of a Celtic water-god.

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CHINESE APPLE

The Low German word for 'orange' is *Appelsien*. High German speakers in northern Germany say *Apfelsine* (other German speakers have *Orange*).

The Low German word spread into Danish and Norwegian where it is *applesin*. In Icelandic it appears as *appelsína*, in Faroese *appilsin*, and Swedish *apelsin*. These words recognise the Asian origins of the fruit, meaning literally 'apple (from) China'.