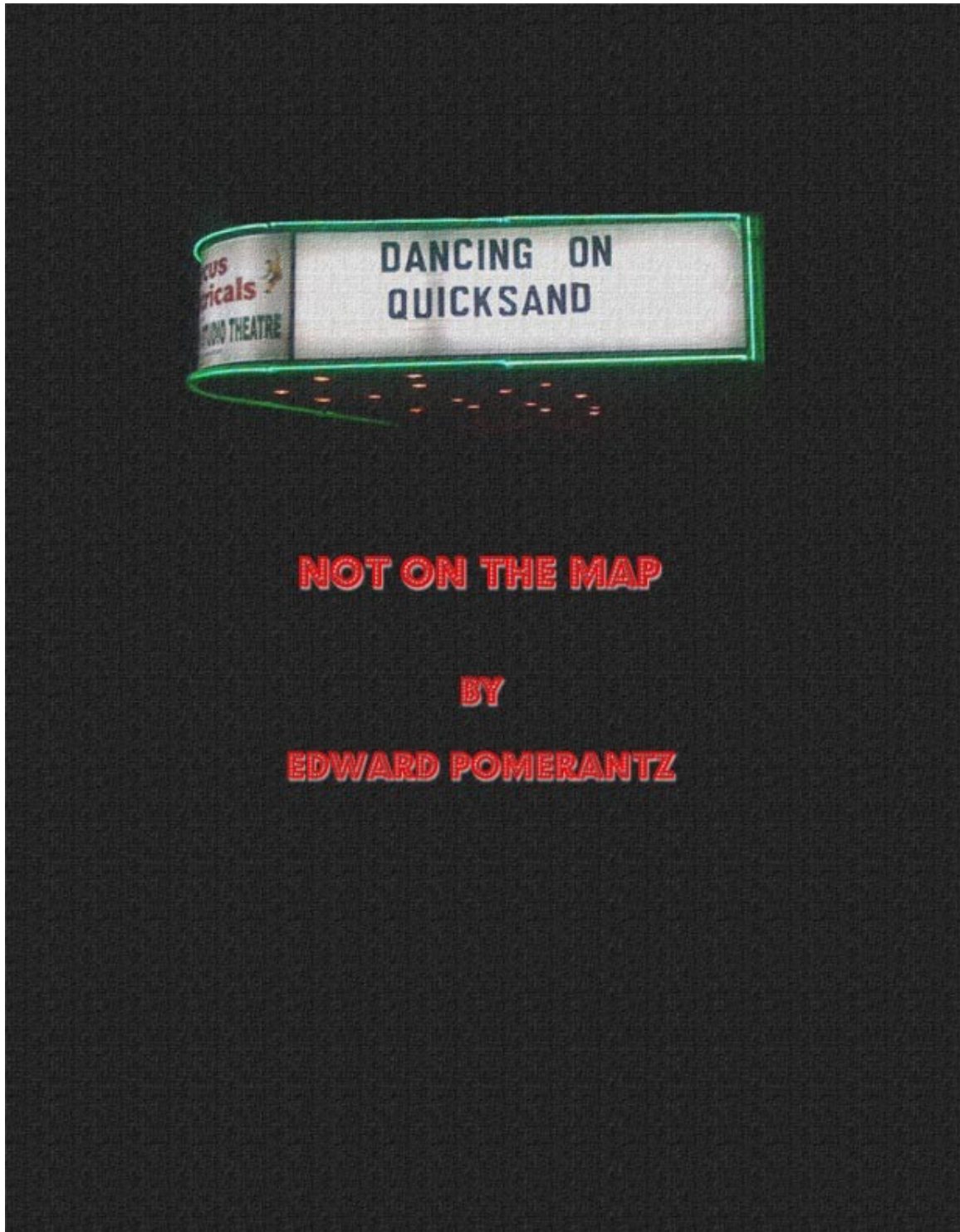




Not On The Map

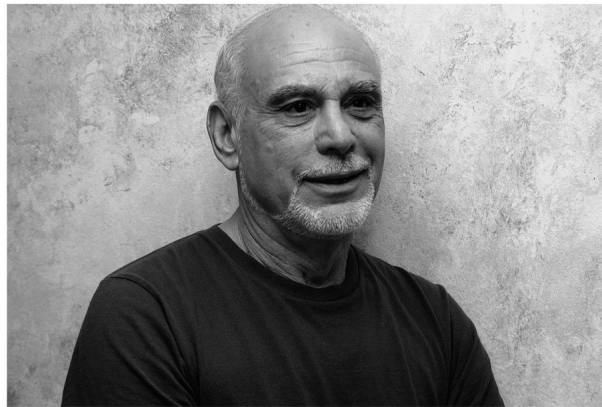
by

Edward Pomerantz

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Praise for Edward Pomerantz



NOT ON THE MAP

“A truly insane comedy. A little Gilbert and Sullivan, a little Wilde, a little Oedipus, and a lot of Eddie Pomerantz storytelling and zany humor.”

Zachary Sklar

“A brilliant play...consistently sharp, funny, and moving.”

Alan Ziegler

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For my parents

Gert and Al Pomerantz

who live and dance in these pages

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe this book to Sandy Kazan, who, for better and for more and less better, has lived with the writing of these plays. And I thank David H. Cohen and Robert Sims for their time, patience, hard work, and wizardry pulling it all together.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In addition to the plays and screenplay in this collection, EDWARD POMERANTZ has written

INTO IT, a novel, originally published by Dial Press, reprinted by iUniverse.com

CAUGHT, the movie based on INTO IT, directed by Robert M. Young, starring Edward James Olmos and Maria Conchita Alonso, released by Sony Pictures Classics, and nominated for three Independent Spirit Awards

BRISBURIAL, a play/feast, produced by Woodie King, Jr.'s New Federal Theatre,

Dancing On Quicksand

published by Magic Circle Press

SWEETHEART, VIRGIN, AND GOD and DO ME A FAVOR, two novellas, published by Contact, the San Francisco Collection of New Writing, Art, and Ideas

THE GARDEN and ONLY A GAME, two one-act plays published by Samuel French

THE GARDEN (expanded into a full-length play), First Prize, Samuel French National Playwriting Contest

Over 35 commissioned screenplays and teleplays, including two LAW AND ORDER episodes, THE PRINCESS AND THE CABBIE, a CBS movie starring Valerie Bertinelli, and THE GOLD BUG and NEW YORK CITY TOO FAR FROM TAMPA BLUES, two award winning television adaptations

He was a Playwright In Residence at the Yale Drama School, and has received two Writers Guild Awards

He is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Columbia University, where he teaches Filmwriting, and at SUNY-Purchase, where he teaches Writing for Television

He is the Director and Co-Founder (with Voza Rivers) of the Harlem Arts Alliance Dramatic Writing Academy, a program of free workshops and mentoring, created to find and nurture gifted playwrights, screenwriters, and writers for television, in the Harlem community

He has been a Creative Advisor, Mentor, and Visiting Writer at various international screenwriting labs in Mexico, Spain, South America, England, Germany, and Cuba

He is at work on his new play EL GALLO BRAVO TO GO

For reviews and personal tributes, visit www.edwardpomerantz.com

PRODUCTION AND PUBLICATION HISTORY

NOT ON THE MAP, staged at Ardea Arts, New York City.

INTRODUCTION

Coming Home

When I was sixteen, my playwriting teacher at the High School of Performing Arts submitted the play I wrote to Samuel French. It was a one-act called *The Garden*, and I got fifty bucks for it. The next one, *Only A Game*, published a year later, made it official. The first was no fluke. I was the real thing—a Playwright, and got seventy-five bucks.

This was in the early 50's, when the American Theater was an exciting place to find a home in. Until then, I was a movie kid, going to double features at my Washington Heights Loews and RKO every Saturday from the day I was born. But now, a drama student at a pioneering new public high school at Broadway's epicenter on West 46th Street, I was a Saturday matinee kid, getting up at dawn to stand on line for standing room or the last row in the second balcony, where I had my heart broken by Julie Harris in *A Member Of The Wedding* and Bert Lahr in *Waiting For Godot*, my view of reality expanded by Jo Mielziner, his set for the bedroom in *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* an open space, no pretending to look like a real bedroom, just Maggie the Cat in a white slip down left on a thrust stage, her husband Brick, drinking, on a bed up right, nothing but isolation and distance between them.

I was lucky. It was Jacob Weiser, the playwriting teacher, who saw a gift in me I didn't know I had, and mentored me (every day after school in his parked convertible on Riverside Drive) through a long process of endless rewriting, scene by scene, line by line. It's all Jack Weiser's fault. Instead of the next Gene Kelly, I would have to settle for being the next Eugene O'Neill.

Then Time happened. After the one-acts, I expanded *The Garden* into a three-acter, and won First Prize in the Samuel French National Playwriting contest, which led to interest in the play by Kraft Television Theater and an offer to go to Hollywood to be a contract writer for one of the Studios, neither of which happened. Instead, I ended up with an MFA from the Yale Drama School, where I returned six years later, when Robert Brustein took over, to be a playwright-in-residence and write my play/feast *Brisburial*. By now, it was the late 60's, and except for two one-acts in this collection and a production of *Brisburial* at Woodie King, Jr's New Federal Theatre in the early 70's, I didn't write or have another play produced for over twenty-five years.

I did, however, remain a storyteller—writing two novellas and my novel *Into It* (Dial Press), and over thirty commissioned screenplays and television scripts, some of which have been produced (most not), some winning awards. Which jump-cuts me to the mid-90's, when *Caught*, the movie I wrote based on *Into It*, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was released by Sony Pictures Classics. It was around then, after 20 years (and drafts) fighting to get the movie made, I returned to *The Goddess Of Filthy Things*, a play in my head and on scattered pieces of paper that demanded my attention and jeopardized my sanity until I finally “saw the forest for the trees” and figured out what all the voices and unconnected monologues, notes, stories-inside-stories were telling me. Most important, and we're coming around full circle now, I figured out how to travel through the play--through open space, the space Mielziner opened for me when I was a kid in the second balcony watching *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* forty-five years earlier.

With the writing of *The Goddess of Filthy Things*, I had come home. And “home” is where I've stayed since then, writing all the plays in this collection (except for the two

Dancing On Quicksand

one-acts written in the early 70's). I've also included *Man Running*, an original screenplay, which began many years ago when Bob Young, my treasured friend and director of *Caught*, brought me the gift of his idea for it. Decades later, it remains unfilmed. But that could be a "blessing in disguise." What you have here is the latest draft written in the last year (There's always a scene, an inspiration, a truer and funnier way to do it that makes me and Bob laugh, keep working on it).

Play. Novel. Screenplay. I've written them all with the deepest pleasure and satisfaction. Why then, in these last years, has the stage become the only arena for my ideas? Stories? Imagination? Why now, when I close my eyes, it's always that open space I see, giving me the same freedom movie writing gives me—to move fluidly through time and place—meeting and merging with what prose gives me—the music and density of language, the rhythmic force and driving flow of narrative. And even though the neighborhood movie palace was my cathedral, and the Josephs, Conrad and Heller, changed my life, it's the Theater—the public event, the human voice—out there, filling the space, the happening now, right now of it—that keeps me coming back to it. It's the space where all my writing—screenplays, novel, and plays-- intersect. The space where I can create what Matthew Ritchie, the painter, calls "a landscape...designed to produce adventures inside itself, adventures of information," where, like Ritchie, I can "dream the whole thing up as a way to express just how much fun you can have thinking."

Adventure. That's the key word here. Every play in this collection began with a question, a strong scene, image, or situation that haunted me, whose mystery could only be solved by writing it, moving step by step into unknown territory, emboldening me with clues and discoveries, as I moved forward, loving the danger of it, dancing on quicksand. "We're lucky," William Carlos Williams tells us, "when we catch the evasive life of the thing." With these plays, and the one I'm writing now, I feel lucky to still be spending my days in pursuit of it.

Edward Pomerantz
New York City

NOT ON THE MAP, 10 characters. An insane ensemble comedy. Peta Thessaloniki Von Wildergeist Flynn (called Pet), a world-renowned psychoanalyst in her eighties, has retired with her young lover to a not-on-the-map Sicilian farmhouse where no-one with "emotional emergencies" can find her. But then the doorbell rings, and Bobby Vitale, a stranded New York movie director, arrives, his rented car dead on the way to the airport. And then the doorbell rings again...and keeps ringing...with the invasions of Pet's family and former lovers and patients, all bringing their "emotional emergencies" with them, turning Pet's life and dreamhouse into an exploding minefield.

NOT ON THE MAP

a comedy in six scenes

by

EDWARD POMERANTZ

For Sandy

CHARACTERS

in order of appearance

Peta Thessaloniki Von Wildergeist Flynn, called Pet, world-renowned psychoanalyst, retired, mid-80's, looks 60

Arif, Pet's mixed-race Indonesian gardener, cook, and lover, mid-30's

Bobby Vitale, stranded New York City movie director, early 40's

Claire Jones, light skinned African American, just graduated from the City College of New York with a Degree in Film Studies, 22

Pain Flynn, Pet's grandson, recent high school dropout, 17

Richard Flynn, Pet's son and Pain's father, Walt Whitman High School Language Arts teacher, failed poet, late 40's

Frank Levy, award-winning documentary filmmaker, now Film Critic and Professor of Global Film Studies, City College of New York, Claire's teacher and madly in love with her, also one of Pet's former younger lovers, early 60's

Anita Flynn, Richard's wife and Pain's mother, in the 1970's--a notorious kidnapped heiress, bank-robber, and captured fugitive, now founder of school for children orphaned by AIDS, 10 years older than Richard, late 50's

Sacco Levy, Frank's father, blacklisted and expatriate Hollywood movie director living in Sicily, 92

Janeфона Levy, Frank's Vietnamese-American wife and former student, late 30's

SCENE: A farmhouse in the hills of Noto, Sicily, a thirty minute drive down the coast from Siracusa.

SCENE ONE

Dancing On Quicksand

AT RISE: PETA THESSALONIKI VON WILDERGEIST FLYNN, called Pet, a beauty in her mid-80's, looking 60 (or even younger), is playing the harpsichord in the simple but elegant living room of her farmhouse in the hills of Noto, Sicily. With almond trees and bougainvillea outside every window and the sea in the distance, the room is large and comfortable, furnished with deep warm Greek and Italian colors, and paintings, sculptures and masks from ancient and primitive cultures.

Outside, down left is a garden bench under an almond tree. Up right, on the other side of the house, is a small patio for outside dining with a wooden picnic table and chairs.

Bathed in early morning May sunlight, Pet, eyes closed, lost in the music, plays Brahms's Klavier Trio, Opus 101. A long moment of exquisite peace and serenity, then ARIF, Pet's dark handsome Indonesian gardener, cook, and lover, in his mid30's, enters from the kitchen, right, carrying a watering-can and a large handful of just-picked wildflowers. He pours the water into a vase, then sets the can aside, puts the flowers in one at a time, and starts arranging them. Another long moment as Pet comes to the end of the Brahms, then sits in silence, still at peace, transported. Another moment, then she opens her eyes. Arif smiles at her.

ARIF

(indicating flowers)

First bloom. Just picked. You like?

PET

I like.

ARIF

For lunch, I've prepared a finnochio con sarde and a few frutta di Martorana. Goes with either a robust red or a versatile white. You like?

PET

I like.

Arif smiles, arranges the last flower, goes to her, gently cups her face in his hands, kisses her.

ARIF

And now we go upstairs. For our morning fuck. You like?

PET

I like. Very much. I like.

He smiles, goes off, and returns with a walker, holds out his hand. Pet takes it and gets up, pushes the walker up center to what looks like an ancient frieze on the back wall, but we quickly realize it's an elevator when Arif pushes a button and the "frieze" slides open. Pet pushes the walker inside and Arif follows. The "frieze" closes. A beat as we hear the elevator ascend to the second floor, then the front doorbell rings. Another beat, then the doorbell rings again...and again, with more urgency. We listen to the elevator descend. The "frieze" opens again, and Arif steps out, goes off to answer the door up left.

PET

(calling from upstairs)

Whoever it is. They've got the wrong house. I don't live here anymore. I died.

From off-stage at the front door:

BOBBY

(all in one breath)

Thank God! Somebody's home. You speak English? Great! Listen. Believe me. If there's one thing I hate, it's people, total strangers, invading your space, your solitude, but I'm on my way to Catania to catch a plane back to New York, and my rent-a-car, a fucking Fiat 500, it just fucking stops, fucking dies on me, and when I keep turning the key to get it fucking started again, it breaks. The fucking key! Fucking breaks! Can you fucking believe this? I'm sitting there somewhere in Sicily in the middle of fucking nowhere with half a key in the ignition, the other half in my fucking hand. And then when I call Alamo to bring me a new car, duh! Big surprise! No fucking signal on my fucking cell!

(barging into the living room, Bronx-Italian, early 40's, unstoppable)

Thank God for the old blind woman crossing the road with her goats. Let me tell you. Between blind and my Bronx Italian, it wasn't easy. But without her, I never would have guessed there was a house around here.

(turning, to Arif, who's still offstage)

Okay if I come in? Call fucking Alamo? I've got two hours before my plane leaves. I'll just tell them where I am, then go back to the road, wait by the car. Five minutes and you'll never see me again, I'm out of your life, I fucking swear.

Arif slowly and calmly appears at the living room entrance, points to the phone.

BOBBY

Thanks. Grazie.

(going to phone, taking out car rental papers, calling Alamo)

God is old, but he doesn't have Alzheimers. He won't forget you for this.

(a laugh at his little joke, then waiting for Alamo to answer the phone, looking around)

Nice place. Wish I had something like this. Not on the map. Hidden away. Where no one can find you.

(into phone)

Hello. Alamo? You speak English? Terrific! My lucky day! Listen! Your fucking Fiat broke down. I need a new car. Pronto! To get to the airport in Catania. Before my plane goes arrivederci, takes off without me.

(a beat)

Vitale. Bobby Vitale. No. Not Batali. Vitale! Like in vino. Vongole! Verdi! Vittorio De Sica!

(to Arif)

You see The Bicycle Thief? Shoe Shine?

(punching his heart, moved, beyond words, then quickly into phone)

Si. Si. I got it! Right here!

(searching through car rental papers, finding the rental number, reading it off, enunciating slowly)
Numero 876532190468987349872JP...

No! Please! No read it back! Just look it up!...Si! P! Like in Palermo. Pitaggio. Passolini! Pinocchio!

(to Arif, smacking his lips)

Pitaggio! Fresh fava beans with baby peas and artichokes. In-spired! A gift from the gods.

(into phone)

Si. Si, signorina. Car fungolo. Morto. Big trouble. Deep merda.

(to Arif)

Where are we?

ARIF

In Noto. Tell her you're on Provincial Road beyond the Strada Statale. Eleven kilometers south of the cemetery.

Dancing On Quicksand

BOBBY

(handing phone to Arif)

Here. You tell her.

Arif, impassive, but annoyed, takes the phone, speaks to Alamo in Italian.

ARIF

(to Bobby)

They can be here in an hour.

BOBBY

An hour?! Fuck that!

(grabbing the phone back)

Now you listen to me. I got a plane to catch and I'm not missing it because the fucking car you gave me is a piece of shit...No. No. Not impossible...

(to Arif)

The closest Alamo is in Siracusa.

(into phone)

Not my problema! In exactly five minutes, you call this number...

He motions to Arif for the house's telephone number. Arif, caught, hesitates. Bobby, impatient, urges him on.

ARIF

331...

BOBBY

331...

ARIF

944...

BOBBY

944...

ARIF

2876.

BOBBY

2876...You got that?...Good. The next time I hear your voice it's gonna sound like churchbells. Cause you made a miracle. The impossibile possibile. You found me a car! In Noto! ...How should I know where? This is fucking Sicily, for fuck's sake. Call one of your cousins in the fucking Mafia!

He slams down the phone.

BOBBY

(to Arif, crossing himself, raising his arm, a sacred oath)

Five minutes. Just pretend I'm not here.

PET

(calling from upstairs)

Arif! What's taking so long?