

# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## Leaving the Lab, but Still Thinking Science

MAYLA HSU

Barbara Ehrenreich graduated from The Rockefeller University (RU), Class of 1968, but never worked as a scientist. Instead, she became a journalist, best known for *Nickel and Dimed*, in which she documented the hardship of life working at a series of low-wage jobs. She has written nineteen books and numerous articles, on diverse subjects such as women's health, war, economics, and the joy of dancing. Her most recent book is *Living with a Wild God*, a memoir describing her childhood into early adulthood, and an exploration of how a lifelong atheist reconciles episodes of mystical dissociation with an absolute conviction in reason and science.

How is it that someone who received a PhD in immunology from a leading university ended up as a leftist freelance writer? *Natural Selections* recently interviewed Ehrenreich to find out. It's a story of a promising young scientist who took some unexpected turns by being completely true to herself.

The path to RU began in Butte, Montana, where Barbara Alexander was born in 1941 to a heavy-drinking, tough-minded copper miner and a severely unhappy homemaker. Although emotionally belittling and constantly fighting, the two were also free thinkers who read voraciously. Ehrenreich's father, a charismatic, handsome, and brilliant man, earned graduate degrees in mining science and propelled himself into the lab and eventually management. Early on, she realized that excelling at school, particularly in science, earned her father's approval. More complicated was Ehrenreich's relationship with her mercurial mother, who insisted that young Barbara was too cold and unattractive to appeal to men, and was resentful of her daughter's academic achievements and disdain of housework. Unsurprisingly, Ehrenreich's upbringing

was marked by alienation, much of it spent reading and writing, with frequent solitary wanderings at night. With little bitterness, she recounts that it was observing her volatile parents that began her life as a scientist. Her father's influence and her own thoughtful nature led her to begin, as a teenager, the journal in which she charted her attempts to understand the most important questions of our existence. Why are we here? Why do we die? Is there something greater than the trivialities of everyday life? Why does religion make no sense?

She devoured books about religion and chemistry, which she describes as "an alternative world full of drama and intrigue...under the calm surface of things there exists a realm exempt from brute gravity, where atoms and molecules are in constant motion ... somehow, out of all this invisible turmoil, the gross material world was supposed to assemble itself." This reduction of all of life and the existence around us led her to ask even more urgently, why? Why was there anything at all?

Along with these ruminations began what became lifelong episodes of strange, extreme dissociation from normal sensory experience. The first of these occurred when Ehrenreich wandered away from a family picnic. She was staring at a tree, when "something peeled off the visible world, taking with it all meaning, inference, association ... the word 'tree' was gone, along with all notions of tree-ness ... was it a place

that was suddenly revealed to me? Or was it a substance—the indivisible, elemental material out of which the entire known and agreed-upon world arises as a fantastic elaboration?" Although she dismissed this as some sort of visual aberration, perhaps due to extreme fatigue from late-night reading, it periodically recurred, in school, or while reading, while alone or even in the presence of others. She wrote "at times like that I am not even real to myself. I don't know where I am. My own thoughts are like a distant throbbing whisper."

It was while returning from a ski trip with her brother and a friend that she had the most profound of such episodes. After skiing all day, and ingesting very little, the three slept uncomfortably in the car. In the morning, exhausted, she woke at dawn, and stepped out of the car to walk around the town of Lone Pine, California. She experienced a sort of mystical sensory overload, when "the world flamed into life...no visions, no prophetic voices, just this blazing everywhere. Something



poured into me and I poured into it.”

After considering a number of psychiatric and neurological explanations for these experiences, she decided not to tell anyone about them. She also wondered whether she was glimpsing an alternative realm or dimension, and if so, who or what had brought her there, since she was unable to control their occurrence. Having been raised an atheist, and after much reading about religion, she concluded there was no god, no candidates to carry out this role.

Science offered a potential refuge: these disruptions of reality were possibly nothing more than transient breakdowns of normal biological processes, explainable by molecular interactions gone awry. Certainly, for an intellectually restless adolescent, an interest in science was timely. The launch of the Soviet space satellite Sputnik in 1957 sparked the imagination of people worldwide, but also led to a push for young Americans to excel in science. So it was no surprise that Ehrenreich decided to study chemistry, heading to Reed College in Oregon, chosen partly for its bohemian reputation.

Ehrenreich's college days coincide with the dawning of the molecular biology revolution. During this time she identified physics as the root of chemistry, which underpinned biology, the determinant of much of the social sciences. It was there however, that she discovered she actually hated lab work. She says, “I am not a patient person. I am not neat. So much about bench work was about having sterile test tubes and things carefully labeled.” Glassblowing was terrifying, and poring over expensive instruments for hours was monotonous. However, the desire to further delve into the fundamentals of life and nature led her to graduate school. She originally applied to RU's nascent theoretical physics department, thinking that without a linear accelerator, no experimentation would be required.

RU in the early 1960s was clearly in a different era. During her admissions interview, Dean Bronk asked whether she planned to get married and have children, and she says “I knew enough to say, ‘of course not.’ She recalls that there were very few women professors and students, and male students pinched her bottom in the lab. She found it disorienting that “you'd been admitted to this amazing elite. On the other hand, you were actu-

ally a sort of a lowly apprentice. It was clear that if you want to stay here, you have to be an obedient serf. I'd never been to any place like this, where we had a dining room where lunchtime service was segregated by rank: students and professors in one dining hall, technicians in another, blue collar workers in a cafeteria somewhere. My friends and I would go eat in the workers' cafeteria because it was informal.” By 1964, feeling defeated by theoretical physics, she began a project with Gerald Edelman, a brilliant and demanding taskmaster, with whom she had a tense relationship. Her studies of chymotrypsinogen conformation required long, tedious sessions with a spectrofluorometer and more of the repetitive experimentation she disliked.

By this time, Ehrenreich's parents had divorced, and her mother, drinking heavily, made the first of her eventually successful suicide attempts. After Ehrenreich's return from visiting her, she realized that her life had become seriously misdirected, and that a future as a middling scientist would not answer her intellectual questions. She became an activist against the Vietnam War, organizing protests and participating in marches. The civil rights movement also drew many students off campus. In the spring of 1966, Edelman sternly suggested that Ehrenreich's relationship with her father was responsible for her “problem with authority”, even though Edelman knew nothing of her father, and anti-authoritarianism permeated an entire generation. He threatened her with expulsion from RU, which was only troublesome as an end to her fellowship. John Ehrenreich, a fellow student and her future husband, convinced her to finish the degree. So she moved to the lab of Zanvil Cohn, a shy, kind mentor who took the time to actually teach. After completing a thesis on pinocytosis in macrophages, she graduated, and to Cohn's dismay, became a freelance writer.

Still unsolved was the mystery of the dissociative episodes. In middle age, after establishing a writing career, raising two children, and weathering breast cancer, two divorces, and depression, Ehrenreich returned to the metaphysical questions. She emerged thinking that it is the monotheistic faiths, so completely unconnected with nature, that are insufficient at explaining deep questions of

**Natural Selections**

*Editorial Board*

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

**Daniel Briskin**

**Alessia Deglincerti**

**Jim Keller**

**Aileen Marshall**

**Nicolas Renier**

**Jason Rothausser**

**Susan Russo**

*selections.rockefeller.edu*  
*nseditors@rockefeller.edu*

existence. Older views, such as the belief in spiritual forces populating the natural environment, or animals as the embodiment of gods, are part of pagan or animist traditions. For her, these were more plausible in explaining her dissociative perceptions, which were so full of pulsating life. And as for whether her physical state of health (exhaustion, dehydration, etc.) was relevant, she comments that although there are material bases for mental experiences, science can't explain everything. “One example would be love between people. We can give all kinds of neurophysiological correlates, but they don't tell us much about the experience of love.” So, she concludes that something exists outside of scientific description. While she continues to reject the idea of an omnipotent being demanding worship, she proposes that if there is such an entity, it may be simply seeking notice by revealing itself occasionally to humans.

Nowadays, Ehrenreich is working with the Economic Hardship Reporting Project to support journalists writing about poverty. When asked how she feels about leaving science, she says, “I don't have any regrets. I love to read about scientific developments, but just as a layperson. I'm happy that other people are doing the work. Let them do the work, and I'll read about it. I'm a consumer of science.” Looking back, she notes the similarities of being a journalist and being a scientist: “You have to get at the truth about something.” Next she plans to write about the biology of macrophages and their association with inflammatory disease. So, at long last, she will use the RU PhD she earned almost fifty years ago in the service of science. ◊

# Paninis and Pupusas: A Jackson Heights Love Story

BRIANNA CASZATT & A GERALD MARTINI

In the months leading up to the World Cup, we kept reading headlines like “Panini Truck Heist in Brazil” or “Colombian Teacher Caught Stealing Students’ Paninis,” to which we thought: what the heck do sandwiches have to do with football? Then our Brazilian friend presented us with our very own Panini World Cup sticker book so we could join him in his quest to collect all of the stickers needed to fill its pages; Panini, it turned out, was a sticker brand rather than a sandwich.

The goal of a Panini sticker book is simple: collect and stick on every sticker (there are 643 in all). There are several stickers related to the Panini brand, FIFA (the international football organization), and the World Cup more generally, including stickers for the 12 stadiums (each stadium is split into two stickers). But, most importantly, each of the 32 teams has a national emblem, a group photo, and a picture for most of the players (there are only 17 player stickers per team rather than the full 23, and these were from the players who were projected to be selected for the tournament, meaning some stickers are of players who ended up not getting selected to actually play).

To start our collection, we bought seven-packs of stickers for \$1 each at sports stores and bodegas around the city. Early on, almost every pack that we purchased was loaded with stickers that we needed—it was fun! But as our sticker book filled up, we started getting a lot of duplicates, meaning each packet of seven had fewer and fewer of the stickers that we needed. It was time to start trading—and that was when things started getting really exciting.

We heard through a friend of a friend about a street corner at 84th Street and 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights where (on Saturdays and Sundays) Panini stickers were bought, sold, and traded, as other World Cup-crazed fans tried to complete their books by the start of the Cup. The first time that we came to the corner, it was very intimidating, since there were a bunch of hunched over little groups of people swapping their stickers. And we soon realized that we were very under-prepared. Nobody else had their booklets with them, rather they were just carrying a list with the numbers of the stickers they were missing (there is a number that corresponds with every emp-

ty sticker space in the book) and their stacks of duplicates to trade and sell. We still had over half a book to fill, so we just watched and bought more packs, knowing many would be duplicates but that we’d be building up our stock of stickers to trade and sell.

We were back next weekend, with our list of missing stickers, our duplicates neatly ordered, and Bri dusting off her Spanish skills (at least her numbers). Eventually, after standing around by ourselves long enough, a mother and her son came up to us to see if we needed any of their duplicates—they were riding high as they’d just finished their collection and wanted to offload their left-overs. And they did in fact have several stickers we needed, this time for 25 cents each.

And pretty soon we were well in the thick of it! (For any Buffy fans out there, it was as exhilarating as when Anya discovers her love of capitalism making her first sale at the Magic Box.) We were buying from, selling to, and trading with people of all ages: from children barely talking, half hidden behind their mothers’ legs, to geriatrics barely walking. Everyone with their number sheets and stickers, everyone trying to achieve the same goal: a complete book. And after our next outing at the sticker swap, we finished our book and got to share in the joy of others as they finished theirs—one kid literally fell to his knees in exaltation when he found his last sticker. (It was only slightly demoralizing when we had to pay \$2 for our last sticker, which turned out to be an advertisement for Panini. They print a smaller number of them. Go figure!)

And as no one should trade stickers on an empty stomach, we also discovered the savory delight that is the pupusa. It is the pupusa, not the Panini, which is the long-term hero in our story here. A year from now we may never look at our Panini book again, but we will certainly still be eating pupusas.

Pupusas are an El Salvadorian specialty. They look like stuffed pancakes: approximately 6 inches in diameter, fried in a pan to a slight brown on either side. The dough is a cornmeal base, and it is stuffed with beans, meat, and cheese (or some combination thereof). They are served with a simple tomato sauce and red cabbage-vinegar coleslaw. And they are amazing!

Gerry had heard about pupusas the week before we started our Panini books, so we decided to fill up before trading stickers under the hot sun. We walked into Mi Pequeño El Salvador Restaurant and ordered one of every pupusa on the menu. Whether they had cheese oozing out or a salty, meaty middle, each variation was incredible. We decided that every time we came out to trade stickers we would stop for pupusas first, and we maintained that tradition each of the three weekends that we took to complete our Panini book. There was just something about that fried-dough goodness that made standing on that corner swapping small, worthless pieces of paper seem like the most natural thing in the world!

Our sticker collection is complete, and the World Cup has drawn to a close, but our love of pupusas has given us another reason to ensure that Jackson Heights will remain a frequent destination for us. ◊

**NATURAL SELECTIONS**



Narrate your story, send us your memorabilia, share with us your interests!

Enrich us by describing your country, culture and living!

Share your experiences here and bring in your unique viewpoints!

Email: [naturalselections@rockefeller.edu](mailto:naturalselections@rockefeller.edu)

**NEEDS YOU!**

# Crickets: From Midnight Music to Midnight Snack?

JASON ROTHAUER

“And how much is that per cricket?” I ask. I’m standing in front of the reptile cages of a local Brooklyn pet store.

“Ten cents a pop.” Sounds reasonable.

“I’ll take forty.”

In a minute or two, the clerk has wrapped up the insects in a large plastic bag, the same way you’d take a goldfish home from the fair. They’re mottled brown and reassuringly lively, hopping frantically against the top of their enclosure like popping corn. As the clerk rings up my order, she jokes, “Salt, pepper, ketchup?” She doesn’t know just how close to the mark she is.

These crickets aren’t for a pet lizard. They’re on tonight’s menu.

It’s hard to think of a stronger culinary taboo than eating insects. Many Americans can barely abide the presence or even the sight of them, but billions of people around the globe regularly consume a wide variety of insect life. The reason is simple: insects are nutritious, incredibly energy efficient, and even tasty. The reason that we all should eat insects is even simpler: it might help to save the planet.

Our current system of global food production is not sustainable. A 2006 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization report found that our present levels of meat production contribute 14–22% of the greenhouse gasses produced in the world in a given year. As the developing world continues to eat more like America does (i.e., much more carbon-intensive meat instead of produce), this proportion will only grow. The reason livestock like cattle are so ecologically deleterious is the inefficiency that comes with raising them. It takes eight pounds of feed to grow just one pound of beef. Insects, by comparison, turn food energy into body mass much more efficiently: a ratio of about 2:1 feed to body mass. And while producing livestock on a large scale requires “monocrops” of corn that themselves are harmful to the environment, insects can be fed on agricultural byproducts and other organic matter that would otherwise go to waste.

For these reasons, many people have come to see insects as a potential magic bullet to our dual challenges of climate change and food insecurity. All we need to do is harvest these energy-efficient (and highly nutritious) food sources, then reap the gains of the reduced need for much more costly and wasteful livestock.

I’ve endorsed these views for years, but outside of the odd chocolate-covered cricket, I had never really dug in. I decided it was time to put my principles into practice—if I think the world should try eating bugs, I needed to be willing to do so myself. Which is what led me to that pet shop, strolling outside with a few dozen or so soon-to-be cricket hors d’oeuvres.

I decided to try cooking crickets because they are popular and easy-to-handle for cooking. A quick Google search nets scores of recipes, from stir-fried crickets to cricket flour. But, for my first foray into entomophagy, I wanted to keep it simple. I didn’t want to hide the fact that I was eating insects in a sauce or a taco, I wanted to stare them in the face. Thus I decided on dry roasting. Crickets apparently make a naturally crispy, nutty snack.

First, I popped the hopping bag into the fridge. About an



hour at a cold temperature slows the insects down and makes them quiescent. In that state, it is easy to drop them into a pot of boiling water for a few minutes (most recipes seem to recommend this as the first step to kill and sterilize the animals). I have to admit at this point feeling a little strange. Fishing dead crickets out of my saucepan with a slotted spoon is not like making an omelet. But I press on.

Next, the crickets go on a baking sheet (they’re now a bit limp and somewhat pale) into a 200° oven for about an hour or so. You know they’re done when they crunch a bit when pressed with the back of a spoon. The final step is crucial. With their legs, wings, and antenna intact, the crickets still seem unpleasantly “buggy.” The solution is simple: take the crickets gently between your hands and roll them back and forth – this breaks off the wings and appendages, leaving you with something resembling a large rice grain with a small head.

Now for the big taste test. The flavor is somewhat shrimpy, yet nutty and surprisingly complex, a bit like a shrimp cracker crossed with a cashew. The texture is crunchy and light, and there is surprisingly little in the way of a gross-out factor. These won’t become my new favorite snack, but that was more because I don’t particularly love shrimp crackers. I could easily see crickets working with a more complex dish— perhaps adding protein and texture to a spicy salsa or guacamole, or mixed up in a stir fry.

What is clear is that insects aren’t ready for prime time on the American dinner table. First, while I was assured by the internet that consuming crickets from a pet store was safe, I’m not sure the Food and Drug Administration would agree. Second, for their small weight, these crickets were expensive (my \$4 worth of crickets, once cooked, would barely fill a couple of shot glasses). But there are signs of development. Companies such as Exo and Chapul market and sell energy bars made from processed crickets, while others offer cricket flour, or chocolate-covered bugs. We are a long way from crickets on your average restaurant menu, but the first murmurs of a trend are there. The death of a taboo begins one small (occasionally six-legged) step at a time. ◉



*This Month Natural Selections interviews Daniel Goldsmith, Summer Volunteer from Yeshiva University, in the Knight Laboratory of Biophysics. Country of origin: United States.  
By Susan Russo*

## New York State of Mind

**1. How long have you been living in the New York area?** I've lived in the New York area for most of my life.

**2. Where do you live?** In Washington Heights.

**3. Which is your favorite neighborhood?** I would have to say Greenwich Village. It has a lot of great venues and attractions, from comedy clubs, to chess shops, to used bookstores.

**4. What do you think is the most over-rated thing in the city? And underrated?** The shopping scene tends to be over-rated. While the comedy scene in NYC is well known, people do not often engage in it. Accessibility to stand-up and improv comedy open mics is underrated.

**5. What do you miss most when you are out of town?** The excitement of the city. There's a definite liveliness that isn't

matched anywhere else.

**6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be?** Transportation being more affordable.

**7. What is your favorite weekend activity in NYC?** On the weekend I enjoy heading over to Midtown and catching dinner and a movie with my friends.

**8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC?** A friend of mine and I went to see a recording of Regis Philbin's talk show at Chelsea Piers. After the show, we met Regis and took a photo with him. He started joking around with us and tried to set me up with his secretary... Definitely a memorable experience.

**9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be?** If I had to choose another place to live in the U.S., it would probably be Palo Alto. Life there seems excit-



ing. Plus, I hear the weather is fantastic.

**10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker?** That's a tough question. It really depends on the day. There are times when I feel too laid back to really consider myself a New Yorker. ◊

## Ten Years of Natural Selections

DANIEL BRISKIN

Continuing on with our salute to the tenth anniversary of Natural Selections, here is a comic republished from July/August 2004. ◊



By Sean Taverna

## Culture Corner

# An Interview with Richard Torregrossa, Author of *Terminal Life: A Suited Hero Novel* and *Cary Grant: A Celebration of Style*

BERNIE LANGS

Several years ago, I was checking the blurbs of recommended articles and reviews indexed by the Arts & Letters Daily web site as I do every day. The site recommended a review of a book about the fashion sense and style of the late, great actor, Cary Grant. Since I admire Grant and his body of work (especially the films done with director Alfred Hitchcock), I clicked and discovered that the book in question was written by a friend I'd worked with at a publishing house. Richard Torregrossa and I became fast friends in the mid-1980s, as we did the dull work of pre-computer copy-editing and marketing, and in his case, copy-writing, editing, and interactions with authors. In addition, we attended book release parties from other publishers where we sipped wine in the evening and hovered in reception room corners while we watched literary types and quietly wise-cracked observations to each other.

We both lived in Brooklyn and finally Torregrossa, born and bred there, had enough and headed west to seek new opportunities, his fortune, and adventure in California. We contacted each other now and then and I was pleased when he found success utilizing his cartoon drawing skills with several captioned-illustrated books such as *Fun Facts about Dogs*, *The Little Book of Wisdom*, *Fun Facts about Cats*, and the more poetic and meditative *The Man Who Couldn't See Himself*.

One phone call we had in the 1990s, was memorable as I listened to a story of how he'd scored a difficult book contract. Torregrossa told me that since he couldn't afford a literary agent to work the difficult terrain of the competitive publishing business on his behalf, he invented an agent, and sent out inquiries under their name. His fictitious agent made inroads into the business and, one afternoon, Torregrossa received a call from a publisher interested in signing him, but on different terms. Torregrossa said his agent was in the room and advised him to stand his ground. The publisher asked to speak with Torregrossa's agent. Torregrossa, without hesitation, asked him to hold, took a beat, impersonated his fake agent with an accent and a higher pitch, and worked out the deal.

After I read the online review about Torregrossa's book, (which includes an introduction written by fashion designer icon, Giorgio Armani), I tracked down his email and we resumed our long-distance friendship. I read many of his erudite and well-written freelance, fashion newspaper columns in major international and U.S. publications and was glad when he became a style consultant with a history of fashion curator at Boston's Muse-

um of Fine Arts. When Torregrossa delved into fiction with *Terminal Life*, I read an advance copy. It was just released to excellent reviews. The graphically violent, action novel unfolds at a quick pace, but with twists on the genre. There is a unique hero, Luke Stark, a former Navy SEAL who returns home to learn that his wife was murdered and his son disappeared. And so begins his tale of revenge written through deftly presented prose. The book's themes examine everything from the value of life to the complications of filial obligations. There's also a sprinkling of fun and humor. When I finished *Terminal Life*, I told Torregrossa that the way he artfully managed the book's deeper ideas was selective and subtle, which packs a more powerful punch and leaves a larger impression.

Torregrossa kindly agreed to be interviewed on the eve of his new book's release for *Natural Selections*.

**Natural Selections:** You've written successfully in several genres: non-fiction, fiction, and as a newspaper columnist. Do you find that you use a completely different creative process for each when constructing the work?

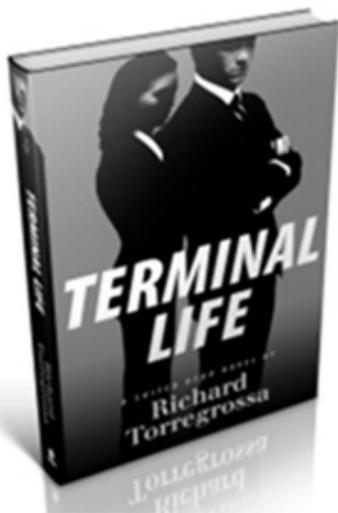
**Richard Torregrossa:** For me the creative process is the same. Whether it's a novel, a biography, an illustration, or a magazine or newspaper article the challenge is to feel the subject deeply, find a unique angle, and try to say something fresh and interesting using language that resonates. In other words, don't bore the reader to death.

**NS:** Your new book, *Terminal Life*, is action-packed and unfolds almost cinematically. Much of the writing is plot-driven, but at key points, you put in existential, poetic descriptions, and flashes of philosophical thoughts and ideas. Did you place these passages strategically or did they just happen as you were writing?

**RT:** I wanted the themes to be organic, an integral not a separate part of the novel. For instance, Luke Stark, the protagonist, is a flesh and blood character, but he is also an objective correlative for the most important theme in the novel: Is life worth living? And that is the ultimate existential question.

**NS:** You're an expert on the fashion style of Cary Grant. Other movie stars of that era, such as Gary Cooper, also took great care in choosing what they wore, not only in public, but when with friends and family. Do you think there are any high-profile people in entertainment who make that effort on a consistent basis today with such success and elegance—outside of red carpet appearances? The Rolling Stones drummer, Charlie Watts comes to mind.

**RT:** Interesting you mentioned Charlie Watts because he is a serious sartorialist. I've written a lot about G.J. Cleverly, a custom shoemaker in Old Bond Street in London where Charlie has purchased numerous pairs of shoes. They're beautiful, hand-crafted, like works of art. They cost between \$5,000 to \$15,000. He's very friendly with the owner of the company who visited



him backstage before a Stones' concert and Charlie wasn't wearing Cleverly. The owner was surprised and a little disappointed, so he asked why he was wearing an inferior brand of footwear. Charlie responded, "Because I'm at work, mate." Charlie cherishes his Cleverlys so much he wouldn't think of beating them up while working, playing the drums.

**NS:** You've mentioned to me that some Terminal Life readers were surprised at the level of violence in the book and at the off-handed way you present it. How did you respond to that?

**RT:** I respond that we live in a violent world and if you don't realize that then you're either in denial or existing in some kind of bubble or fantasy. The violence is a reflection of what's going on in the world; not an exploitation of it. It's not gratuitous. It's reality. I was surprised to read that the Dalai Lama and Mahatma Gandhi agree. The Dalai Lama said, "It may surprise you, but I am not strictly opposed to the spectacle of violence and crime. It all depends on what lessons you draw from it." Mahatma Gandhi said—and this appears on the first page of the novel—"It is better to be violent, if there is violence in our hearts, than to put on the cloak of nonviolence to cover impotence."

**NS:** How do you feel about the way that the publishing industry for fiction has changed in the past 30 years or so? In the era of the blockbuster novel, how hard was it to find a publisher for your new book? What advice could you offer first-time novelists trying to break in?

**RT:** It was very hard. If you compare the rejection letters from agents and editors to the rave reviews it makes you wonder that maybe the inmates are running the asylum. The mainstream publishing industry should not be called an "industry." It should be called a publishing system, like the education system, a .org, because they are such terrible business and marketing people who really are pathetic when it comes to turning a profit. When I worked at Random House way back in 1983, they were bemoaning the shrinking market for books even back then. What did they do about it? Nothing. They sat behind their desks and whined and complained—and didn't innovate! But companies like Amazon did and completely stole their lunch by inventing the eBook, the Kindle, etc., and they're left with the crumbs. Mainstream publishers should've done that. And they were very slow to embrace the Internet and they are still befuddled by it and really clueless when it comes to using so-

cial media and clever marketing and PR. They are also working off an antiquated model: putting all their eggs in one basket. The resounding failure of Hillary's Clinton's new book, *Hard Choices*, is an excellent example. They paid \$14 million for that book (and that doesn't include all the money they spent on marketing!) and as I write this in its second week of its release, it's barely sold 85,000 copies [...]. How could they be so off the mark? Because they're lazy. Sign up a ce-



lebrity and let the media do the rest. It doesn't even matter if the book is any good or not. The really tragic implication to my mind is even worse. All that money Simon & Schuster lost? Well, that means less money to buy books by emerging authors, talented authors without name recognition, so they can't spend the necessary marketing money to promote them and build their audience slowly and efficiently by publishing their books even if they don't immediately make a ton of money.

**NS:** You've lived in New York City and now reside in California. Does location make a difference in your creative process, either positively or negatively?

**RT:** Absolutely. I need quiet and solitude and buckets of sunshine to write productively and happily. And a good swim in the afternoon. You just don't find that in NYC. It's a city that grinds you down. The infernal subways are an antiquated disgrace. It's also absurdly expensive, noisy, crowded, filthy, congested, ugly, gloomy, rude, and full of distractions. Where I live now, in San Diego, there's nothing but blue skies and sunshine and beautiful surroundings—beaches, mountains, rivers, lakes, jacaranda, palm trees, gentle breezes, swimming pools, and people who are generally upbeat and friendly. And they leave me alone. They don't get in your business. And most of all I can always find tranquility. I'm rarely in a New York state of mind, even though I grew up there. ◉

## For Your Consideration – Cannes Shakedown Edition

JIM KELLER

It's become a regular thing for me to take a bit of a hiatus after May's Cannes Film Festival. This is largely because there simply isn't much to write about in the Oscar world, but if I'm one hundred percent honest, it's nice to have a bit of downtime as the summer months approach. So here we are in the thick of summer, the FIFA World Cup 2014 just came to a close, and most people are not giving the film world a second thought. Yet here I sit, mere weeks after the July 4th weekend, on the precipice of what is sure to be a crazy Oscar race, slowly beginning to take shape much like galaxies from dust particles. To that end, I am reluctant to dive into the "Ones to Watch" series just yet so in this edition we take a closer look at those films and performances in the Oscar conversation that bowed on the Croisette, which could earn nominations in their respective categories.

***Foxcatcher*** (director: Bennett Miller): This drama tells the true story behind the 1996 murder of Olympic wrestler David Schultz by paranoid schizophrenic and heir to the du Pont chemical fortune, John du Pont.

**For Your Consideration (FYC):** Not only did Miller win the festival's Best Director prize, but his film went on to vie for the Palme d'Or, which it lost only by a narrow margin to Turkish director Nuri Bilge's *Winter Sleep*. As I mentioned in the last column, Miller won the Best Director Oscar for *Capote* in 2006. For now, he is the one to beat in the Best Director race. Also in May I wondered how meaty Channing Tatum's role as David Schultz would be. While Steve Carell (du Pont) will campaign as lead actor, both Tatum and Mark Ruffalo, who plays Schultz's younger brother, also named Mark, are considered co-leads. But with Carell's playing against type, the two will likely compete head-to-head in the supporting race. A nomination here would be the first for Tatum, while Ruffalo earned a Best Supporting Actor nomination for *The Kids Are Alright* in 2011. On top of that, co-screenwriter, Dan Futterman

was nominated alongside Miller for his work on *Capote* in 2006, so look for him to figure in. All of this combined makes *Foxcatcher* a viable Best Picture nominee and possible winner.

***Maps to the Stars*** (director: David Cronenberg): The film depicts the plight of two former child stars and looks at the entertainment industry's complex relationship with the whole of Western civilization.

**FYC:** Where *Foxcatcher* came up short in the acting categories, *Maps* excelled with a win for Julianne Moore as aging actress Havana Segrand, who tries desperately to reclaim her Hollywood fame. Moore has been nominated for Oscar four times, first for her supporting role in 1997's *Boogie Nights*, then as a lead for 1999's *The End of the Affair*. In 2003, she earned a pair of nominations: supporting for *The Hours*, and lead for *Far From Heaven*. More than 17 years after her first nomination, Moore is overdue for a win, and if Hollywood can set aside its inevitable squabbles with the film's depictions of Hollywood and celebrity, this could be her chance to break the spell. The film's other standout is Mia Wasikowska, as Segrand's assistant, Agatha Weiss, a Florida sanatorium transplant. Wasikowska has yet to garner Academy attention, and I stress "yet." An outside chance also exists for the Academy to punch Cronenberg's ticket as well—though that is much less likely.

***The Homesman*** (director: Tommy Lee Jones): The film centers on a claim jumper and a pioneer woman who team up to escort three insane women from Nebraska to Iowa.

**FYC:** The word on Jones' adaptation of Glendon Swarthout's 1988 novel of the same name is mixed. Where some fell hard for it, others felt it was disjointed. Most agree that the film's biggest chances for Academy recognition lie with actors Jones as the claim jumper George Briggs, and Hilary Swank as the pioneer

woman Mary Bee Cuddy. As discussed in the last column, Jones was first nominated for Best Supporting Actor in 1992 for *JFK* and two years later he won in the category for his role in *The Fugitive*. He earned his only lead actor nomination in 2008 for *In the Valley of Elah* and was last nominated for his supporting role in 2011 for *Lincoln*. The Academy doesn't seem to favor Jones, and given the mixed reviews, a nomination would be his award. Swank, on the other hand, has won two Best Actress Oscars, the first in 2000 for *Boys Don't Cry* and the second in 2005 for *Million Dollar Baby*. Going by recent history, if she can get a nomination, she's a threat for the win.

***Leviathan*** (director: Andrei Zvyagintsev): Russian director Zvyagintsev's drama tells the story of a man who struggles against a corrupt, land-hungry mayor. The screenplay is a modern reworking of the Book of Job it deals with some important contemporary, Russian, social issues, and covers the themes of love and tragedy experienced by ordinary people.

**FYC:** In 2007, Zvyagintsev's second feature film, *The Banishment*, competed for the Palme d'Or, which allowed him to capitalize on his familiarity. In 2011 he returned to the festival with *Elena*, which won the Un Certain Regard Special Jury Award. This year *Leviathan* competed for the Palme d'Or and Zvyagintsev won Best Screenplay along with Oleg Negin. These achievements make the film one to watch in the Best Foreign Film race.

***The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby*** (director: Ned Benson): This drama tells the story of a couple as they sift through their broken past and try to reclaim the love they once shared.

**FYC:** The film first bowed last year at the Toronto International Film Festival as two different cuts: *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: His* and *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Hers*. Since then, an additional cut has been shown: *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Them*—

each with its own depiction of the same couple's love story. While the film is helmed by first-time director Benson, the buzz has largely been about its co-leads Jessica Chastain and James MacAvoy as well as Viola Davis' supporting turn. Chastain has been nominated twice: supporting in 2012 for *The Help* and lead the following year for *Zero Dark Thirty*—a win she narrowly lost, likely due to the film's takedown by senators John McCain, Dianne Feinstein, and Carl Levin. While MacAvoy earned a Golden Globe nomination for his leading role in 2007's *Atonement*, he has not yet garnered Academy attention. Davis, on the other hand, was first nominated in 2008 in a supporting role for *Doubt* and narrowly lost in a leading role alongside Chastain in *The Help*. Any of these three could earn nominations, but my bet is on Chastain, who has not one, but four chances for a nomination this year. She will also appear in *Miss Julie*, *Interstellar*, and *A Most Violent Year*.

**How to Train Your Dragon 2** (director: Dean DeBlois): This animated feature sequel follows two young dragon-friendly Vikings who discover an ice cave filled with wild dragons and a mysterious dragon rider. Through their adventure, the two find themselves at the center of a battle to protect peace.

**FYC:** The film played out of competition at the festival, but that didn't stop it from earning rave reviews. It appears that the sequel is on its way to much fanfare and possibly repeat nominations in the Best Animated Feature and Original Score races, following the 2010 film. Whether or not it can win against the much heralded *Lego Movie* is anyone's guess.

**Mr. Turner** (director: Mike Leigh): A biopic that explores the last quarter century of the great, eccentric British painter J.M.W. Turner's life.

**FYC:** Leigh finally makes good on his

promise to deliver his big screen biopic after a 2010 *Los Angeles Times* interview, and from the looks of it, it's about to pay off. When the film bowed at the festival, critics fell hook, line and sinker for the extraordinary palette served up by Leigh, some going so far as to call it a masterpiece. The strong appreciation for his film earned it a Palme d'Or nomination, something Leigh has experienced four times, beginning in 1993 for *Naked*. He won in 1996 for *Secrets and Lies*, the film that catapulted Leigh onto the Academy's stage with Best Screenplay and Best Director nominations. In 2000 he earned another screenplay nomination for *Topsy-Turvy*, followed by a second screenplay and directing pair of noms for *Vera Drake* in 2005. Leigh went on to earn two more screen play nominations: in 2009 for *Happy-Go-Lucky* and in 2011 for *Another Year*. There really is no reason why Leigh couldn't land double noms again this year. Which leads me to Timothy Spall—another weapon in the film's arsenal, who plays Turner. Spall has not yet attracted the Academy's eye. He is perhaps best known for his role as Wormtail in the *Harry Potter* films, but has been a stalwart player in Leigh's films over the years. Beginning with a role in 1990's *Life is Sweet*, followed by *Secrets and Lies*, which earned him a Best Actor BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) nomination and *Topsy-Turvy*, which earned him a second BAFTA nomination for his supporting role, Spall has now appeared in five Leigh films. Where Leigh was nominated for directing, Spall took home the Best Actor hardware, which could easily become one of many this year. Further, outside of *Foxcatcher*, I'd say this is the most likely of the Cannes bunch to land a Best Picture nomination.

**Clouds of Sils Maria** (director: Olivier Assayas): The drama concerns successful actress Maria Enders and her loyal assistant, who retreat to the town of Sils Maria in the Swiss Alps after a young actress interprets the role that made her famous and her world begins to crumble.

**FYC:** Assayas' film is another that competed for the Palme d'Or this year—an honor he has enjoyed four times, beginning in 2000 with *Les Destinées Sentimentales*. Based on the initial reaction to the film, I wouldn't expect his name to pop up much in this year's Oscar race, but I wouldn't dismiss the actors' chances: Juliette Binoche and Kristen Stewart, in particular. Binoche won the Best Supporting Actress Oscar in 1997 for *The English Patient* and earned a Best Actress nomination in 2001 for *Chocolat*. While Stewart is not closely associated with "Oscar," she spent the years following the *Twilight* franchise delving into more challenging roles and rebuilding herself after 2012's affair with director, Rupert Sanders, which resulted in her dismissal from the planned *Snow White and the Huntsman* sequel. Chloë Grace Moretz also appears as the young actress, but don't look for her to figure in with a less prominent role.

I always write this, but it's worth repeating: Cannes isn't primarily an Oscar vehicle. While the performances and films discussed in this column may go all the way, for many the road will end here. Further, there were several films at Cannes this year that struck a chord with critics, and these, too, could build steam as the Oscar race picks up. The *Un Certain Regard* category unleashed both Xavier Dolan's *Mommy*, and Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's, Marion Cotillard starrer *Two Days, One Night*. I chose not to discuss these in depth because the directors, while big names at Cannes, are Canadian and French, respectively. They are not well-known outside of the film world and for them to attract Academy attention, their films would have to really hit hard. Given some of the Cannes slate I discussed here, and what is yet to come from the bigger names, that is not a likely scenario.

Next month we will hit the ground running with the first in the three-part "Ones to Watch" series. ◉

# Darwinian Evolution

BIG BROTHER AND THE HOLDING COMPANY

This puzzle's constructor and honoree are both Rockefeller alumni. To write more here would be to give away the multi-layered theme, but when finished with the puzzle, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/evolutionmidrash> for a complete explanation

1	2	3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12		13	14	15	16	17	18	
19								20						21						
22								23						24						
25					26							27					28			
29				30		31					32	33					34			
	35				36					37						38				
			39					40	41	42				43	44					
	45	46						47					48							
49					50	51					52	53			54			55	56	57
58				59						60						61				
62			63					64	65	66				67	68					
69								70						71				72		
73					74			75				76	77	78				79		
				80			81				82					83	84			
85	86	87							88	89					90					
91								92	93					94				95	96	
97						98						99	100	101			102			103
104					105						106				107		108			
109				110						111	112					113				
114										115						116				
117										118						119				

## Across

- |                             |  |                                      |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Ice cream concoction     | 22. 1961 award to Sanche de Gramont for his moving account of the on-stage death of Leonard Warren | 1910, that means "the best"          |
| 8. Irritate by rubbing      | 24. Protein that allows skin to stretch  | 27. Actor David or football coach Al |
| 13. March 31, 1974, e.g.    | 25. Sprint car racing org.   | 28. Caribou kin                      |
| 19. Retired professors      | 26. 39-Across honor society founded in   | 29. Hopeful lover's plucking         |
| 20. Rowed one's boat ashore |  | 31. Declinations                     |
| 21. Master artist's studio  |  | 32. Signs of approval?               |

34. Suffer, in Scotland (anagram of the name of college that Steve Jobs dropped out of)

35. Streetcar name?

37. The Heat's home

38. Haggard, the "Okie From Muskogee" whose "Mama Tried"

39. High school alma mater of 88- and 111-Across, where they were both on the Math Team

43. Irish pub in midtown Manhattan, established in 1974 and named for the author of "Juno and the Paycock" (1924)

45. "She was just 17, you know what \_\_\_" (early Beatles lyric)

47. Like Australia's Outback

48. Arkansas's and Missouri's \_\_\_ Mountains

49. "Four and twenty blackbirds baked in \_\_\_"

50. Not really that good

54. "Don't \_\_\_!" (short rave review)

58. Antioxidant used as a food preservative: Abbr.

59. Theater major's deg.

60. Unit of cultural transmission

61. "\_\_\_ People Go"

62. Article about 111-Across that was published on March 31, 1974

69. Año starter

70. Concerning the 74-Down

71. Bond creator Fleming or Dolly creator Wilmut

72. Word in the first sentence of the Gettysburg Address or the first line of the "American Pie" lyrics

73. Made-over, like some kitchens

75. Natalie Portman's birthplace

79. Has second thoughts about

80. Instrument for Holocaust survivor Alice Herz-Sommer

82. Anticrime acronym since 1970

83. Lets the cat out of the bag

85. Having a reddish-brown tinge, reminiscent of element number 29

88. 1974 Westinghouse Science Talent Search winner, born February 3, 1957, whose project was on quasiperfect numbers

91. Namesakes of Perry's creator

92. One-time 18-Down skipper who will be inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2014

94. Horse operas

97. Word before future or catastrophe

98. "Toy Story" studio

99. Fight like a knight

102. Slips through the cracks?

104. \_\_\_ Friday's (one of the original singles

bars in Manhattan, before it became a family-friendly restaurant chain)

105. It's just for show

106. When many workdays start

108. Birth continent for 111-Across

109. "Sex and the City" author Bushnell

111. 1974 Westinghouse Science Talent Search finalist, born April 4, 1957, whose project was the focus of 62-Across

114. Empire State tribe whose name means "People of the Standing Stone"

115. It leaves the left ventricle

116. One who 83-Across

117. Ted \_\_\_\_, the name adapted by Sanche de Gramont by the time he authored 62-Across

118. A void to avoid

119. Connoisseur of beauty

### Down

1. Energize

2. Tickled pink

3. Connect, in a way

4. Poultry stew that is served in sauce

5. Land in the Thames

6. Chichén \_\_\_ (Mayan ruins)

7. Actress Gene or Maura

8. Thicket

9. Stags

10. Met highlight

11. Casablanca cap

12. Palindromic Dutch city

13. Plays by oneself

14. Jazz home

15. XP forerunners

16. Pomme \_\_\_ (Parisian potato)

17. How gymnasts perform

18. Bronx cheer recipients?

21. "Symphonie fantastique" composer

23. 2016 Olympics host, for short

27. Piece of cheesecake?

30. \_\_\_ Grey who Charlie Chaplin married in secret after she became pregnant at age 16

32. Break a commandment

33. Absorb, as a cost

34. 1957 Tracy/Hepburn film with a title evocative of secretarial accessories

36. Post-election election

37. 1943 Greer Garson title role

38. Monroe who sang "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" at Madison Square Garden

40. \_\_\_ victus (woe to the vanquished)

41. Blunder

42. Letter opener?

44. Rotating engine part

45. Time's 2007 "Invention of the Year"

46. Like British bishops

48. Lyric poems

49. More competent

51. Brewer's tub

52. Bo Derek's rating

53. Aussie that can't get off the ground

55. Surname of Hungarian scientist who discovered actin and was the Ph.D. mentor of 111-Across's father (it is no coincidence that he and 111-Across share a first name)

56. JPEGs, e.g.

57. Proof goofs

59. Remote rural areas, informally

63. Word with eye or name

64. He was on deck when Mookie hit the ball through Bill Buckner's legs to win Game 6 of the 1986 World Series

65. Hot time in Montréal

66. Roman man

67. "Yuck!" of yore

68. Greek letter used to designate wavelength

74. Equilibrium organ

76. Bracketed word in a verbatim quote

77. Oft-torn knee part: Abbr.

78. Mauna \_\_\_ (Hawaiian volcano)

79. \_\_\_ elements (scandium, yttrium, or any of the fifteen lanthanides)

81. Its mag. published 62-Across

84. "\_\_\_ go, Mets!"

85. War games grp., often

86. Herb that Hippocrates used as an antiseptic

87. Comparatively uncomplicated

88. Rivera's was 0.70 in post-season play

89. Elementary school trio?

90. Characteristic of bland food and bad dressers

93. Prefix denoting addition of element number 8

95. Antique transaction

96. Upright 80-Across

98. Thanksgiving pie ingredient

99. Dyes

100. Machu Picchu people

101. Holiday band for Obama

103. Anne \_\_\_\_, author of "Rosalind Franklin and DNA" (1975)

105. Arp's art

106. It turns "a one" into "none"

107. Degs. for career execs

110. Get it?

111. Org. that can't be lax about LAX?

112. Take the money and run

113. Co. founded by Alexander Graham Bell

## *Life on a Roll*



*Tea Time*



*Choice*

All photos contributed by Elodie Pauwels,  
<http://elodiephoto.wordpress.com>

