



# THÉRÈSE RAQUIN

**ROUNABOUT  
THEATRE  
COMPANY** | **50  
YRS**

**UPSTAGE GUIDE**

A publication of **EDUCATION AT  
ROUNABOUT**



# UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

## *Thérèse Raquin*

A quiet young woman with a restless spirit, Thérèse submits to a loveless life at the side of her weak and selfish husband...until she meets his childhood friend Laurent. Consumed by their desire for each other, Thérèse and Laurent dream of the day they can finally be together. When their overwhelming passion spins violently out of control, they realize that love can be a dangerous game, and sometimes there is no winner.

## *a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines*

*Thérèse Raquin* is a story that I've wanted to put on stage for more than 15 years. Having read Émile Zola's novel and seen earlier stage versions of the piece, I was completely enthralled by this tale of power, lust, and guilt in 19th century France. I read every possible adaptation I could get my hands on, but none had captured the full vibrancy of what was on the page. I decided that the best plan was to start over completely, and so Roundabout commissioned the gifted playwright Helen Edmundson to breathe new life into *Thérèse Raquin*. Helen proved to be more than up to this significant challenge, capturing the passionate energy of Zola's original and giving us the feeling that we are getting a glimpse behind the polite façades that society requires.

### *when*

1868

### *where*

France

### *who*

#### **Thérèse**

A restless young woman. Orphaned in her youth, she lives with her aunt and cousin.

#### **Camille**

Thérèse's cousin and husband.

#### **Madame Raquin**

Thérèse's aunt and Camille's mother.

#### **Laurent**

Camille's childhood friend.

#### **Monsieur Grivet**

Camille's supervisor at the Railway and a Raquin family friend.

#### **Superintendent Michaud**

A retired police commissioner and Raquin family friend.

#### **Suzanne**

Michaud's niece and frequent guest at the Raquin household.

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## UPSTAGE CONTRIBUTORS

### MANAGING EDITORS:

Kim Oria  
*Education Program  
Manager*

Jill Rafson  
*Director of New  
Play Development*

Leah Reddy  
*Teaching Artist*

Olivia O’Connor  
*Artistic Associate*

Sarah Kutnowsky  
*Education Apprentice*

### WRITERS:

Jason Jacobs  
*Teaching Artist*

### INTERVIEWS:

Ted Sod  
*Education Dramaturg*

### GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Esther Wu  
*Graphic Designer*

Darren Melchiorre  
*Art Director*

### EDUCATION STAFF:

Jennifer DiBella  
*Director of Education*

Mitch Mattson  
*Assistant Director of  
Education*

Paul Brewster  
*Senior Manager of  
Education Programs*

Abby Case  
*Education Coordinator*

Katlyn Rapini  
*Education Assistant*

Samantha Jacob  
*Education Apprentice*

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# INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT HELEN EDMUNDSON

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod discussed adapting *Thérèse Raquin* from novel to play with playwright Helen Edmundson.

**Ted Sod:** Will you tell us about your background? Where were you born and educated? You started as an actress in an agit-prop theatre company and then began to write, correct?

**Helen Edmundson:** Yes, that's all correct. I was born in Liverpool, and we lived in various cities around the northwest of England before I went to Manchester University, where I studied Drama and then went on to complete a diploma in playwriting. Towards the end of my time there, I set up an agit-prop theatre company mainly doing cabaret style songs and sketches around political and feminist issues. Eventually after being with the company for a few years, and working as an actress freelance as well, I decided it was time to leave and to write plays. Just before I left, I wrote a musical for the other people in the company. It was called *Ladies in the Lift*, and it went very well. It was that which led to my first commission to write a play, and my career developed from there.

**TS:** Would you say that your work often focuses on women?

**HE:** Yes. I'm very drawn to strong female protagonists. I think that's partly because I identify with them and feel that there are so many stories to be told. I get a real kick out of watching large numbers of women being on stage and giving them voices as strong as their male counterparts.

**TS:** Which brings us to your adaptation of *Thérèse Raquin*. This was a commission correct?

**HE:** Yes, it was. When Roundabout asked me to do it, I was thrilled. There wasn't any question in my mind. It was a gift.

**TS:** Were you immediately drawn to the story?

**HE:** *Thérèse Raquin* has always been one of my favorite novels, and I love Zola's work in general. I've read a large amount of it. I fell in love with *Thérèse Raquin* when I was a teenager—it's the passion, the illicit nature of it, the way that it chills you and takes you to dark places. I remember seeing an adaptation of it on television, on the BBC, when I was growing up, and it completely seeped into my soul. I couldn't take my eyes off it. I've always thought I'd love to do a stage version. I actually wrote this adaptation very quickly compared with how long it sometimes takes me to write one.

**TS:** Will you tell our readers what you think *Thérèse Raquin* is about?

**HE:** I think it explores what happens when our most basic, animal instincts are pushed to the surface and start to dominate our behavior. And what happens when that clashes with the more developed side of ourselves, the empathetic side, the side where our conscience resides—everything which separates us from the beasts. Zola claims he was trying to do a scientific experiment. It was as though he was saying: I'm going to examine human beings under the microscope and see how they work—study the link between human physicality and sensuality and the way they behave, etc. But he didn't just take an average girl as his subject. He took somebody who had been suppressing that animal side of her nature for such a long time that it



Playwright Helen Edmundson

was ready to burst forth in an explosive and unstoppable way. *Thérèse* and Laurent are both – but particularly *Thérèse* – extreme creatures. I love the daringness of Zola deciding to see what would happen when people cannot control that side of their nature.

**TS:** Did you have to do a great amount of research? Did you read Zola's stage version? Was that of any value?

**HE:** I always like to read as much as I can about the author and feel that I really know what they were intending. I want to know what it was that was preoccupying them and inspiring them, so I fully understand the material and themes.

I did read Zola's stage version, yes. It was largely useful because of things it doesn't do. He was writing with his hands tied behind his back. There was no way that, at his time, he would have been able to put any of the more explicit parts of the book on stage. He'd already got into trouble over *Thérèse Raquin* – there was a great backlash against it. It became the sort of book that people passed under tables and wouldn't let anybody see them reading. People talked about it as being pornographic. Theatrical style and convention was also completely different at the time he was writing.

But it was also useful to read the voices he had given to the friends of the family who come into Madame's house. It was lovely to read Zola's portrayal of those characters.



"I THINK IT EXPLORES WHAT HAPPENS WHEN OUR MOST BASIC, ANIMAL INSTINCTS ARE PUSHED TO THE SURFACE AND START TO DOMINATE OUR BEHAVIOR. AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THAT CLASHES WITH THE MORE DEVELOPED SIDE OF OURSELVES, THE EMPATHETIC SIDE, THE SIDE WHERE OUR CONSCIENCE RESIDES—EVERYTHING WHICH SEPARATES US FROM THE BEASTS."

**TS: I find it fascinating how quiet Thérèse is at the beginning of your adaptation, and how she's given a voice by finding her sexual self. Was that challenging?**

**HE:** That was. I felt it was important for the audience to see how restrained Thérèse had been for so many years. I felt it was really important that we see her unable to express herself, to understand that she has never met with people of a similar nature, who might understand her emotions, desires and intellect.

There's clearly a sense that she is stifled into living a life that is not fulfilling. One of the challenges for a director is to keep our focus on Thérèse. Once the director works towards helping the audience to focus on this silent creature, she can actually become incredibly powerful in her silence. And when she does start to speak, hopefully we're hanging on her every word because we've waited so long to get a glimpse of what's underneath the surface.

I think the challenges of this adaptation were similar to the ones which I've faced before. Plays work in a completely different way from novels. The structure and dialogue are necessarily different. Even characters sometimes have to be altered or developed. Sometimes it's only the bones of the story and the ideas and themes which remain the same. Novels can meander—plays can't. For example, in the novel, Thérèse goes through a phase where she feels relatively happy—the time when she is on her own, when she is not attached to any man and when she is educating herself. She starts reading novels, she starts talking to intellectuals in cafes. Her mind is expanding. Things like that I would have loved to be able to have a little more time with. But it wasn't possible in the adaptation if I was going to maintain the tension and keep the pace. I had to deal with that part of her journey as deftly as possible because the dramatic tension is compelling us to move forward.

**TS: Why do you think so many artists have been intrigued by this story and have written their own versions of it?**

**HE:** I think it's partly because of the scale and the intensity of the emotions in the piece. When you put that against the fact that it was taking place in a time which was less liberated than ours, I think it gives the most wonderful, dramatic clash. I think artists are all always looking for that. We're always looking for that sense of what happens when things which we're not allowed to do actually break out and happen. Thérèse and Laurent are not psychopaths. They're not mad. They are people who are functioning in the world, who have people around for tea and to play cards. And yet, they take that step. They move into that zone where some of us may sometimes have considered going, but haven't. To be able to deal with characters who do take that step is enormously alluring and fascinating.

**TS: What do you look for in a director?**

**HE:** A lot of plays which I've written, particularly the adaptations, are not naturalistic. Some of them are more overtly expressionistic than others. *Thérèse Raquin* is probably one of the least expressionistic ones I've written in a way, but I think a director has to recognize that it can't be naturalistic. It has to involve really using the performers' physicality,

using movement direction, going to a place way beyond reality. Even the language is heightened—it's rhythmic and precise, poetic at times. I look for somebody who can move the action swiftly from one location to another. The directors I love are the ones who thrive on that. Who don't think, oh my goodness, how on earth is it possible to move from a riverbank to a flat in Paris in the space of half a minute? I love the ones who relish and harvest that to serve the drama of the piece, and to push the boundaries of theatre.

**TS: And what about performers? Do you have a sense of the traits the actors need to do this type of play?**

**HE:** I think the actors need to be very brave. I think they need to be aware that they're not going to be surrounded by lots of props or things to hide behind. They are quite exposed. I love to work with actors who are strong storytellers and who are not afraid to go to highly emotional places.

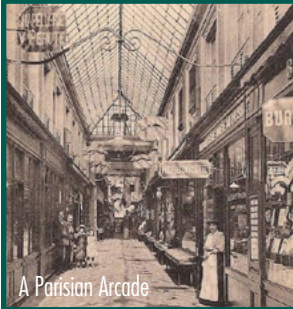
**TS: I'm wondering to what degree you'll be involved with rehearsals. Do you anticipate any script changes?**

**HE:** I'm going to be there for the first week of rehearsals when the company are really investigating the script. Hopefully I'll be of some use. I will certainly be looking out for any problems. I feel confident in the script, but if there are ways in which I can change things in order to solve a particular staging challenge, for example, I'll be ready to help out with that. And I'll be there during the first previews to keep an eye on the storytelling. •





# THÉRÈSE RAQUIN'S PARIS

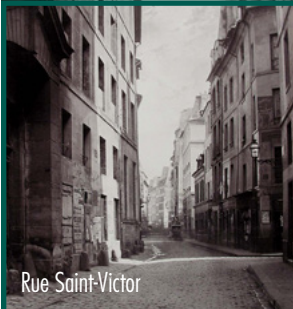


A Parisian Arcade

## RAQUIN SHOP/HOME

*"...the Arcade of the Pont Neuf, a sort of narrow, dark corridor...not a place for a stroll."*

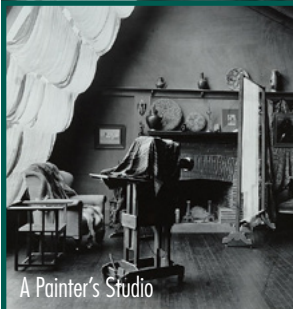
Zola imagined a dank, dirty, gaslit arcade on the Rue Guenegaud. It was like the many glass-and-ironwork shopping arcades built in Paris in the 1820s-30s. By the time the Raquins arrive in Paris, many arcades would have been abandoned for grander department stores.



Rue Saint-Victor

## LAURENT'S ROOM

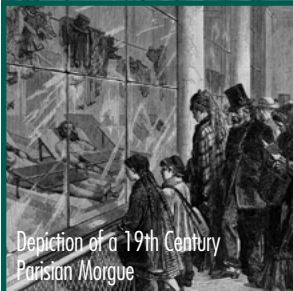
*"...in the Rue Saint-Victor, opposite the Port aux Vins, [Laurent] rented a small furnished room at 18 francs a month. This attic, pierced at the top by a lift-up window, measured barely nine square yards." Laurent has come to Paris to be an artist, but he would face steep competition from the thousands of artists striving in Paris in the late 19th century.*



A Painter's Studio

## LAURENT'S STUDIO

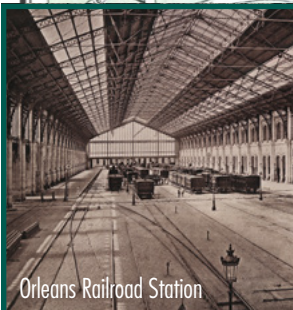
To escape from an unhappy marriage, Laurent rents a small artist's studio on the lower part of the Rue Mazarine: *"...a square loft about seven or eight yards long by the same breadth. The ceiling ...inclined abruptly in a rapid slope pierced by a large window conveying a white raw light to the floor and blackish walls."*



Depiction of a 19th Century Parisian Morgue

## PARIS MORGUE

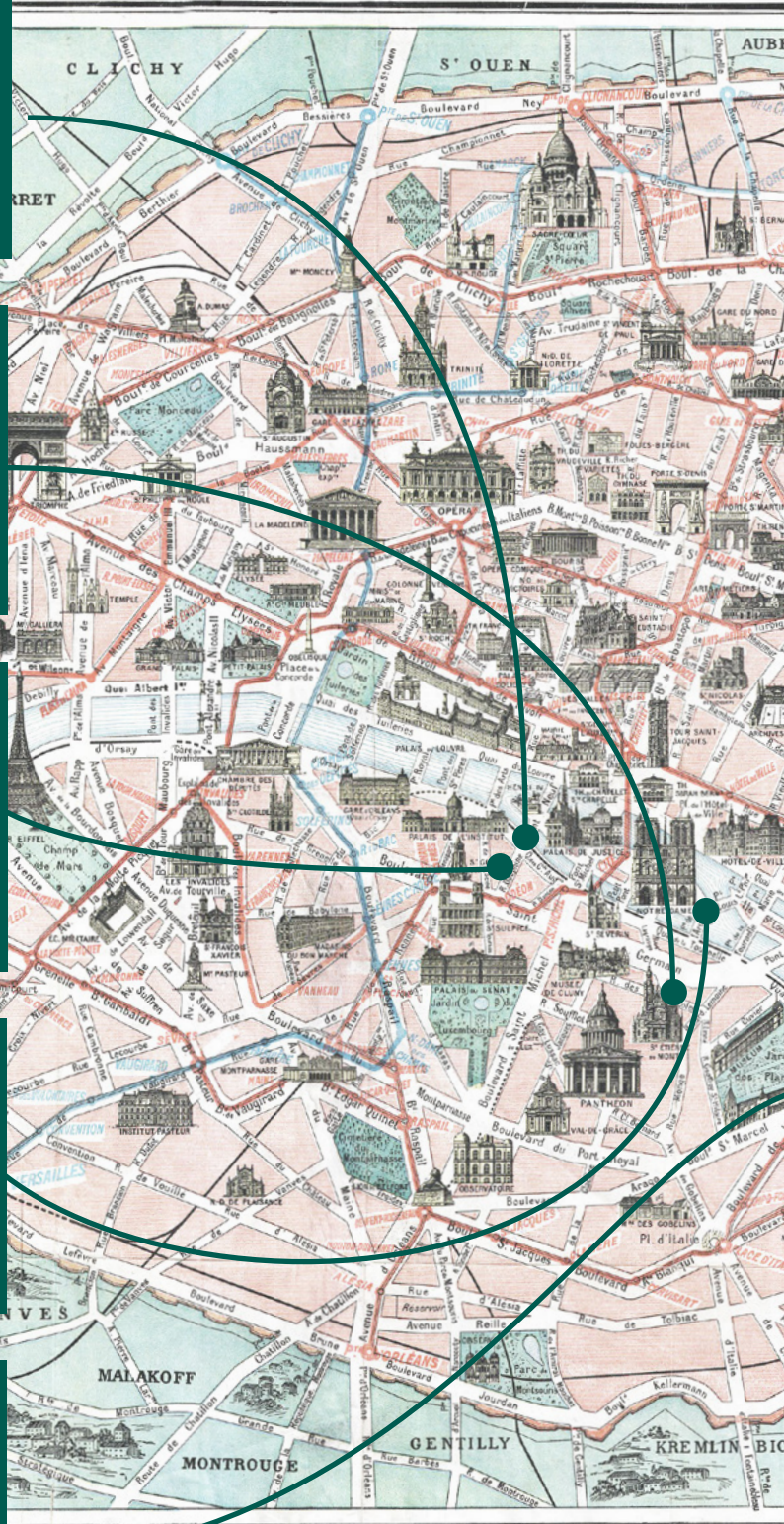
In the building of a former butcher shop, the morgue opened in 1804 at the quai of Notre-Dame. The exposition room displayed unidentified bodies of accident and homicide victims in the hopes that they would be claimed by friends and relatives. Viewing was free, and the morgue became a form of entertainment and spectacle for voyeuristic Parisians and tourists.



Orleans Railroad Station

## ORLEANS RAILWAY STATION

Paris became the central hub of France's expanding railways. Over 40 new stations were built between 1840-1900. Camille and Laurent work for the Orleans railway at the Gare d'Orleans, originally built in 1840 and expanded in the 1860s. Today this building is the Gare d'Austerlitz.





ZOLA'S YEARS IN PARIS (1840–1902) WERE A TIME OF GREAT EXPANSION AND TRANSFORMATION, UNDER THE CAREFUL DESIGN OF GEORGES-EUGÈNE HAUSSMANN. ZOLA'S WRITING PAYS CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CHARACTERS. IN *THÉRÈSE RAQUIN*, ZOLA PROVIDES SPECIFIC DETAILS ABOUT THE MAJOR LOCATIONS, SO AN INHABITANT OF PARIS WOULD KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THE KEY SCENES OCCUR.



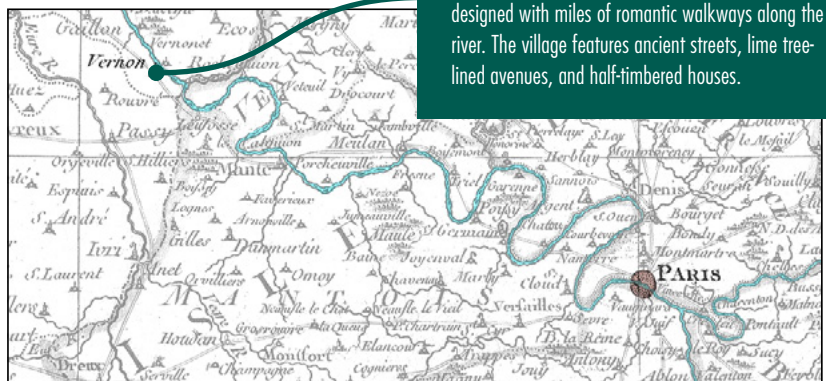
### SAINT-OUEN

Thérèse, Camille, and Laurent come here, about 4 miles from the center of Paris, for their weekend excursion. Around a series of small islands in the Seine, Parisians could escape the city and enjoy bathing, boating picnics, and natural walks. Saint-Ouen is close to Asnières and La Grande Jatte, where George Seurat created his best known painting, *Sunday In the Park at La Grande Jatte*.



### VERNON

Before moving to Paris, the Raquins live close to Giverny, the inspiration for many of Monet's garden paintings. Vernon sits in the Seine Valley and was designed with miles of romantic walkways along the river. The village features ancient streets, lime tree-lined avenues, and half-timbered houses.





# INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR EVAN CABNET

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with director Evan Cabnet about his work with *Thérèse Raquin*.

**TED SOD:** Tell us about yourself: Where were you born and educated? When and why did you decide you want to direct for the stage?

**EVAN CABNET:** I was born in Philadelphia, raised in the South Jersey suburbs. I went to NYU and studied at the Playwrights Horizons Theater School, which is where I began to get a sense of the theatre landscape in the city. I started as an actor, as most of us do, but realized very young that while I had a passion for the art form and for the process, I didn't have much interest in being on the stage. I felt I could be a better and more productive participant as a director.

**TS:** How did you research the world of the play? Did you read the original Émile Zola novel or his own stage adaptation? Did you watch or read any of the countless versions (movies, plays, operas) of the story? What did you have to do in order to prepare to direct *Thérèse Raquin*?

**EC:** I haven't seen any of the film or stage adaptations, but now I'm suddenly nervous that I should! I've read a few translations of the novel, and every stage adaptation in print (including Zola's own attempt a few years after his book was published). Helen Edmundson's version stays very true to the novel, with a few very significant thematic exceptions (I won't elaborate for fear of spoiling her approach). As a result, so much of my research was learning about Zola, his influences— including his very good friend Manet and his mentor, Flaubert— and the Paris he lived in, which features prominently in both the novel and in Helen's script. Zola was among the first great figures of Naturalism, so there's been some academic research mixed into all of our work, although that won't be visible in the production.

**TS:** Why do you think the story of *Thérèse Raquin* is so timeless and compelling to both artists and audiences? What do you think the play is about? Do you see it as a morality tale?

**EC:** Like all great stories, there's a timelessness to *Thérèse Raquin* that speaks to our passions, our desires, our fears, and our longings. It's about loneliness and emotional claustrophobia and the animal desires that lurk just beneath our civilized surfaces. And it's an exploration of what happens when we indulge those more primal impulses and the fallout that ensues. I definitely do not see it as a morality tale, as Zola was far more interested in the study of humans as animals— it's not coincidental that *On The Origin of Species* was published just a few years before Zola sat down to write *Thérèse Raquin*— and so the ethics of these characters was not something he was particularly curious about: he was far too busy thinking about their wants, their actions, and the subsequent consequences.

**TS:** Helen's adaptation is somewhat cinematic in its approach. The scenes are sometimes very short and move swiftly from



Director Evan Cabnet

**location to location. What are the challenges of directing a play written in this style?**

**EC:** Besides the basic technical challenges, the trick is always momentum. The questions we have to ask ourselves when building the play is whether the pace is serving the story, the stakes, and the tension. That doesn't always mean "faster," of course, but it does mean that the physical production must be malleable enough that it can accommodate the natural rhythm of the story, whatever that may turn out to be.

**TS:** What did you look for in casting the actors? What traits did you need? Do you have a sense of what it will be like to direct a cast that is comprised of both American and British actors?

**EC:** Helen's take on these characters is very specific, and so our marching orders came from her. It's difficult to describe the traits without spoiling the plot, but what I can say is that we were looking for a fearlessness and willingness in our cast to push themselves to an emotional limit, a willingness to get messy, so to speak. As for the multi-national company: it's a French novel, adapted by an English dramatist, directed by an American, and featuring actors from England, Wales, and the US. I think so long as we can agree on accents, we'll be in great shape.

**TS:** How will the play manifest itself visually? How are you collaborating with your design team? There are some marvelous effects in the play – how much pre-production work has to go into making those effects happen? Will there be original music?



“IT’S ABOUT LONELINESS AND EMOTIONAL CLAUSTROPHOBIA AND THE ANIMAL DESIRES THAT LURK JUST BENEATH OUR CIVILIZED SURFACES. AND IT’S AN EXPLORATION OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE INDULGE THOSE MORE PRIMAL IMPULSES AND THE FALLOUT THAT ENSUES.”

**EC:** We’re staying true to the period in which the play was written and using color, light, and scale to tell the story of both Thérèse’s interior and exterior life. Beowulf Boritt, our incredible set designer, has conjured a world that honors plot, theme, and tone seamlessly and elegantly. Josh Schmidt is composing original music, heavily influenced by the popular music of the time, particularly of the lower classes featured in the play. Jane Greenwood, who needs no introduction, has created beautiful clothes that storytell in a simple, powerful way, and Keith Parham, our lighting designer, will paint Beowulf’s set in a way that articulates and heightens the tension as the play veers from Naturalism into other territories.

**TS:** Water seems to play an important part thematically and literally in the play. Do you think Zola was using water as a metaphor for something else?

**EC:** I think Zola’s use of water in his story is certainly symbolic of freedom. The themes of escape, of deliverance, of distance are all encapsulated in the constant movement of the Seine, but over the course of the play it turns into something more sinister and inescapable.

**TS:** When you last directed at RTC, I asked you how you keep yourself inspired as an artist and you said, “...As a director, you’re only as good as your sense of observation, so the more you pay attention to the world around you, the more you’re (theoretically, at least) sharpening your skill.” Will these observations help in directing a period piece like *Thérèse Raquin*? If so, will you share with us an observation about human behavior you’ve made that relates to the play?

**EC:** If there’s a play that exists that doesn’t rely on wrestling with human behavior, I definitely don’t know about it. The



Keira Knightley in *Thérèse Raquin*

period— in this case, 1860s Paris — is the setting, but the story is as immediate and startling as anything we read online and in the papers every day. I like to think Zola’s aim in writing *Thérèse Raquin* was quite simple in the end: to answer the question of “how do people do such things?” whenever unimaginable tragedy strikes. In order to answer this, we must find those dark, primal parts of ourselves and of those around us and examine them unflinchingly, as Zola did. That’s the only way to get to the truth he and Helen are seeking, and will, I hope, make for a bracing, thrilling night at the theatre. •



The Cast of *Thérèse Raquin*



# ÉMILE ZOLA BIOGRAPHY

Émile Zola was a significant 19th century French novelist, critic, and political activist. Born in Paris in 1840, Émile-Édouard-Charles-Antoine Zola was the only child of an Italian father and a French mother. The family moved to Aix-en-Provence when Émile was three; four years later, Émile's father died of pneumonia, leaving little money behind. Zola attended school but failed the *baccalauréat* examination, which meant he could not pursue a formal education.

At age 18, Zola returned to Paris and lived in poverty for four years, until he found employment as a clerk at the Hachette publishing firm. Zola began writing cultural reviews and political journalism as well as fiction. In 1865 his first novel, *La Confession de Claude* (*Claude's Confession*), caused scandal by portraying a young man's affair with a prostitute; however, it established Zola's reputation as a writer. Zola quit Hachette and resolved to support himself and his widowed mother through his writing. His second novel, *Thérèse Raquin*, was released in 1867, first in serial form and then as a book. Although *Le Figaro* called the book "putrid literature," it was a popular success.

In 1870, Zola began a masterwork that would take over 20 years to complete. The *Rougon-Macquart* series consisted of 20 novels. They portrayed a fictional family in the years of France's Second Empire (1850-1872) and explored the impact of social, economic, and political events on the family. Zola championed naturalism, a literary genre that applied scientific principles to storytelling. "Determinism" held that forces of heredity, environment, and history determined character and behavior, while the experimental method called for a detailed, objective recording of precise data. Through naturalistic novels, Zola illuminated the plight of society's poorest and most persecuted members.

Zola remained a prolific journalist and an outspoken advocate for justice. He wrote critically about France's president Napoleon III, who had staged a *coup d'état* and crowned himself as emperor. Zola is best remembered for intervening in the Dreyfus Affair by openly denouncing the government with his words "*J'accuse*" ("I accuse"). In an open letter, he accused the government of mishandling the case of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer wrongfully convicted of espionage and treason. Authorities retaliated against Zola by prosecuting him for libel. Zola fled to England and lived in exile for almost a year, until the Dreyfus case was reopened. Zola's letter helped to shed light on the societal



anti-Semitism and militarism at the root of Dreyfus case.

Zola married his lover Gabrielle-Alexandrine Meley when he was 30 years old, and their marriage lasted throughout his life. But his only children, Denise and Jacques, were the product of a 14-year affair with one of his housemaids, Jeanne Rozerot. Gabrielle recognized the children after Zola's mystifying death in 1902. Zola died by asphyxiation from coal gas that leaked into his bedroom from a blocked chimney flue. Although his death was officially ruled to be an accident, to this day suspicions exist that he was murdered by fanatical opponents from the Dreyfus controversy. At his death, Zola was one Europe's most respected novelists and widely admired for his political conviction and action. •



# ZOLA AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Many French citizens lived in extreme poverty during the mid-nineteenth century. This caused both the political Revolution of 1848 as well as a movement in art and literature called *realism*. Realism, unlike the earlier classical and romantic styles, sought to accurately portray contemporary life: the settings, material goods, language, and lives of ordinary, working-class people. The creator often reports to the reader what he or she sees without opinion.

Consider the following examples of realism. First, a passage from *A Second Home* by Honoré de Balzac, an author writing during the 1830s and 1840s. In it, he describes a working-class apartment:

*“At that hour an old table on trestles, but bare of linen, was laid with pewter-spoons, and the dish concocted by the old woman. Three wretched chairs were all the furniture of this room, which was at once the kitchen and the dining-room. Over the chimney-piece were a piece of looking-glass, a tinder-box, three glasses, some matches, and a large, cracked white jug.”*

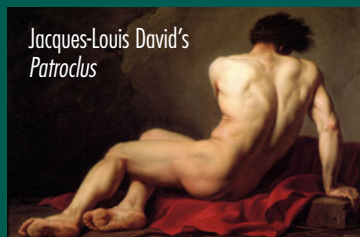
Second, Courbet's *A Burial at Ornans*, from 1850. In this painting, which is ten feet high and 22 feet long, Courbet shows the funeral of his great-uncle, using ordinary townspeople from Ornans as his models. Courbet's choice to paint a small town burial in a size and style that earlier artists had used to paint grand historical subjects shocked the art world when the painting was first shown.



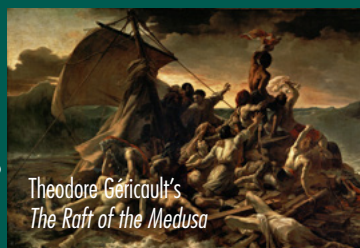
Émile Zola took realism one step further, developing a genre called naturalism. Rather than simply show life as it is, he attempted to show how characters' inherited traits and environment determined their behavior. He wrote that he was attempting “the study of temperament and of the profound modifications of organism under the pressure of circumstances and situations.” After Zola, most prominent naturalist writers were American, including Edith Wharton, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris. •

## CONTRASTING STYLES

**Neoclassical art** is inspired by the art of ancient Greece and Rome. It focuses on idealized versions of people or objects. Neoclassical art emphasizes form (for example, the shape of a line in visual art, or the rhythm in a line of poetry) and shows the nobility and glory of man. Neoclassical art became popular after the chaos of the French Revolution.



**Romantic art** attempts to convey intense emotion and emphasizes individual rights and a spiritual connection to nature. It grew out of a response to the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution and the movement toward a rational, scientific approach to life. Romantic artists encourage the audience to feel and identify with others.



## ZOLA AND CÉZANNE

Émile Zola grew up in Aix-en-Provence with Paul Cézanne, the famous Post-Impressionist painter. As boys they attended school together. Cézanne was the better student, and Zola considered him a better poet.



Zola moved to Paris in 1858, and the men wrote each other regularly about both life and art, and for a short time they both lived in Paris and saw each other often. Zola encouraged Cézanne to pursue an artistic career over the objection of Cézanne's father. It was through Cézanne that Zola met a group of painters known as the Impressionists. Like their realist contemporaries, Impressionists broke tradition by depicting scenes of everyday life. Impressionist paintings are impressions of moments, without symbolism or narrative. In the 1860s and 1870s Zola wrote a series of newspaper articles that favorably reviewed Impressionist art, helping the group gain supporters and legitimacy in the French art establishment.

In an 1873 novel, Zola created a character named Claude Lantier who was based on Cézanne. In 1886, he wrote a novel about Lantier called *The Masterpiece*, in which Lantier, a failure, hangs himself in front of his “unfinished, unfinishable masterpiece.” The novel ended their correspondence and friendship, though Cézanne mourned deeply when Zola passed away.



# INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR GABRIEL EBERT

Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, sat down with actor Gabriel Ebert to discuss *Thérèse Raquin* and his role as Camille.

**TED SOD:** Why did you choose to play the role of Camille Raquin in *Thérèse Raquin*?

**GABRIEL EBERT:** I was blessed with the opportunity to work with director Evan Cabnet back when I was at Juilliard in my fourth year. And I've always loved the way he runs a room and the work that he does. The role of Camille is a bit of a departure for me—I've been playing a lot of tortured artists. Camille is babied by his mother and treated as though he's ill all the time. He has a phlegmatic personality, and he is responsible for a lot of the humor in the play. This character could be seen as a stereotype of an uncaring husband. Maybe I can find a way to play him that would allow his behavior to be better understood by the audience.

**TS:** Why do you think Camille behaves the way he does?

**GE:** He is an only child. He has always been a mama's boy. He's never learned how to be self-sufficient, self-reliant. He's always been treated like a prince. And the fact that Thérèse doesn't treat him in that way wounds him. I am hoping to discover in the rehearsal room how much love there actually is between him and Thérèse. I think a lot of things go unsaid. I think there are misunderstandings between the two of them because she was forced into this relationship with his family due to the death of her parents.

**TS:** How do you explain the fact that he's clueless about who his friend Laurent really is?

**GE:** I've had the experience of meeting someone who I think is really cool and wanting to just hang around with them. I think Camille, who has always been around women, suddenly has the opportunity to spend time with a really confident, good-looking painter who is rather like an older brother. And because the excitement of that is so great, he doesn't take the time to actually look more deeply at things that might be happening. Camille doesn't see what's negative about Laurent because he's blinded by the excitement of having a cool friend.

**TS:** What do you think the play is about?

**GE:** It's hard for me not to read the play in terms of just character motivation. I try to empathize with my character. I try to relate to all of the characters on a human level. Helen Edmundson's adaptation has made this a very human story. What do I think the play is about? It's about Thérèse and her struggle. She's forced into a marriage which is clearly loveless, a marriage that doesn't allow her to be authentic. It denies her a rich inner life. She's always struggling and staring out at the water. Finally she finds passion in Laurent. At the end of play, maybe one of the realizations Thérèse has is that Camille wasn't actually so bad after all. I think the play could be about the deception of lust. Or the fact that incredibly sexy encounters might not add up to



Gabriel Ebert

true love. I think a lot of the play is about guilt. How guilt gets in the way of being able to accomplish anything. I feel that's something that Laurent and Thérèse struggle with in the second half of the play.

**TS:** How will you research your role? What kind of work do you have to do before you get into the rehearsal room?

**GE:** If I get pedantic in my research it actually takes me away from the visceral experience of being in the rehearsal room and telling the story that we're all telling. I'm definitely going to read more of Zola's work. Maybe Zola will give me a key into how Camille walks – perhaps it is with his hands behind his back or maybe he does a funny little thing with his nose when he talks. I'll probably study the character traits of the phlegmatic humor. I'll explore with that in the rehearsal room and see what comes out of it. I have to make this story accessible to the audience at Studio 54.

**TS:** *Thérèse Raquin* has been adapted many times as a film, opera and play. What do you think attracts so many artists to this story?

**GE:** Thérèse is such a great character. Audiences can relate to her because a lot of us get into relationships that don't fulfill us in every single capacity, and we search for escape. We don't want to lose the relationship entirely, but our id is howling from our bowels, asking for the other things that we need. And so we go and seek those. This story talks about the cost of that. It



"I THINK A LOT OF THE PLAY IS ABOUT GUILT. HOW GUILT GETS IN THE WAY OF BEING ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING."

looks at actually balancing the howling id with reality and the consequences of that.

**TS: What do you look for from a director when you're working on a role?**

**GE:** I like working with a director who provides me a very firm structure. Because within a structure, there's more freedom I find. I've already had a couple of conversations with Evan about the play, and he's got amazing ideas. I don't go in with too many preconceived notions. I'm a nerd for all the minutia. I love doing table work, sitting and talking about the play and everyone getting on the same page in terms of the journey that we're going to create for our audiences. I like discussing the themes that are in the text. Rehearsal is great for me because it gives me an opportunity to fail really big, and through some of those failures, I'll find things.

**TS: Will you talk about American actors working with actors from the United Kingdom?**

**GE:** For some reason I've done a lot of English plays or musicals, and I often play British in transfers from London. I've worked with a lot of British directors. I don't necessarily find that there's too much difference. This will be my first time working with a movie star of Keira Knightley's stature. I have an affinity for Brits. I love them. And I love England. I don't know if it's very different. I mean they love the theatre, and they take it very seriously. And so do I. And in some ways I feel like a Brit who just happened to be born in America. So in a way, it feels like coming home. Matt Ryan, who plays Laurent, is Welsh, and I love the Welsh accent. I'm definitely going to listen to him talk and secretly try to steal what I can, so that maybe I can play a Welshman someday.

**TS: What about the French aspect of the story? Is that something you have to deal with as an actor?**

**GE:** I don't know. I am sure Evan will tell us what world we live in. I don't know where our dialects are going to live. I love doing dialects. But I think it'll be kind of weird if we are all doing French accents or something like that. I imagine everyone French was smoking cigarettes at that period in time, so that's something I'd be interested in exploring. But I don't know if you can really smoke cigarettes in Studio 54 anymore. Whether in terms of dialect or in terms of style, hopefully we'll just communicate the human elements of the story. When I read Zola's novel, all his details—the way that the fog hangs over the buildings or the smell of the air or the colors of the time—all those details create a French atmosphere for me.

**TS: Did you ever have any teachers at Juilliard or elsewhere who profoundly influenced you?**

**GE:** I'm incredibly indebted and grateful to my teachers at Juilliard. And several of them still come and see my work. Jim Houghton took over the program after my first year, and he's been a huge inspiration to me. My acting teacher Richard Feldman and

Richard's wife, Carolyn Serota, who ran the Alexander Program at school, were both influences. For years, I always hunched over and apologized for my height because I felt bad that I was bigger than everyone. When I got into her class, she got me to stand up straight for the first time. And Richard made me play kings and killers because I was always the clown, always apologizing for my size. They actually made me fulfill and embody my size. And for that, I'm extremely grateful. I also had a great teacher at Denver School of the Arts named Shawn Hann. She allowed me to do some great things and still comes to see the theatre I am doing and brings current high school students with her.

**TS: Do you have advice for the public school students who might want to pursue an acting career?**

**GE:** The thing I say to kids who are auditioning for colleges, which I know is terrifying, is try to go in with the attitude of I may be the right person and I may not. They're not looking to turn people away—they're looking to accept the right people. If you keep that in mind, it gives you a positive outlook going in rather than a defeatist point of view. I think it leads to better work. If you go in and say to yourself, "I may very well be the right person for this job and I may not. But I'm not going to take it personally either way," then you allow yourself an opportunity to succeed. I grew up playing a lot of sports. And being in sports, failure is a huge part of success—you have to strike out a bunch of times before you get a base hit. •



Gabriel Ebert in *Thérèse Raquin*



# PSYCHOLOGY OF GUILT

**GUILT** *noun* \ˈgɪlt\

- 1 the fact of having committed a breach of conduct especially violating law and involving a penalty
- 2 a: the state of one who has committed an offense especially consciously  
b: feelings of culpability especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy : self-reproach
- 3 a feeling of culpability for offenses

—Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Guilt, thanks to the ease of its provocation, is a quiet mainstay in most lives. Often, the emotion comes out of relationships with others: we might feel guilty for not calling our parents more often or for making an insensitive comment to a friend. Guilt may also stem from an ethical transgression (lying, cheating, stealing) or an internal failure, in which we don't meet our personal standards (watching a television show rather than completing a work assignment). Generally, guilt comes from action or inaction, and how we feel that action or inaction will have a negative impact on ourselves and our relationships. While guilt can be painful, it can also serve a purpose; it's considered to be among the "prosocial" emotions (which also include shame, gratitude, empathy, and remorse), which help us build and maintain harmonious relationships with others.

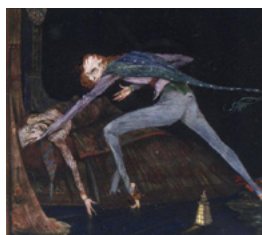
In Thérèse Raquin, guilt goes far beyond everyday pangs. As Thérèse and Laurent's misdeeds go unaddressed, their guilt grows more and more pervasive, rotting away at the foundation of their relationship and their lives. Below, you'll find theological, literary, and theatrical examples of similarly extreme tales of guilt, tales in which an apology simply won't suffice.



Paul Gustave Doré's *Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise*

## GENESIS 2:4–3:24

The bible has provided one of our culture's most foundational stories of guilt, in the form of Adam & Eve. When, against the orders of God, Adam and Eve eat fruit from the tree of knowledge, they learn of good and evil (and immediately cower from the shame of their nakedness). The guilt from this transgression, known as "original sin" in Christian tradition, is laid on them and on all of their descendants.



Harry Clarke's Illustration of "The Tell-Tale Heart"

## THE TELL-TALE HEART

Edgar Allen Poe's short story is one of the most famous examples of guilt made manifest. The story's narrator kills a man and hides his body under the floorboards of his apartment. Initially, the narrator feels a flood of relief (he had been haunted by the man's "vulture eye"), but when the police arrive to investigate, he is soon sure that he can hear the dead man's heart beating through the floorboards.

## HAMLET & MACBETH

William Shakespeare was a master of guilt—and of ghosts. In *Hamlet*, a young prince fights to avenge the murder of his father as his father's brother who is the murderer and Hamlet's sudden stepfather and king, walks freely about the castle. In *Macbeth*, a noble couple takes murderous steps to claim the throne, but their guilty consciences threaten to undo them. •

## IS SHAME A SYNONYM FOR GUILT?

Not quite. While we often use shame and guilt interchangeably, they are actually different emotions. While guilt is primarily about what we *did* or *did not do*, shame is primarily about that behavior as it relates to the *kind of person we are*. Feeling bad that you didn't go to the gym is guilt; feeling like you didn't go to the gym *because* you are a lazy or worthless person is shame.

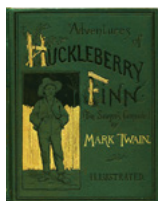
## THE REALITY OF THE "GUILTY PLEASURE"

We might assume that guilt lessens the joy we get from indulging in a vice—or hope that guilt will prevent us from indulging in the vice altogether. But studies have shown that guilt actually increases the pleasure we take from caving to our cravings. The link between guilt and indulgence is so strong that the feelings actually amplify one another (thus the childhood pleasure of secretly staying up after bedtime), and, in some cases, the indulgence-to-guilt pattern may actually be reversed (for instance, a person trying to lose weight may overeat after being unable to fit into a smaller pants size). In the case of Thérèse and Laurent, this guilt-pleasure association is especially apt; the moment their love affair has no need to be illicit, it loses its passion.



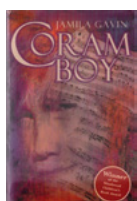
# ADAPTATIONS IN THEATRE

Helen Edmundson's adaptation of *Thérèse Raquin* is the newest addition to a long history of bringing written works to life. There are many other novels that have made the journey to the stage. Here are just a few...



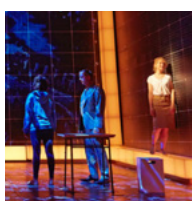
## THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

*Big River*, an adaptation of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, follows Huck and Jim as they float down the Mississippi together on a raft. The musical first premiered on Broadway in 1985. In the 2003 revival, the Roundabout Theatre Company and Deaf West Theatre re-envisioned the production to include both hearing and deaf actors. The musical's set was covered with large scale pages from Twain's novel.



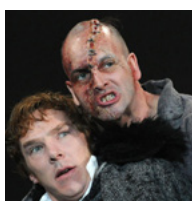
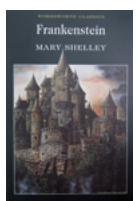
## CORAM BOY

Jamila Gavin's young adult novel is about the perils that face abandoned children in 1700s England. This other Helen Edmundson adaptation started at the National Theatre in 2005 and appeared on Broadway in 2007. The melodrama prominently features Handel's oratorios (large scale musical compositions), which fuel and escalate the turbulent story.



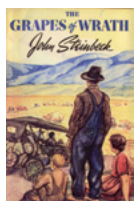
## THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

Mark Haddon's novel is about Christopher, a young man with autism, and his quest to solve the murder of a neighborhood dog. Adapted by Simon Stephens, the play made the move from the West End to Broadway in 2014. Using a combination of lights, sound, and projections, the stage becomes a large scale grid through which audiences can see Christopher's unique view of the world.



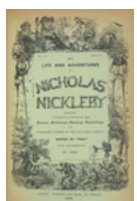
## FRANKENSTEIN

In Nick Dear's adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel, performed at the Royal National Theatre in 2011, actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller alternated the roles of both Victor Frankenstein and his creature. The play began with the creature's birth; audiences watched it emerge naked from a light filled orb, clawing its way into existence.



## THE GRAPES OF WRATH

The classic American novel by John Steinbeck follows the Joad family on their journey from Oklahoma to California, where they hope to build a new life. In 1990 the play, adapted by Frank Galati, was performed on Broadway. The production had live music (composed specifically for the play, using Steinbeck's words) and a 12-foot water tank for the actors to swim in.



## THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

Charles Dickens' novel follows a young man, Nicholas, who must provide for his family after his father dies. David Edgar's adaptation dramatizes the entire story, which is over 700 pages long, in a two part play that lasts for 8 and ½ hours. The play was first performed in 1980 at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Aldwych Theatre, and moved to Broadway in the fall of 1981. The play featured Roger Rees, pictured at left, as Nicholas.



# LIFE IN SECOND EMPIRE FRANCE

*Thérèse Raquin* takes place during France's Second Empire, an era of rapid economic and social change between 1852 and 1870. Under the rule of Emperor Napoleon III, the nation was slowly evolving from a class-based, agricultural society controlled by the Catholic Church to an egalitarian, urban, industrialized, and secular civilization.



Jacques Bertaux's *Prise du palais des Tuileries* (Taking of the Tuileries Palace), a depiction of the French Revolution

## FROM THE ANCIEN RÉGIME TO THE SECOND EMPIRE

These changes in French life began with the French Revolution in 1789. The pre-Revolutionary power structure, or *Ancien Régime*, was a monarchy ruled by a king who was beholden to the powerful Catholic Church. Society was rigidly divided into social classes called estates. The third estate comprised 97% of the population, and most were subsistence farmers who did not own land. They were heavily taxed and did not have the right to vote.

The French Revolution ended the *Ancien Régime*, overthrowing the monarchy, stripping power from the Catholic Church, and driving much of the nobility into exile. The Revolution ended in the rise of dictator Napoleon Bonaparte in 1800. During this First French Empire, Bonaparte instituted a public education system, enacted a unified set of laws called the Napoleonic Code, and expanded French territory through a series of wars, but did not allow elections or freedom of the press.

After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, the monarchy was restored as a constitutional monarchy with limited power. Still, less than one percent of the population had the right to vote. During this time the wealth gap between rich and poor increased. Rural families, including children, worked 16-hour days on plots of land too small to feed them. Poor harvests routinely pushed them to the edge of starvation. Urban laborers survived on bags of half-rotten meat scraps.

The French public rebelled against the monarchy in 1848 and the king abdicated. The opposition formed a new government, the French Second Republic, which extended the vote to all men, outlawed slavery, and attempted a scheme to provide a job to every man. Soon the republic divided along class lines, pitting the urban working classes against the emerging middle class of shop and factory owners, who in turn struggled against the wealthier bourgeoisie who controlled the financial system. Louis-Napoleon, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, won the first presidential election in the new republic. Napoleon was popular with all classes and ran on a platform of social stability and greater economic opportunity. Napoleon believed in an active government that would use its policies to create change in France.

In December 1851, after the legislature was unable to pass an amendment to the French constitution that would allow him to run for a second term, Louis-Napoleon seized power in a coup d'état, amended the constitution to give himself all political power, and was declared Emperor Napoleon III. The Second Empire officially began in December 1852.

## THE ECONOMY OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

Napoleon III immediately set about modernizing the French financial system and encouraging industrial development. His efforts were enhanced by the 1849 global economic boom. Banks were created, and business loans of all sizes became available. Middle class shop and factory owners expanded their businesses, and large factories that produced rubber, ink, matches, candles, steam engines, iron work, and glue were constructed. Demand for mid-price consumer goods increased. Bon Marché, the original department store, opened, and for the first time, French consumers could see the goods available for purchase through large glass windows in storefronts. As the economy



Bon Marché in Paris





Franz Xaver Winterhalter's  
*Napoleon III*

grew, young people like Camille and Laurent moved from villages and rural areas to Paris in search of greater economic opportunities. Once in Paris, they took advantage of new bars and cafes that were opening all over the city.

Despite economic gains, in 1865 42% of Parisians were classified as too poor to pay taxes. Workdays lasted 12 hours. Both the working class and the lower middle class to which Camille and Thérèse belong

could afford little more than food and rent. Émile Zola, author of the novel *Thérèse Raquin*, once earned 100 francs a month as a mailing clerk in a book publisher's office. At the time, food cost a minimum of 30 francs a month, and rent around 25 to 30 francs each month.

In urban areas a class of workers known as chiffonniers, or rag-pickers, sorted trash and sold anything that could be reused, including clothing, wine corks, fruit peels, and bones. The dominoes that Madame Raquin and her friends play in *Thérèse Raquin* were made of salvaged bone.

### DEVELOPMENT OF RAILWAYS

France lagged behind neighboring nations in the development of railways, in part because French industry didn't need, and couldn't financially support, a rail network. By 1848 there were eighteen independent companies in operation, all partially government-funded. The railways did not connect to each other, making rail travel inefficient. Soon after he became emperor, Napoleon III launched a public works campaign to expand French railways. Companies like the Orleans Railway where Camille and Laurent work were encouraged to merge into larger networks. The government offered loan guarantees for the construction of new lines, and developed the French industries that would come to rely on trains to transport their products.

### NAPOLEONIC CODE

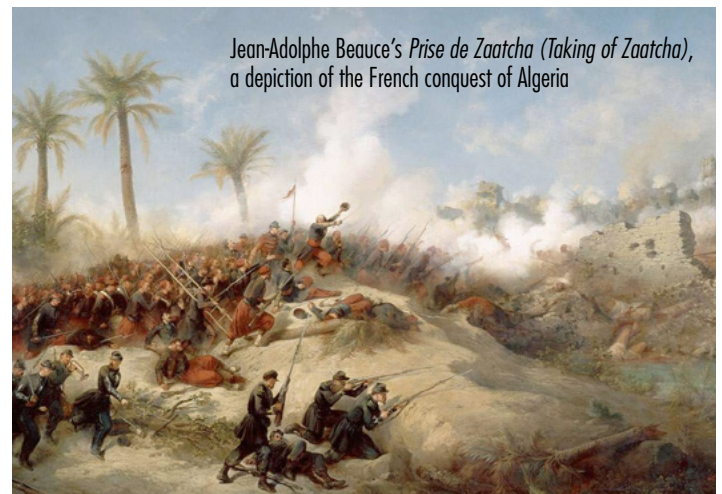
The Napoleonic Code was in use during the Second Empire. In addition to spelling out property and individual rights, it affirmed the legal right of men to control women. A married woman was legally represented by her husband. She could not vote. She could not buy, sell, give, or mortgage property,

even property she owned prior to the marriage. She could not work without her husband's permission. She was required to follow her husband and live wherever he "may judge it convenient to reside."

The Napoleonic code also made marriage and divorce civil, not church, matters. Divorce was legal in cases of "outrageous conduct," "ill-usage," or "grievous injury" on the part of either party, or if a man brought a concubine into the house he shared with his wife. Women, on the other hand, could be jailed for three months for adultery. A widow was required to wait ten months from the time of her husband's death before remarrying, and if she had a child she had to seek permission of a family council before remarrying. There were no similar restrictions on men.

### FRENCH ALGERIA

Algeria, a small wheat-producing region in North Africa, sold grain to the French during the revolution. France had refused to pay for the grain for nearly forty years when, in 1830, the governor of Algeria threatened to forbid French trading in the region, and may have struck the French envoy with a fly-swatter. The French used this incident as an excuse to invade. The invaders followed a "scorched earth" policy, destroying, looting, raping, and killing as they made their way from the coast to the capital city. During the next decades, French laborers in search of farmland emigrated to Algeria. Algeria, like the rest of the non-Western world, was popularly described as dark and exotic, a place of barbarians, pirates, and harems. Thérèse, the illegitimate child of a French sea captain and an Algerian mother, would have carried both the stigma and mystique of her mother's homeland. •



Jean-Adolphe Beauce's *Prise de Zaatcha (Taking of Zaatcha)*, a depiction of the French conquest of Algeria

# DESIGNER STATEMENTS

## BEOWULF BORRITT/SET DESIGNER

*Thérèse Raquin* is a story of a young woman forced into smaller and smaller boxes until she lashes out with devastating results. It's startling and sad to see how relevant that mid-nineteenth century storyline remains in 2015. Helen Edmundson's beautifully modern adaptation of Émile Zola's novel sets up water as a primary image. The river is a place of emotional release for Thérèse in the early scenes, the tool of her physical release at the center of the play, and a haunting phantom late in the story. Evan Cabnet and I have chosen to devote much of our stage space to that image and hope it will enhance the story. Additionally, we've created a set that starts as wide open and airy as possible, and compresses, darkens, and imprisons Thérèse as the world closes around her. I explored French period interiors, but in the end used images by the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershoi, which captured the stark emotion of this story better than the drapery filled apartments of mid-nineteenth-century Paris. The emotional feel of the scenic visuals seemed more interesting to us in telling this story than strict anthropological adherence to the historically correct look.

## JANE GREENWOOD/COSTUME DESIGNER

First I read Émile Zola's book, which is a fascinating study of this bourgeois family in 1868 France. The play has captured a great sense of the story and a strong feel for the period, so it has been so interesting to bring these characters to life through their clothes. While we were fitting Keira Knightley, who is playing the title role, we talked about Thérèse's love of the river and her clothes being somewhat fluid and unhampered. 1868 was a period of great constriction in women's clothing. For Keira and I, that was not of interest. In the period, there were people who were critical of the current fashion and its restrictive nature, so we looked to them for research. Thérèse's clothes came from this research,

which helped us develop a simplicity and functionality that works well for the character.

The color palette is inspired by the murky river bottom: grays, muddy greens, browns. We bring a little color in with Suzanne because I feel that she should represent a more conventional woman of the time. There's much talk in the play about Suzanne's dresses—so she is much more decorative than the other women, in particular Thérèse, which provides an interesting contrast. I keep turning the pages of our costume research, looking at the characters and photographs from the period—with particular interest in the tension created between the person and the often restrictive clothing they wear. It occurred to me that the attraction Thérèse and Laurent have for each other is completely visceral and has nothing to do with the clothes. You get a sense that they look at each other and all they want to do is take their clothes off. So much of my responsibility for this project has been designing clothes for Thérèse and Laurent that they can wear, take off, and then put on again without any help!

## KEITH PARHAM/LIGHTING DESIGNER

The lighting of this piece has been about finding the balance between the operatic scale of what is happening in Thérèse's head and the intimate realities of where the scenes are set. These two states are in a dance with each other through the entire piece, and each has to be constantly given the correct amount of weight. Designing lighting for this play has meant a process of searching for how to appropriately use the large canvas of the set in relation to the very small canvases of the scenes. We have to find the ways and means in which a scene lit by a single candle is harmonious with the psychological space of the theatre and the ways in which they are juxtaposed.

Costume sketches for Thérèse



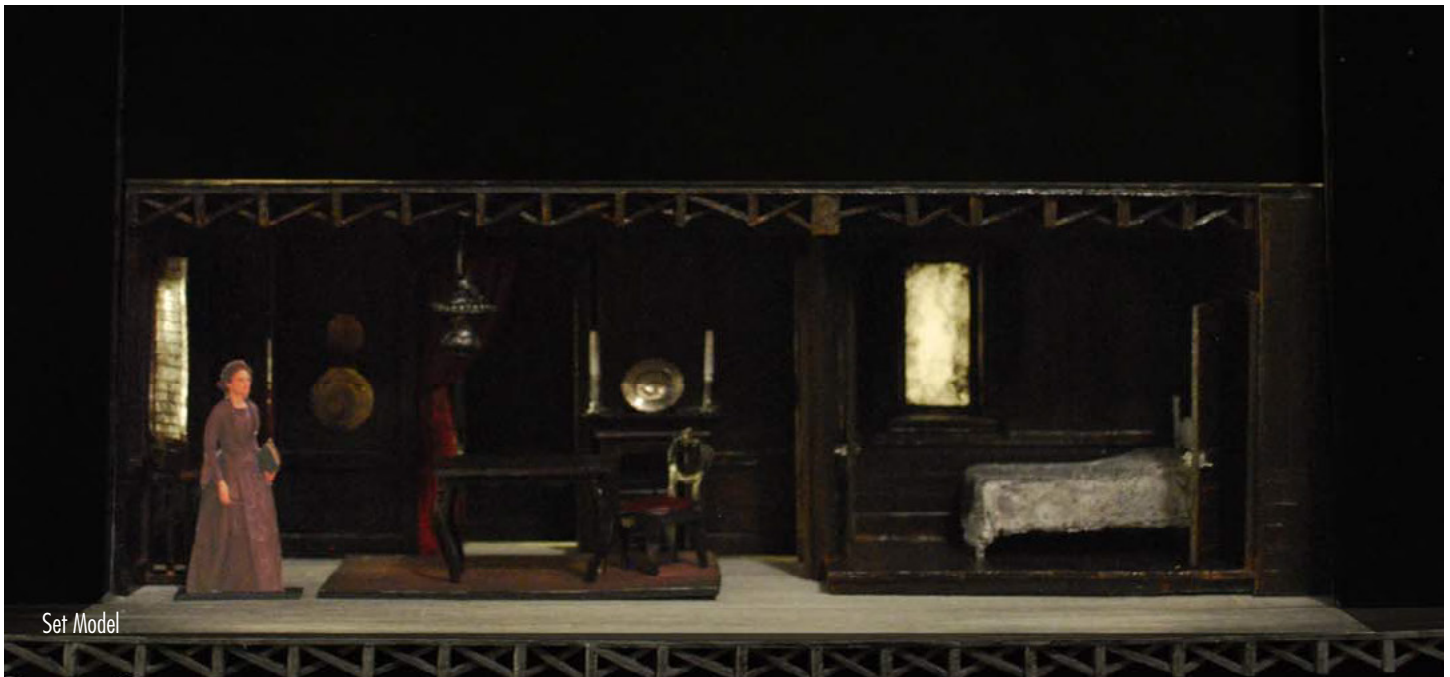
Costume sketches for Camille



Costume sketches for Laurent







Set Model

**JOSH SCHMIDT/ORIGINAL COMPOSITION AND SOUND**

When considering these elements within the body of this classic tale, it is easy to lapse into period appropriate music—lush, pre-Impressionistic soundscapes inspired by the same artists that fuel Zola’s writing. But to implement this material into this design would be disingenuous, and in the process turn this piece into the tawdry melodrama that is something we all want to avoid. The world Thérèse inhabits is limited in so many ways—a shaft of light here and

there, the dingy streets of the Pont Neuf, the sound a distant barrel organ, the walls of people across the river bank, the sound of water rushing downstream...all of these carry so much weight within her inner psychology that the starkness of their presentation truly must be explored. Poetically, what music churns out of that should be (and will be) surprisingly contemporary, unexpected...variously subtle and pronounced as she sinks deeper and deeper into a vortex of lust and guilt. •



Set Model

# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## HOW DO AUDIENCES ENGAGE QUESTIONS OF ETHICS AND MORALITY IN *THÉRÈSE RAQUIN*?

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Before watching the play, students participate in a collaborative discussion and write about the moral conflicts they will observe. (Common core codes: CCSS W 11-12-4)

(Note: A summary of the play is available for your preparation [here](#); however, we recommend you DO NOT REVEAL ANY MAJOR PLOT POINTS to students before they see the play.)

**ACTIVATE** Ask the following prompts and have students move to one of three parts of the room, depending on whether they (ALWAYS/SOMETIMES/NEVER) agree with the behavior. After each prompt, ask a few students to defend their position and invite to change their position if they wish.

- It is (ALWAYS/SOMETIMES/NEVER) okay to tell a lie.
- It is (ALWAYS/SOMETIMES/NEVER) okay to spend time alone with your best friend's boyfriend/girlfriend.
- We should (ALWAYS/SOMETIMES/NEVER) respect elders.
- We should (ALWAYS/SOMETIMES/NEVER) put our own needs before needs of others.

**WRITE** Introduce students to the overview of the play and the characters Thérèse, Camille, and Laurent provided on the "Callboard" at the front of this UPSTAGE GUIDE. Ask them to imagine they are advice columnists for a newspaper and write a response to this question:

*"Dear Abby: I allowed myself to marry a man I don't love, and I live in France in the 19th century, so divorce is not an option. Last night, my husband brought a friend over to our house, and (although we don't use this slang in France), he is totally HOT! I think he feels the same way about me. So far, I haven't even talked to him. What should I do?"*  
—A Woeful Wife

**SHARE** Allow a few students to read their advice. Facilitate a discussion about the moral issues in this situation, and without revealing any further plot points, ask them to watch for what happens in the play.

.....

## HOW DOES HISTORICAL COSTUME REVEAL THE WORLD OF THE PLAY?

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Before watching the play, students explore the social expectations, work life, and gender roles in Second Empire France through art. (Common core codes: CCSS W 11-12-1)

Respond: Post an image from the PDF found [here](#), on the walls or SmartBoard. Have students focus on one character that intrigues them, and write down or share out things they objectively see in the images, e.g. "He is young. He is wearing blue. He is carrying a pocket watch."

**WRITE** Have students create a character profile for the image they have chosen. Who is this person? How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do for a living? What is their greatest wish? What do they worry about? What is their everyday life like?

**ACTIVATE** Share character profiles, either through discussion or improvisation in which each student becomes their character and introduces themselves to others in the classroom.

**REFLECT** What kind of society do these characters live in? What kind of technology do they have? What kind of jobs do they have? Who has the power in their families? In their government? Are there firm gender roles? Ask students to provide evidence from the images for each of their opinions.



# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## HOW DOES AN ENSEMBLE IMPROVISE A TRIAL TO ASSESS THÉRÈSE RAQUIN'S RESPONSIBILITY AND GUILT?

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(Common core codes: SL 11-12-1b)

After seeing the play, students conduct a mock trial activity centered around Thérèse's actions in order to analyze the play and construct oral and written arguments.

**DISCUSSION** Ask students to imagine the possibility that Thérèse could live and be put on trial. Is she guilty of participating in Camille's murder? During the discussion, ask students to support their points with evidence and remind them of any key story plot points. (Use the story summary [PDF](#) to support your discussion.)

**ACTIVATE** Facilitate a trial for Thérèse. Divide students into three teams: judges, defense attorneys, and prosecution attorneys. Each attorney individually writes three points to support the defense/prosecution of Thérèse, citing evidence from the play. Each judge writes three questions for the attorneys about Thérèse's actions. Allow student judges to run the trial, by alternately calling on prosecution and defense teams, and allowing attorneys to make arguments and responses to points made by the opposing side. After students have presented their cases and judges have asked questions, have the judges to vote on Thérèse's guilt or innocence. Then, poll the class as a whole to see if they agree with the verdict.

**WRITE** After the trial activity, you may ask students to write a full argument essay on whether or not they feel Thérèse shares the guilt for Camille's murder.

.....

## HOW DOES AN ACTOR COMMUNICATE WITHOUT USING HER VOICE?

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In *Thérèse Raquin*, both Thérèse and Madame Raquin have scenes in which they say very little but are major presences on stage. (Common core codes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2)

**BRAINSTORM** As a class, create a list of possible reasons why a character is unable to speak during a scene.

**IMPROVISE** Divide the class into groups of three. (If your class is inexperienced with improvisation, distribute short open scenes to each group.) Have each group determine who the characters are, where they are, what they are doing, and which character can't speak and why. Allow time for a short rehearsal.

**REFLECT** Share the scenes. How did the silent character feel about what was happening? How did you know?

# GLOSSARY

## ARCADE

an arched, covered passageway lined with shops  
*Madame Raquin tells Thérèse to shut the window because the arcade traps the smells from the street.*

## CHIEFTAIN

a leader of a clan or tribe  
*Thérèse tells Laurent that her mother was the daughter of a chieftain.*

## HABERDASHERY

a shop that sells materials and supplies for sewing and clothes-making  
*Madame Raquin owns a haberdashery in Paris.*

## INDELIBLE

cannot be erased, changed, or forgotten  
*Michaud tells Laurent that the things he has seen at the morgue are indelibly etched in his mind.*

## INVALID

a person who is too ill to care for themselves  
*Thérèse warns Laurent that invalids can kill those healthier than themselves with their demands and complaining.*

## LITIGIOUS

likely to be engaged in lawsuits  
*Laurent recalls how litigious his father used to be.*

## SCARLET FEVER

a bacterial illness that presents with a sore throat, fever, and rash; most commonly affects children  
*Madame Raquin mentions that Camille once suffered from Scarlet Fever.*

## SOU

former French currency of little value  
*Laurent tells Thérèse that she has never known what it is to hold her last sou in her hand.*

## TUILERIES

a royal palace in Paris  
*Camille says if the government made the islands look like proper parks they could resemble the Tuileries.*

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# ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

## ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

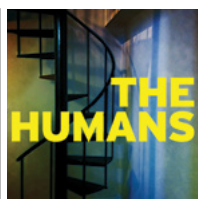
Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatregoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year.

We are committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences.

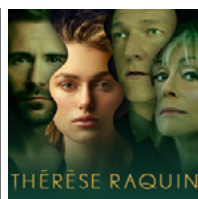
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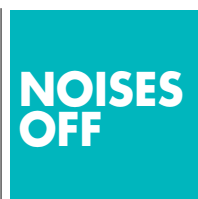
By Harold Pinter  
Starring Clive Owen, Eve Best and Kelly Reilly  
Directed by Douglas Hodge



By Stephen Karam  
Directed by Joe Mantello



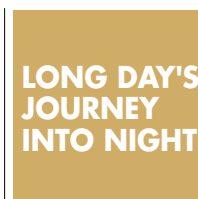
By Helen Edmundson  
Based upon the novel by Émile Zola  
Starring Keira Knightley, Gabriel Ebert, Matt Ryan and Judith Light  
Directed by Evan Cabnet



By Michael Frayn  
Directed by Jeremy Herrin



Book by Joe Masteroff  
Music by Jerry Bock  
Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick  
Choreographed by Warren Carlyle  
Directed by Scott Ellis



By Eugene O'Neill  
Starring Jessica Lange, Gabriel Byrne, Michael Shannon and John Gallagher, Jr.  
Directed by Jonathan Kent



By Lindsey Ferrentino  
Directed by Patricia McGregor

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH PAYROLL & BENEFITS ADMINISTRATOR, YONIT KAFKA

**Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? How and when did you become Payroll & Benefits Administrator?**

**Yonit Kafka:** I grew up in Livingston, NJ and attended Jewish day schools. I then went to Barnard College where I majored in English with a concentration in Theatre, and minored in Economics. The summer after graduating college, I took an internship in Roundabout's Business Office, and I've stuck around ever since. It was only about a month into my internship when a position became available in the Business Office and was offered to me! So in July of 2002 I became the Business Office Assistant at Roundabout. A few years later I was promoted to Business Associate, and a few years after that I became the Payroll & Benefits Administrator. I've learned so much along the way and feel very lucky to be working with kind and knowledgeable people in a secure work environment.

**TS: Describe your job at RTC? What are your responsibilities?**

**YK:** Over the years, as my titles changed, my job responsibilities changed and increased as well. In my current position, my main responsibility is the weekly payroll. I am responsible for paying all of our non-union, non-show-related employees, which includes all of our administrative staff and some theatre staff. I also support the Payroll Director and cover for him when he is away from the office. In addition to payroll, I make fee payments to many of our contracted personnel: directors, choreographers, designers, properties supervisors, fight directors, dialect coaches, etc. I've also taken on various Human Resources responsibilities, such as responding to unemployment

information requests from NYS, managing workers' compensation claims, and tracking paid time-off requests and accruals for employees.

**TS: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?**

**YK:** The best part of my job is the people I work with. I was very lucky to work with nearly the same group of individuals for the first twelve years of my employment. I had the same boss all that time and I felt very comfortable, secure, and trusted under her leadership. I am grateful to many of my colleagues whose professional and personal support has been invaluable to me. The hardest part of my job is getting it all done! Because I've taken on many varied responsibilities, I really need to prioritize what I need to tackle first. And because our seasons pretty much run one into the next, there isn't much down time to catch up. So I'm kept constantly busy. But it's better than the alternative.

**TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?**

**YK:** I choose to work at Roundabout because it's a great company and things are always happening here. The company has grown since I've started working here, and it continues to grow and take on new challenges. Every new challenge for the company is an opportunity for me to learn new skills and grow professionally. In my time here we have acquired two new theatres, have become a landlord renting out our theatres to commercial productions, and have mounted our own touring productions—and that's on top of the myriad of shows we produce every season. It's exciting for me to contribute to the wonderful work this company produces. •

Learn more at [roundabouttheatre.org](http://roundabouttheatre.org). Find us on:



# WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

## TICKET POLICY

As a student, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

## PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

## AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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