



### Is Another Bear Market Around the Corner?

If you have a \$500,000 portfolio, you should download the latest report by *Forbes* columnist Ken Fisher's firm. It tells you where we think the stock market is headed and why. This must-read report includes our latest stock market forecast, plus research and analysis you can use in your portfolio right now.

[Click Here to Download](#)

FISHER INVESTMENTS

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

WSJ.com

BOOKSHELF | October 12, 2012, 3:35 p.m. ET

## What's Lurking In the Pool

*The discovery of a naked woman floating in a pool sparks a tale of subtle domestic menace. Sam Sacks reviews Deborah Levy's "Swimming Home," Juan Pablo Villalobos's "Down the Rabbit Hole" and Scott Hutchins's "A Working Theory of Love."*

By SAM SACKS

In an introduction to Deborah Levy's **"Swimming Home" (Bloomsbury, 157 pages, \$14)**, the experimental novelist Tom McCarthy writes that the author is less concerned about the story she tells than "about the interzone . . . in which desire and speculation, fantasy and symbols circulate." This will be happy news to readers who like a nice fictional interzone. But let me reassure those who have no idea what Mr. McCarthy is talking about that here is an excellent story, told with the subtlety and menacing tension of a veteran playwright (and, indeed, Ms. Levy has written for the stage).

The book takes place over a week in the French Riviera in 1994. A renowned English poet, Joe Jacobs, is vacationing with his wife, teenage daughter, and two friends, when their villa is visited by a mysterious stranger. This is the "flame-haired" Kitty Finch, a manic-depressive poet manqué whom they first discover floating naked in their pool. Kitty has come to give Joe one of her poems ("We are in nerve contact," she claims of him), which Joe and his daughter are shaken to recognize is a thinly veiled suicide note.

Joe, though, is catastrophically attracted to Kitty because she sees the darkness buried beneath his pose as a distinguished man of letters—"the threat . . . lurking there in all his words." There is a throat-closing sense of confinement and looming aggression in "Swimming Home" that brings to mind Harold Pinter's dramas. The table talk and small gestures seem always to straddle the line between politeness and malevolence. When Joe's wife brings Kitty a seat, Kitty can't tell if "she was being offered the chair or forced to sit in it." Likewise, Kitty's voice, Ms. Levy writes, "was hard and soft at the same time."

There is also something of a counterpart to Pinter's famous dramatic pauses, as Ms. Levy has honed her skill in the art of omission, of narrative silence. The secrets of Joe's traumas are left mostly unexplained and the dire message in Kitty's poem is elided with the word "etc.," which "concealed some thing that could not be said." The darkness found between the lines grows deeper as Kitty's increasingly volatile intervention pushes the novel to "the edge of something truthful and dangerous."

The title of Juan Pablo Villalobos's **"Down the Rabbit Hole" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 75 pages, \$12)** is, of course, a wink at Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." The Alice here is an 8-year-old boy named Tochtli (the name means rabbit in Nahuatl, one of Mexico's main indigenous languages); his wonderland is the isolated compound run by his father, a notorious Mexican drug baron.

Two stories run concurrently in this shrewdly crafted novella (playfully tra Harvey). The first is Tochtli's naïve account of his days locked inside the "I

Created with

**nitro** PDF professional

download the free trial online at [nitropdf.com/professional](http://nitropdf.com/professional)

because his father's nickname is the "King"). In his lifetime, he has met, by his count, 14 people. His obsessions include a hat collection (which, he says, are "like the crowns of kings"), samurai films and the Liberian pygmy hippopotamus, which he's learned about from an encyclopedia and yearns to add to the palace's already stocked menagerie. Tochtli is witness to gang activity—the bribery of politicians, the murder of enemies—but none of it is separable in his mind from what he sees in movies.

The parallel story is the decline of his father's cocaine empire. Although Tochtli understands little of what he's describing, it's clear that his father is a prime target of the government's crackdown on "narcotraficantes." Mr. Villalobos cleverly overlaps reality with surreality as the King's paranoid delusions become indistinguishable from Tochtli's earnest fantasia.

Copyright 2012 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)