***Blood Brothers* Press Kit**

**Short Synopsis**

*Blood Brothers* tells the story of two brothers whose relationship strains when the younger one receives news of an unexpected inheritance—and both brothers become attracted to the same young woman who arrives on their island.

**Long Synopsis**

Based on the novel, *Pierre et Jean* by French writer Guy de Maupassant, *Blood Brothers,* is set in 1872 Nantucket, during the island’s “ghost period”— after the decline of whaling, before the rise of tourism, and in the shadow of the Civil War. The film tells the story of two brothers whose relationship strains when the younger one receives news of an unexpected inheritance—and both brothers become interested in the same mysterious young woman who arrives on their island.

The film’s protagonist Peter Roland (Christian Coulson), is in his late 20’s, a sensitive and sober town doctor and former Civil War medic, who wishes to secure his struggling island medical practice. Peter takes pleasure from a cozy relationship with his striking mother, Louise (Golden Globe winner, Jacqueline Bisset) and he enjoys a playful camaraderie with his mischievous and fun-loving younger brother John (Shane Patrick Kearns). One afternoon after an early dinner, a courier arrives with news of an odd inheritance for John. Immediately, Peter darkens, questioning how this inheritance could have occurred in this manner.

Burdened by his suspicions, Peter can’t find the words or feelings to resolve his fears. And he becomes unexpectedly drawn to Lucia Childs, a young Cuban-American woman who arrives on the island, carrying secrets of her own—and a connection to Peter’s wartime past.

John also finds Lucia attractive, prompting an awkward fraternal rivalry. As Peter struggles to find the money he needs to secure his medical practice, complications mount and he becomes increasingly unsure of himself, questioning all he believes and descending into a fog as thick as the rolling mist that regularly engulfs his seaside home.

**The Author and Novel**

*Pierre et Jean* author Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) was best known for his short storiesthat broke ground through their economy of style and graceful denouements. Born and raised in France, Maupassant was a protégé of Gustave Flaubert and even imagined, at times, that he was the illegitimate son of the older writer. He also worked this theme of legacy and legitimacy into a number of his writings.

Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean* was widely credited for helping to change the course of narrative fiction through its detailed psychological characterizations. Tolstoy and Nabokov both cited the novel as a powerful influence. In a letter to his brother Theo, Vincent Van Gogh cited its evocation of visual power through Maupassant’s detailed description of its seaside setting. Henry James wrote, “Monsieur de Maupassant has never before been so clever” and he called *Pierre et Jean* a “masterly little novel” for its potent themes of family, status, self-discovery and the lengths to which someone will go to reveal or suppress the truth.

**Director’s Statement** (includes spoilers)

I first came to this story in 2003, when I was contracted by a British producer to re-write and direct an adaptation of Maupassant’s seaside novel. The film was planned for production in Durbin, South Africa but collapsed, late in the game, when two producers clashed. Back then, I had proposed a Nantucket setting for the film—but European co-production financing required that we shoot in a signatory nation.

Flash forward fifteen years, when I was on Nantucket to produce a benefit event with actor and Marlboro College alumnus, Chris Noth. Island friends casually suggested a Nantucket movie, then, during an interview about the Noth benefit, *Inquirer and Mirror* writer Lindsay Pykosz asked whether I had plans for an island production. On the spot, I said I did—and I mentioned Maupassant’s novel of fraternal rivalry, a too-close relationship between Peter and his mother.

I liked the Maupassant story and its distinctive seaside setting. And I knew it would provide an excellent learning opportunity for students participating in my biennial Movies from Marlboro film intensive semester, where 22 professionals lead 32 students in the production of an ambitious feature film for national and international release. It didn’t take long to get excited about the everything that the period and place could yield—for casting, costumes, and props, locations, cinematography, music, historical and social research and more. This would be an ambitious project—but ripe with possibilities.

I initially thought I would tweak the collaborative script I’d developed years earlier but after months of investigation and negotiation it proved impossible to clear the rights—so I started from scratch, and involved students participating in the Marlboro film intensive, to re-build the script and characters. Through research and hours of discussion and debate we also worked to find distinctive Nantucket and New England threads that we could weave into the story.

Readers and critics often identify themes of jealousy in Maupassant’s novel but I wanted to develop a tale that is less about conventional envy than it is Peter’s series of cathartic realizations that force him to confront his own predicament and what former Brandeis University French literature professor Murray Sachs described as the young doctor’s furtive reckoning with “the hollowness and immaturity of the illusions by which he lived.”I saw a complex and relevant tale of family, class, money, legacy, legitimacy, self-discovery, romance, and the extent to which we will go to hide or disclose the truth.

I was also interested in characters impacted by their experience of the U.S. Civil War. Guy de Maupassant set a number of his stories during and after the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870’s and he allowed complications from that war to bubble up into his stories. He was especially interested in the ways that people were permanently changed by their experiences of war. I have also spent time investigating this idea, especially through my 2004 documentary, *After the Fog,* that features interviews with a dozen combat veterans from World War II, Vietnam, and Iraq.

It always makes sense to find personal connections to a film that inhabits your imagination for literally years. It helps you imagine the character backstories and motivations and can help a filmmaker develop the all-important words that can guide collaborations with actors. Personal links can also provide a vehicle for exploring unresolved or unprocessed personal thoughts and feelings. For *Blood Brothers* I found many connections to my own relationships to my mother and my younger brother. These relationships are not identical to the ones between Peter and Louise and/or Peter and John, but there were enough significant parallels and strained complications to spark my imagination of the characters and narrative.

I try to locate my films in a specific sense of a place that I know. I was excited to shoot this film on Nantucket and to set the story there. I discovered the island when I was 17, and have spent time there nearly every year since then. For several years, I mentored Nantucket teen writers and filmmakers, in and out of the high school, through the Nantucket Film Festival’s education program. I’ve traveled the island extensively, mostly on a bike, discovering dozens of special nooks in town, out on the moors, at Polpis, Miacomet, Coskata Pond, and other locations we used in the film. By choosing places and visual strategies, I was able to create a distinct and striking visual world for *Blood Brothers* that wasn’t exactly the Nantucket I knew – but was shaped from it. I couldn’t think of better place to film *Blood Brothers*.

**The Historical Imagination of *Blood Brothers***

I like history and no one takes better care of its historical records, artifacts, and narratives than Nantucket does. Through conversations with island historians and research into several books and online sources, especially the *Inquirer and Mirror* and other newspaper archives digitized at the Nantucket Atheneum, I was able to get a detailed sense of the time and place that informed our film.

The island’s whaling history and its Quaker past figured prominently into my baseline thinking about the Roland family characters. We imagined family patriarch Charles Roland as a man who embarked on a career as a whaling captain but threw in the towel after 14 years at sea. Depending on how you read his character, you may find reasons for why he retired early. As a result of his early withdrawal from whaling, his family lives a bit on the financial edge though they work to maintain the trappings of means and respectability. But when Charles hears news from his cook and housekeeper, Josephine, that attorney Bennett plans to visit, he frets that the lawyer may be coming to collect overdue payment for house repairs from storm damage.

In our more elaborated backstory, that we filmed but cut in the editing room, John reveals that his family inherited their home from Louise’s loyalist ancestors who, like some islanders during the time of the American Revolution, made money by selling whale oil to the British and/or smuggling supplies to the island. We didn’t include this information in the film – too much “told story” can get in the way of a dramatic narrative. Especially when it isn’t essential. Still, these details informed character backstories.

Of course, Charles’ background in whaling also tells us something about the kind of life the Rolands would have lived some 25 years earlier, when men would leave for years on end for grueling voyages all the way into the Pacific. I come from northern New England where the loggers are the equivalent of the wild west’s cowboys and rough riders. But nothing compares to the whalers for arduous epic struggle and adventure. After those difficult years, Charles decided to cherish his leisure time. He proclaims his belief that the most important thing in life is “to take it easy.”

During our research phase we read and talked to historians and learned how, when whalers returned, they often found changed conditions, even within their own families. Sometimes this included children born during their long absences that could not have been theirs. Children of questionable parentage were not stigmatized, or so we were told.

Once I decided to set *Blood Brothers* on Nantucket during the early 1870’s, I knew that the Civil War would still be reverberating. This interested me since I feel that the War remains, in many ways, deeply embedded and not fully resolved in our national culture and politics. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James McPherson’s recent book, *The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters*, makes the case that the Civil War continues to resonate powerfully in our national psyche. And he argues that the war’s most pressing issues of racial status, state and regional sovereignty, and the role of national government continue to chafe and divide or nation. Ted Widmer’s fascinating recent *New York Times* article, *Did the Civil War Ever End* reminds us how recent this history remains, by noting that an elderly North Carolina woman, Irene Triplett, still collects her $73.13 monthly pension as the daughter of a Civil War veteran who fought for both the Union and the Confederacy.

So, I wanted to develop a narrative subtext that would add uniquely regional dimensions to Maupassant’s characters. Nantucket’s 19th century history and culture provided many points of entry for the development of a fictional narrative rooted in this history. After all, the world’s first abolition society was established on the island, though Quaker pacifists debated whether to participate in the Civil War. In their book *The Civil War: The Nantucket Experience*, Richard Miller and Robert Mooney tell how the first steamship returning from the battlefront stunned islanders when it sailed into port with its flag at half-mast and six island men in caskets. More than 300 Nantucket men served in the war and 73 were killed.

Shortly after the war, local newspaper reports showed the lingering impact of the war. Veterans wrote first-person narratives of the battles at Antietam and Gettysburg and of life in squalid prisoner-of-war camps like the Confederate prison in Andersonville in Georgia and the Union’s Camp Douglas in Chicago. I also saw political cartoons in period newspapers where vets were depicted as freeloaders for their continued claims for disability compensation. As the Gilded Age approached, some people wanted to forget the many broken men who fought in the punishing War Between the States.

Island newspaper accounts also report stories of women traveling off-island to attend mainland meetings of suffragettes and for equal rights. I walked with several students through Guinea Town, the part of Nantucket where people of color lived. We learned that a rare inter-racial marriage was tolerated on the island despite the fact that it was illegal in Massachusetts. And we were told how, before and during the Civil War, the African American island population included freed and escaped slaves who relished Nantucket’s progressive values. We also learned how a number of these people left the island after the war, when new hope suggested opportunities in more places on the mainland.

I read about a boarding house in Guinea Town and about dance parties that scandalized more conservative parts of the community. Island historian Frances Karttunen sent me a short note that appeared in a local newspaper after the Guinea Town dance hall burned. It stated simply, “Totally destroyed, but no loss to community." Nantucket Historical Association’s (NHA) Obed Macy Research Chair suggested that an itinerant off-islander like Lucia would not have been warmly welcomed on the island. Historian Nat Philbrick clued me into residual opium addiction among some veterans—the addictive narcotic was widely used to treat pain and other ailments on the battlefield where disease ravaged troops on both sides.

It didn’t take long to find a dozen fertile story nuggets rooted in Nantucket’s specific history. We wouldn’t have gotten to this story without the thoughtful advice and ideas provided by island historians. Nor would we have been able to develop our sense of place and time without the fabulous newspaper archives at the Nantucket Atheneum and the generosity of the NHA that opened its warehouse to our student prop mistress and art department.

We also looked to some larger history from the war. We studied the work of medical personnel and conditions on the battlefields after the fighting ended when it sometimes took days to clear the dead and wounded. We read how, during the clearing of the dead, soldiers sometimes went to the edge of the battlefield and sang songs to quiet the cries of injured men calling out for mercy. We learned how soldiers observed impromptu truces while battlefields were being cleared of dead soldiers—and exchanged stories and newspapers with enemy troops until their officers called for the resumption of combat. I was reminded of the Christmas truce during World War I when German and British troops paused to sing songs to each other across the battlefield trenches.

I read about the heroic Union nurse, Clara Barton who treated wounded soldiers on both sides of the fight. And we looked into the story of Walt Whitman who traveled to see his brother George after hearing that he had been wounded at Fredericksburg. Whitman arrived to find his brother only slightly wounded, then he stayed on to tend dozens of wounded soldiers, befriending and treating men on both sides.

After prisoner parole and exchange systems broke down in 1863, when the Confederacy refused to count black Union soldiers as equal to whites, there is evidence that some medical personnel who treated enemy combatants exacted promises from the soldiers that they would not return to combat, then sent them home or off to their own hospitals rather than turning them over to be sent to prison camps where an estimated 58,000 men died in places that National Geographic described as “death pens” where conditions were even “more horrible than battle.” I was intrigued by the thin line that sometimes divided north from south, especially when it came to the men fighting fellow Americans and, sometimes, even family members on the other side.

I became fascinated by stories of Confederate leaders who developed links to the Cuban independence movement after President Polk withdrew promised support in deference to Spain. And I found profiles of several Cuban women, including Confederate spy Lola Sanchez who was driven to commit espionage after Union soldiers invaded her home and arrested her father on false charges. Beyond that, we conflated and elaborated Lucia’s character, using fragments of research from several sources that we combined. It is important to note that our Movies from Marlboro students contributed substantially to Lucia’s development and wrote some of her dialogue, especially for the scene where she and Peter share their war stories.

We found Yale University professor Crystal Feimster’s research into sexual violence during the Civil War. As Dr. Feimster wrote in her *New York Times* article “Rape and Justice in the Civil War” (April 25, 2013), “Southern women’s wartime diaries, court martial records, wartime general orders, military reports and letters written by women, soldiers, doctors, nurses and military chaplains leave little doubt that, as in most wars, rape and the threat of sexual violence figured large in the military campaigns that swept across the Southern landscape.”

Feimster wrote that even though President Lincoln issued strict guidelines and ordered harsh punishments for soldiers found guilty, “sexual violence was common (and underreported) to the wartime experience of Southern women, white and black. Whether they lived on large plantations or small farms, in towns, cities or in contraband camps, white and black women all over the American South experienced the sexual trauma of war.”

*Blood Brothers* is a work of fiction that was shaped through specific research and found narratives from the war. Through this imagined story we worked to create compelling characters that could explore Maupassant’s themes. We also explored story ideas that developed the whole idea of secrets alternately hidden, shared, and discovered by the story’s characters.

We do not purport to represent Nantucket’s historical record, though we drew from it. *Blood Brothers* is intended as an historical imagination of place and time—one that interacts with the narrative source of a French novel and a regional and national history combined with the considered inventions of the film’s creators.

We have aspired to a narrative truthfulness, not an historical re-creation. Mostly we were attracted, as I have been in my two most recent films, by the idea of the past being present and of a history that remains open to metaphor and interpretation.

**The Visual World**

We would not been able to render the visual world that brings this story to life without the support and generosity of dozens of location owners and facilitators who are credited in the film. Our own art and costume departments also created miracles every day—with very few financial resources. Production designer Kate Merrill and her art director Sadie Wechsler worked imaginatively and around-the- clock to stay ahead of production. Emmy-winning costume designer Sarah Beers also became crucial to the look of the film—and was an extraordinary mentor to her student team, whom she left fully in charge of this crucial department, half-way through production. Sarah had to take another job—but was confident that her crew could lead and manage.

Special thanks are due to Cecelia Johnson and India Blake who went beyond the call of duty when they offered their stunning Almanack Farm in Polpis to our production. We shot scenes in every room of their gracious period home—and outdoors, too. We even built our sets for the apothecary shop and Peter’s quarters aboard the schooner in their barn. Several lucky crewmembers also bunked down at the Almanack Farm, vacating their rooms each morning when we had to move in actors, our costume and art departments, lighting crew, assistant directors, and hair and make-up artists to get things rolling. We dubbed the Almanack Farm “Johnson Studios” during our stay.

Jim Lentowski at the Nantucket Conservation Foundation scouted conservation lands with our cinematographer Brad Heck and me on one of the coldest and windiest days I can remember. And I’m from northern Vermont! And he pointed us in the right direction to make contact with partners at the Nantucket Land Bank and the Trustees of the Reservations who followed Jim’s expansive and generous lead in making spectacular conserved lands available for our shoot. The look of our film would not have been possible without this support.

We also could not have imagined better partners than Bill Tamposch, Marjan Shirzad, and other friends at the Nantucket Historical Society, who opened the Hadwen House and their warehouse with more than 35,000 historical artifacts, to our production.

Our film started with a 19th Century French seaside novel. But it found its way to Nantucket, thanks to these and other gracious island hosts and collaborators. Our locations coordinator and associate producer Joy Margolis acted as the mid-wife to this entire production—as she presided at the birth of each scene and on each of our twenty-eight days of production.

None of these visual developments would have been possible without the assured leadership, patience, vision, and skill of cinematographer Brad Heck. Heck was one of my leading students at Marlboro College. He graduated in 2005 and has worked with me on a half-dozen projects over the years. Brad is a fabulous mentor to students who love him. He knows how to keep a production on track and he’s the most generous collaborator I could hope for. He’s smart, resourceful, and always full of fertile ideas that help to frame visual strategies that bring the script to life on screen.

**Film Production as a Platform for Experiential Learning**

*Blood Brothers* was produced through the Movies From Marlboro program that I launched in 2011 as a partnership between my non-profit film and arts company, Kingdom County Productions (KCP), and Marlboro College. As with KCP’s 2012 production of *Northern Borders*, 22 filmmaking professionals mentored and collaborated with 32 students from 12 colleges. Students who participated in our *Blood Brothers* production came from Wellesley, Mount Holyoke, Boston College, University of Vermont, Lyndon State College, Dartmouth College, Smith, Sarah Lawrence, Emerson, Antioch, London School of the Arts, and Marlboro College. Our project also included two second-semester high school seniors from Champlain Valley Union H.S. (Vermont) and Nantucket High School.

Our unusual production model is motivated by a desire to provide transformative learning opportunities inspired by early 20th Century philosopher and education pioneer John Dewey’s call for “intensive learning that enlarges meaning through the shared experience of joint action.” Today, when so much of young people’s learning experience is individualized and rooted in the solitary acquisition of information, we saw important learning opportunities when students work with mentors and peers to take on substantial responsibility.

I recently screened a *Blood Brothers* preview at Mount Holyoke College, one of our key partners for the project. Three young women who worked on the film watched intently and then spoke about their experience. They started by talking about a fabulous shot in the film where two lead characters gallop on horseback across the Nantucket moors.

It’s pouring rain in the shot and the students started by exchanging quips about how wet and cold it was; how the horses were uncooperative and required food and soothing; how the two girls who doubled our lead actors were soaked and freezing and had to be costumed and made up – one to look like a guy with a mustache and the other as our Hispanic female lead. They talked about having a technical crew of only two students and how they had to shield the costumes and our expensive camera from the gale-force wind and rain. And they explained how the mother of the girls, was justifiably ticked off because the shoot had to be re-scheduled, after she had already taken the day off from work. And they reminded me that the day they managed the scene was THEIR day off.

The story these gals told was as bad as any you could imagine. But they had huge smiles on their faces as they told it. They owned the narrative of this complicated episode. And now they saw the fruits of their labor. The skills they developed on the film shoot went far beyond filmmaking and will serve them well—no matter if they work in film or civil engineering, school teaching, organic agriculture, or energy development. They’ve got a leg up.

John Dewey again: “We only think when confronted with a problem.” And, “A problem well-put is half solved.”

**Sample Press Release**

**Jay Craven’s film, “Blood Brothers,” Starring Jacqueline Bisset, Set for Release**

Jay Craven’s new seaside film drama, *Blood Brothers*, is set for national and international release by Indican Pictures, according to Indican founder and president, Shaun Hill.

*Blood Brothers* tells the story of two brothers whose relationship strains when the younger one receives news of an unexpected inheritance—and both brothers become attracted to the same young woman who arrives on their island. The film is based on the 19th century novel *Pierre et Jean* by Guy de Maupassant and it’s set in 1872 Nantucket, during the island’s “ghost period”— after the decline of whaling and in the shadow of the Civil War.

Maupassant’s novel was widely credited for helping to change the course of narrative fiction through its detailed psychological characterizations. Tolstoy and Nabokov both cited the novel as an influence. In a letter to his brother Theo, Vincent Van Gogh cited this novel for the visual power of its detailed seaside setting. Henry James wrote, “Monsieur de Maupassant has never before been so clever” and he called *Pierre et Jean* a “masterly little novel” for its potent themes of family, status, self-discovery and the lengths to which someone will go to reveal or suppress the truth. A film trailer can be seen at: https://vimeo.com/116906319

*Blood Brothers* stars 2014 Golden Globe winner **Jacqueline Bisset** (*Bullitt,* *Under the Volcano, Welcome to New York,* *The Deep*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, Claude Chabrol’s [*La Cérémonie*](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112769/?ref_=filmo_li_tt)**.** Truffaut’s *Day for Night*); **Christian Coulson** (*Mozart in the Jungle*, *The Hours*, *Nashville*, *Harry Potter: Chamber of Secrets*, *Nashville*); **Diane Guerrero** (*Orange is the New Black, Doom Patrol, Jane the Virgin);* **Susan Kelechi Watson** (*This is Us, Louis, The Good Wife*); **Shane Patrick Kearns** (*Blue Collar Boys*); and Emmy-winner **Gordon Clapp** (*Flags of Our Fathers,* *Matewan*, *NYPD Blue,* *Glengarry Glen Ross* on Broadway).

*Blood Brothers* marks Jay Craven’s eighth narrative film. His previous films include *Northern Borders*, with Bruce Dern and Genevieve Bujold, *Disappearances*, with Kris Kristofferson, and *Where the Rivers Flow North* with Rip Torn, Tantoo Cardinal, and Michael J. Fox. Craven’s films have played 58 countries and 73 festivals, including Sundance, SXSW and AFI Fest—with special screenings at The Smithsonian, Lincoln Center, Le Cinémathèque Française, the Constitutional Court of Johannesburg, and others. Craven’s commitment to New England place-based filmmaking was recently profiled by Orion Magazine that wrote: “Jay Craven has come closer than any other filmmaker to realizing (American poet, essayist, and film theorist) Vachel Lindsay’s dream of a vital regional cinema that embodies the character and genius of a place in all its mystery, magnificence, and pain.”

***Blood Brothers* Press Quotes**

“It sizzles underneath its beautiful island scenery and authentic 1800s propriety. Think *Masterpiece Theater* — but with simmering emotions percolating beneath. The performances and mystery remain riveting, with Jacqueline Bisset a powerhouse. With successive films, Craven’s work becomes more sophisticated, seamless and, consequently, powerful. *Blood Brothers* is a beautiful but often uncomfortable experience — and that’s what fine filmmaking is all about.”

*-- The Times Argus*

“Stunning. Craven’s film is reminiscent of Merchant-Ivory period pieces like “The Europeans” in that it’s character - driven. This provides a welcome break from the noise and mayhem of most summer films of late. To its credit, *Blood Brothers* keeps us wondering how it will all turn out for the brothers, their parents and Lucia, and the understated resolution rings true. Watching the movie is like reading a good book – you stick with it, and you’re glad you did.” – *Cape Cod Times*

“Superb acting.” – *Vineyard Gazette*

“*Blood Brothers* has an almost mythic quality. With exceptional visual and auditory beauty, the film’s small story, precisely told, is relevant, as good art is, beyond its specific setting. The film reveals characters yet conceals mysteries that haunt the viewer afterwards. There’s a wonderful museum-like antique quality to the piece. A gentility almost as if you asked what would a film have been like if it had been made in the late 19th century.”

-- *Provincetown Banner*

**First Person Pieces by Jay Craven**

**Reflections on my film *Blood Brothers***

**By Jay Craven**

My film, *Blood Brothers,* is set in 1872 Nantucket and it tells the story of a young doctor whose life is upended when his younger brother receives word of a strange inheritance. Then, both brothers fall for the same mysterious young woman who arrives on their island. Complications multiply.

Movies are like our own kids—we know and love them each quite distinctively. Maybe we also see a couple of flaws and even dwell too much on them. But we’ll stand up for our kids in any setting and pray for the day they make their way into the world, find a few good friends, and know when to wipe their nose.

I try to find a personal angle into every film—and I’ve been lucky to find stories to which I can connect, sometimes deeply. Genevieve Bujold’s portrayal of Cordelia in my 2007 film “Disappearances,” was informed by my one-of-a-kind relationship with my dear grandmother who raised me. “Geema” could look beyond what was visible and she often spoke enigmatically, leaving me with something to ponder. She taught me about love – and provided an oasis in my family of difficult alcoholics.

My relationship with “Geema” was complex so I was pleased that when I made my 2013 film, “Northern Borders,” I got another chance to explore it. I also got a second opportunity to work with the fabulous Quebecois actress Genevieve Bujold, whose Abiah is very different from her Cordelia. Bujold sharply admonished me on this point during our first day of shooting for “Northern Borders,” as she struggled ever so slightly to breathe life into her new character.

“If we think for a minute about Cordelia…” I whispered, trying to be helpful and start a conversation.

“Don’t ever mention Cordelia again,” Genevieve snapped.

I didn’t.

Guy de Maupassant’s novel, “Pierre et Jean” is the basis for my new film—and it was credited at the time for breaking ground for its psychological characterizations. Henry James, Tolstoy, and Nabakov said the novel inspired them—and Maupassant’s vivid description of seaside settings also stirred Vincent van Gogh to exclaim their beauty in a letter to his brother Theo.

I found personal connections to the film, too, mostly through its depiction of an emotionally perilous “too close” relationship between Peter and his mother, Louise, played by Jacqueline Bisset. I had this kind of relationship with my hard-drinking mother and it complicated my early years. Peter’s relationship with his brother John also mirrors some of what I experienced—and continue to experience with my younger brother. Like Peter, I needed to reach a point where I could let go of “the illusions by which I lived.”

We based our story’s love interest, Lucia, on an actual history of Cuban expatriate and Confederate spy, Lola Sanchez, whose family fled to St. Augustine, Florida before the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War. I named her Lucia, based on a deeply affecting film I saw in my early 20’s by the Cuban director Humberto Solas. Again, I made personal connections and sense memory to guide my work on the character.

We may get further into some of this at our screening. And I’m sure I’ll enlarge my own understanding of the picture through what audience members say. This, too, adds to my personal experience of making – and touring— the film.

**On the Road Again – or The Night of the Living Chairs**

**Jay Craven**

I’m on the road for our fall barnstorming tour for my new film, *Blood Brothers*. The picture is set in 1872 Nantucket and it tells the story of a town doctor’s jealousy over his younger brother’s strange inheritance. Their rivalry intensifies when they both fall for the same young woman. The picture stars Golden Globe winner Jacqueline Bisset, Christian Coulson (*Harry Potter: Chamber of Secrets*), Diane Guerrero (*Orange is the New Black*), and Emmy-winner Gordon Clapp (*NYPD Blue*).

I like our barnstorming tours because every crowd is different. During my *Disappearances* tour, I remember one night, playing the Irasburg Town Hall. I was nervous because it was my longtime collaborator, novelist Howard Mosher’s, hometown and I knew he’d be there.

As I unloaded our equipment and carried it upstairs into the big main room, I noticed two huge stacks of heavy wooden chairs, four seats ganged to a unit. “I’ll worry about these later,” I told the building manager who watched as I worked.

I set up the projector and tested the sound. Then I turned to the seven-foot stacks and wrestled the joined the ancient blocks of chairs off the pile. Sweating hard in the 90-degree upstairs heat, I felt my back straining after hefting a few units, so I lay on the floor. It felt good.

Ori, a Wesleyan freshman I’d hired to sell tickets called from downstairs. “Are we ready to let people in?”

“Just a minute,” I said, getting back on my feet. In fact, I was nowhere near ready. But people were lined up around the block and I re-tackled the stack, reaching up and across a seven-foot pile of chairs to grapple the top unit free. These chairs had a will of their own—to resist.

Howard Mosher walked up from the ground floor. “Come, Jay, let me introduce you to Maurice.” Howard pointed out the window to a skinny older fellow with a startled look on his face. He had long yellow-white hair a beard that, he later confirmed, hadn’t been cut for thirty-five years. “He wants to know if it’s OK to drink beer during the show. He’s got stomach cancer and says beer’s the only medicine that works. He threw all his pills down the toilet. Come meet him.”

“I’d like to, Howard,” I say. “But I don’t have time right now. But he can drink the beer if he wants to.” I could see that Maurice was fast becoming a candidate for a character in Howard’s next book but I just didn’t have time. Dark afternoon clouds had lifted and light was now streaming through the windows. “I’ve got to darken the room,” I told Howard. “I forgot my black cloth and there’s no ladder.”

Howard looked at the bright windows. “I see what you mean.” The Irasburg writer moved a few more chairs off the pile as audience members climbed the stairs. “I never thought I’d see you do real work,” said one audience member to Howard.

“It will be the last time I do. I promise you that,” said Mosher.

I ran to Ray’s Market and came back with black garbage bags to tape to the windows. Back in the hall, progress on the chairs had stopped when Howard was commandeered by another local man. I slapped some tape on the garbage bags and stuck them in the window frames. Them I took four more runs at the tangled stack, as the crowd kept growing.

Twenty minutes later, the show was rolling and I checked out the situation downstairs, where Howard’s new friend, Maurice, had stepped out for a cigarette. “Thanks for letting me drink the beer,” he said. “I ain’t rowdy or nothing. I just need it. Only thing that works.”

Maurice said he was 71 and had just gotten engaged. “Hell, I can drink a 24-pack of beer like it’s nothing at all,” he says. “That’s what my girlfriend likes about me.”

The show went well, Ori and I packed up the equipment, and we hauled it out to my car. It was 10:15pm.

“What about the chairs?” I said.

“Maybe they’d like to keep them set up,” said Ori.

“That may be wishful thinking,” I replied.

Exhausted, we trudged back up the stairs to fold, carry, and re-stack the wooden chairs. It was better with two people and we were done in 45 minutes. I was worried that all this work would prove too much for young Ori. But she remained game.

“It’s good to get the worst date out of the way early in the tour,” she said.

“Yes. But it may not be our worst date,” I replied. Then, wanting to keep her spirits up, I added, “But it might be. You just never know.”

**Feature story**

Jay Craven’s new film *Blood Brothers* opens in Concord

By JANA FORD Concord Monitor staff

Sometimes the quickest decisions are the best ones.

That would be true for independent filmmaker Jay Craven and his latest release: Asked in an interview years ago whether he would ever base one of his films in Nantucket, he answered, “Yes,” instinctively.

“It will be a period piece,” he added.

Never mind that in his eight films he’d never gone south of the New Hampshire border and never mind he’d never done a period piece set in the 19th century.

Before the interview had ended, he also had the story in mind. “I had had involvement with this story 10 years earlier in a project that collapsed three weeks before shooting,” he said. “I saw Nantucket as perfect place for a period film and *Blood Brothers* is a seaside story.”

Now, *Blood Brothers* is a New England Emmy nominee featuring renowned

actress Jacqueline Bisset. Based on the 19th century novel *Pierre et Jean* by Guy de Maupassant, it’s set in 1872 Nantucket, during the island’s “ghost period” – after the decline of whaling, before the rise of tourism, and in the New England shadow of the Civil War. The 􏰀lm tells the story of two brothers whose relationship strains when the younger one receives news of an unexpected inheritance – and both brothers become attracted to the same young woman who arrives on their island.

Along with Bisset, the film stars Christian Coulson (*The Hours, Harry Potter: Chamber of Secrets*); Shane Patrick Kearns (*Blue Collar Boys*); Diane Guerrero (*Orange is the New Black, Jane the Virgin*); and Gordon Clapp (*Matewan, Eight Men Out, Glengarry Glen Ross* on Broadway).

*Blood Brothers* marks Craven’s eighth narrative 􏰀lm based in New England – and it was recently nominated for a New England Emmy. The director’s previous pictures include five collaborations with Vermont writer Howard Frank Mosher, among them *Northern Borders*, with Bruce Dern and Genevieve Bujold, *Disappearances*, with Kris Kristo􏰁erson, and *Where the Rivers Flow North* with Rip Torn, Tantoo Cardinal and Michael J. Fox.

*Blood Brothers* will kick off its New Hampshire tour with an eight-day run at Red River Theatres. Craven will be on hand tonight for its premiere and a question-and-answer session afterward. Craven does these “event screenings” with most of his films. He said it is a new wave for independent filmmakers.

“Just putting it on the screen isn’t enough anymore,” he said. “It’s rooted in this region, too, where there can be a sense of connection with one’s own history and culture.”

Craven likened the interest in the films, which he admitted tends to be underestimated, to the growing interest in the local food movement; this desire to know where the product comes from.

Craven lives in the Northeast Kingdom and all but one of his films have been based and filmed in New England – most notably in New Hampshire and Vermont. Each film gets a tour around these states (the Vermont tour of Bl*ood Brothers* is running right now as well) at several well-known independent theaters across the state.

“I would argue that New Hampshire is the best with independent film programming and audience development. Very robust,” he said.

Look to the grassroots, Craven says. “The mandate to actually make the movie and then support of the movie in its release . . . it does require the audience seeing themselves as participants, not only in content but in terms of how it’s getting made.”

Craven’s films come to be through a partnership with Marlboro College, where he is a professor. With this program, 22 professionals mentor and collaborate with 32 students from 12 colleges. Craven said it’s a model of experiential learning that is now being used in other college tracks, such as political science and environmental science.

“Students come away with skills that are marketable but still steeped in liberal arts,” he said. “We do deep research into Nantucket history, the Civil War. . . . By the time we get to the six weeks of production, the kids know every square inch of the script, then they see the casting, location scouting, setting up props. They see how what has been in their mind a certain way for weeks can change and take new shape.”

They also use Kickstarter to help fund these productions, and the students are a big part of that, Craven said. They kept up a blog, giving behind-the-scenes looks at the whole production of the film. With this campaign, they raised $62,000 with 439 donors. While Craven works to keep production costs down, he still is always looking for other ways to fund the project. He said direct mail doesn’t work anymore, and he feels crowd funding is where it’s at. The next film, *Wetware*, just wrapped up production and has already exceeded its goal and raised $65,000.

“Kickstarter is providing more money to the arts than the National Endowment for the Arts, by far,” he said.

**Our cast and crew**

**Cast**

2014 Golden Globe winner **Jacqueline Bisset** (LOUISE ROLAND) has more than 90 film and television credits that include *Bullitt,* with Steve McQueen; John Huston’s *Under the Volcano*, with Albert Finney; *The Deep*, with Nick Nolte; Francois Truffaut’s *Day for Night,* with Jean-Pierre Leaud; Roman Polanski’s *Cul-de Sac*, with Donald Pleasance; Claude Chabrol’s *Le Ceremonie*, with Isabelle Huppert; Sidney Lumet’s *Murder on the Orient Express* with Lauren Bacall, Ingrid Bergman, Sean Connery, and Vanessa Redgrave; and *Casino Royale* with Peter Sellers, Orson Welles, Ursula Andress, Woody Allen, and Jean-Paul Belmondo. Her 2015 release *Welcome to New York* was directed by Abel Ferrera and co-stars Gerard Depardieu as a thinly disguised character inspired by the highly controversial French bank executive, Dominique Strauss –Kahn. The film premiered at Cannes.

UK native and Cambridge University graduate **Christian Coulson** (PETER ROLAND) has worked extensive in theater and film. His credits include Stephen Daldry’s *The Hours* with Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, and Julianne Moore; *Love is Strange* with Alfred Molina and John Lithgow; *Harry Potter: Chamber of Secrets*, with Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, and Fiona Shaw; and, as James, Duke of Monmouth in the Emmy-wining BBC Series, *The Last King*.

**Diane Guerrero** (LUCIA CHILDS) has nearly 20 film and television credits that include the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* (as Maritza Ramos), CW’s *Jane the Virgin* (as Lina) and the DC Comics TV series, *Doom Patrol*. Diane graduated from the Boston Arts Academy and has spoken extensively about immigration after writing a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed that attracted national attention by detailing her experiences as the American-born daughter of Columbian parents who were deported, leaving her, at the age of 14, to make her own way.

**Shane Patrick Kearns** (JOHN ROLAND). Film credits include *Blue Collar Boys, Persona Au Gratin*, and *Love Sick Love*. Shane also appeared in *The Sky and the Limit* at 59E59 Theaters, directed by Billy Hopkins.  His own first full-length play *Blue Moon Bastard* was produced in Los Angeles, directed by Paul Ben-Victor. Television credits include *Law & Order: SVU*, and *Taxi Brooklyn.* Underthe name of Shane Patrick, he released his Debut Album *Go Places* in 2012.

Emmy-winner and Tony nominee **Gordon Clapp** (CHARLES ROLAND) graduated from Williams College, also the alma mater of writer/director John Sayles. Gordon appeared in Sayles’ films, *Return of the Secaucus Seven, Matewan, Eight Men Out*, and *Sunshine State*. Gordon won his Emmy as Detective Greg Medavoy on *NYPD Blue* and he received a Drama Desk Award and Tony nomination for his work as Dave Moss in David Mamet’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Gordon’s many other credits include Clint Eastwood’s *Flags of Our Fathers,* the HBO series, *Deadwood* and his acclaimed turn as Robert Frost in A. M. Dolan’s *This Verse Business*.

*Blood Brothers* supporting cast players include **Gary Farmer** (*Smoke Signals, Dead Man*) as SMOKE; **Bill Raymond** (*Lincoln, Michael Clayton)* as CAPTAIN BEAUSIRE;**John Rothman** (*Sophie’s Choice, Devil Wears Prada)* as ATTORNEY BENNETT; Christopher Baker (*True Detective*) as JAKE RIVERS; and **Susan Kelechi Watson** (*This is Us*, *Louie, Blackout*) as PATIENCE ROSS. Also Northeast Kingdom, Vermont-born actresses**Abbey Volmer** and **Tessa Klein** (*War Horse, Disappearances*) and Nantucket actors **Susan McGinnis** (*Sex and the City, Carlito’s Way),* and **Vince Veilleux** (Theater Workshop of Nantucket’s *Six Degrees of Separation*).

**Key Crew**

Key *Blood Brothers* personnel provided the leadership and skill to make this ambitious project possible. They include director of photography **Brad Heck**, and production designer **Kate Merrill**, both of them Marlboro College graduates. Brad has worked professionally in Chicago and New York, and Kate recently received an MFA in photography from Yale—and has taught and helped design photo shoots. Nantucket and New York-based producer **Virginia Joffe** worked as an effective and tireless first-time producer who participated in strategic decision-making and crucial fundraising. The film is dedicated to her and to executive producer and Marlboro College President, **Ellen McCulloch-Lovell,** whom I’ve known since 1975 when Ellen led the Vermont Council on the Arts and I began my career as an arts activist based in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom. Ellen has also worked in Washington as U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy’s chief-of-staff and director of the veterans’ oral history project for the Library of Congress. Ellen worked for the Clinton White House as Executive Director of The President’s Committee for the Arts and Humanities and as deputy chief of staff to First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Line producer **Michael Toscano** fully rose to the multiple challenges of this complicated production. Mike’s a graduate of Ithaca College and the Columbia University MFA program for producers. We couldn’t have asked for a more capable and imaginative line producer. Our patient co-editor **Josh Melrod** worked with me on *Northern Borders* and he has a longtime affiliation with The Edit Center in New York. Emmy-winning costume designer **Sarah Beers** performed miracles on a limited budget—her costumes provided a fabulous asset to the production, helping to set the period and articulate character details. Sarah also worked on my earlier films, *The Year That Trembled* and *A Stranger in the Kingdom*.

Sound designer and post-production coordinator **Evan Schwenterly** also worked on *Northern Borders* and he’s a Marlboro College alumnus. I couldn’t have navigated the numerous challenges of post-production without him. Sound recordist and generous mentor **Dave Richards** also worked on *Northern Borders*. Los Angles-based supervising editor **Beatrice Sisul** studied film at the renowned Zagreb film school in her native Croatia and she edited my earlier films, *The Year That Trembled* and *Disappearances*. I was thrilled when Beatrice said she could devote a month to polishing out picture cut.

**Judy Hyman** and **Jeff Claus** arranged music for the film and scored embellishments to the fabulous score by 19th Century American composer **Louis Moreau Gottschalk**. Jeff and Judy composed, produced, and performed music for my earlier films including *Where the Rivers Flow North, A Stranger in the Kingdom, Disappearances, The Year That Trembled, Disappearances*, and *Northern Borders*. They also lead the long-time Ithaca-based indie art/rock/bluegrass band, The Horse Flies.

**Essential Nantucket Crew**

Other Nantucket personnel include production manager, **Russell Bartlett**; co-producer **Cecelia Johnson**; location manager and associate producer, **Joy Margolis**; and musicians **Ethan Philbrick**, **Nick Davies**, and a 45-member **Nantucket chorus** directed by **Barbara Elder**. ALSO actors **Chuck Gifford** and **Blake Lazarus**; construction coordinator **Jacques Zimicki**; art department assistant **Sean Allen**; assistant locations manager **Grace Dineen**; casting associate **Gabrielle Gould**; second unit director **John Stanton**; production consultants **Jim Lentowski**, **Charles Bartlett, Chris Westerlund**, **Alan Worden,** **Damien Trubini**, **Harvey Young**, **Marjan Shirzad**, **Suzie Kraft**, and **Peter Kaizer**; on-set costumer **Ellie Peterson**; tailor **Kirsten Peterson**; caterers **Greg Margolis** and the **Nantucket Catering Company**; baker **Tiina Polvere**; ornithology sound consultant **Vern Laux;** hair and make-up artists **Daiva Vtariere** and **Amy Gabrielson**; and associate producers **Susan Lazarus** and **Holly McGowan**. Also, island historians **Nat Philbrick**, **Frances Karttunen**, **Betsy Tyler**, **Ben Simons**, and **Robert Mooney.** And many others…

Collaborating Nantucket non-profits include the **Nantucket Historical Association**, **The Nantucket Conservation Foundation**, **Nantucket Atheneum**, **Nantucket Dreamland Theater**, **Nantucket Film Festival**, **Star of the Sea Youth Hostel**, and **Maria Mitchell Association**. Business sponsors include **Hy-Line Cruises**, **Cape Cod Five**, **Cabot Creamery**, **Cisco Brewers**, **Triple Eight Distillery**, **Nantucket Vineyard**, **Compass Rose Real Estate, Hingham Savings Bank**, **Mahon About Town**, and **The Inquirer and Mirror**. Film industry sponsors include **Arriflex Cameras**, **ARRI CSC**, **DU-ART Film and Video**, **Sound Lounge NYC,**

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**Jay Craven**

Director/writer/producer Jay Craven’s nine feature films include *Disappearances* (with Kris Kristofferson and Charlie McDermott), *Where the Rivers Flow North* (with Rip Torn and Tantoo Cardinal), *A Stranger in the Kingdom* (with David Lansbury, Ernie Hudson, and Martin Sheen), *The Year That Trembled* (with Jonathan Brandis, Fred Willard, Marin Hinkle), and *Northern Borders* (with Bruce Dern, Genevieve Bujold, and Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick), *Wetware* (with Jerry O’Connell, Morgan Wolk, Cameron Scoggins, Nicole Shalhoub, Bret Lada and Aurelia Thierree).

Craven’s films have played 58 countries and 73 festivals, including Sundance, SXSW, Vienna, Vancouver, Avignon, Nantucket, San Francisco, St. Louis, Savannah, Santa Fe, BAM Cinemafest and American Film Institute’s AFI Fest—with special screenings at The Smithsonian, Lincoln Center, Harvard Film Archives, Le Cinémathèque Française, the Constitutional Court of Johannesburg, and others.

Also, broadcasts on Showtime, Starz, the Disney Channel, Sundance Channel, Encore, PBS affiliates in twelve states, and syndication to more than 200 commercial U.S. TV stations. Also, Netflix, Amazon and I-Tunes.

Awards include two National Endowment for the Arts Production Grants; a MacDowell Colony Fellowship; the Producers Guild of America NOVA Award for Most Promising New Motion Picture Producer of the Year; two New England Emmys and designation for the National Endowment for Arts’ American Masterpieces and the Vermont Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Craven and his work have been profiled by The New York Times, Boston Globe, Washington Post, Esquire Magazine (*Best of the New Generation* profile by Ann Beattie), Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Philadelphia Inquirer, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the CBC, and National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*, *Fresh Air*, *Morning Edition*, *Here and Now*), among others.

His film, *Where the Rivers Flow North*, is included in *The Sundance Collection* at the UCLA Film Archives and was selected as one of three U.S. Finalists, from among 120 submissions, to Critics Week at the Cannes International Film Festival. Craven’s commitment to New England place-based filmmaking was recently profiled by Orion Magazine that wrote: “Jay Craven has come closer than any other filmmaker to realizing (American poet, essayist, and film theorist) Vachel Lindsay’s dream of a vital regional cinema that embodies the character and genius of a place in all its mystery, magnificence, and pain.”

For more information about *Blood Brothers*—or upcoming editions of this experiential learning program contact Jay Craven (jcraven@sarahlawrence.edu).