

Madison foursquare

88

This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704.

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Covers

[SC] Nice covers, **Hope** and **Karl**. Bananas in January? Cheerful!
[JG] I like it. Somehow it reminds me of a heroic Russian propaganda poster.

Greg Rihn

[SC] Your annual review was certainly gloomy, but we are living in gloomy times. At least your health has been good, congratulations on the weight loss, and you guys have seen some great shows. As for the rest, we will have to wait and see how it all plays out. I'm probably more optimistic than I have any logical right to be.

We helped Don Helley move his show home last week. We also bought a piece from him. He is taking a casual attitude toward marketing his work, which is good to see. He's not setting up a website, or planning to travel the state selling his work out of a booth, he's just selling a piece



"The Land Remembers: Trees," by Don Helley

here or there and enjoying making the art. I hope he does another showing as I think that worked well for him.

Please join us for the *Little, Big* discussion. The more the merrier.

[JG] It felt to me like your 2024 review of dread came from much the same place as the artwork featured on our January zine – the looming tornado. It's going to be a bumpy ride this year.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I liked your observation this month, "I learned from her that personal dignity and self-respect and even good humor, don't have to be dependent upon social standing or occupation." In recent years especially we've seen lots of evidence that wealth and privilege do not insure or inspire dignified or respectable behavior.

[JG] I recognized and laughed at your observation that people of all ages have their pet topics of complaint. I bet that most of us, even if blindfolded, could probably identify the ages of any group in conversation with one another by the targets of their complaints.

Well... my tendency to be unaware of my body may be less distracting as you suggest, but I blame it partially for my clumsiness, bodily inflexibility, and balance issues. It's possible to improve these problems through practice and physical therapy, but I seldom put in the time and effort to work on them ... because I rarely think about it until I am injured or find that my activities have become limited in some way. Then I just grumble and focus my attention elsewhere. So, I think that you and I both benefit and suffer as a result of our patterns of perception. Nothing to envy here.

Both you and **Greg** argued with **SteveSw**'s suggestion that the hard lives of servants and farmworkers in the 19th and 20th centuries may not have been worth the mansions and art that their labor enabled their wealthy masters to commission. Georgie, you pointed out that living and working conditions for minimum-wage workers today is comparable to a serf's experience. (But I'm not going to comment on the value of architecture and art created by the masters of serfs.) I was reminded of a movie Scott and I saw recently – *Origin*, directed by Ava DuVernay, which is based on Isabel Wilkerson's book, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. (I highly recommend this movie and the book, though I have not read the book yet. The movie is not a documentary that simply regurgitates Wilkerson's premise, but instead, the film makes Wilkerson-as-researcher into its protagonist, and features her travels and research, as well as her personal struggles and the relationships she dealt with while studying the issue of racism and caste. Sounds dry, but it is most definitely not that; I teared up several times during the movie.) Wilkerson's thesis is that racism is

just a *flavor* of the caste systems that proliferate in all cultures and times. She posits that every culture enforces a hierarchy that oppresses the people who occupy the lowest rungs of a hierarchy. She compares and links slavery and the Jim Crow era in the U.S. with the Nazi genocide of Jews, and also with the caste



system in India (and suggests, further, that there are many other caste systems in other cultures that she could have included). She argues strenuously against the idea that racism is a unique thing, not comparable to other forms of oppression. In fact, she found some horrific historical connections between Jim Crow laws and Nazi's anti-Jew laws. Apparently, Nazis literally copied Jim Crow law as a way to formalize and enforce their campaign against Jews. (This was covered by the news earlier this year, but I didn't realize that it was Wilkerson who brought it to light.) The reason your comments reminded me of *Origin* is this: Just because we do not use the words "slave," or "serf," or "master," doesn't mean that the mechanisms of oppression have significantly changed into something else.

Thanks for the recommendation for Laniey Molnar. I just checked out her Facebook page and have begun following her. I can see why you like her work!



Laniey Molnar art

Steve Swartz

[SC] I enjoyed your extended thoughts and analysis of *Babel*, a book I liked and respected but did not entirely agree with. Disagreement with an author's opinions does not necessarily represent the failure of a book for me. I'm far more likely to trash something that's badly or lazily written than just expressing a different opinion. In this case, I felt the heart of the book was the debate between Robin and Griffin as to whether or not violence was the best, if not the only, effective response to British dominance, racism and imperialism. Kuang says yes, I say not necessarily. I say long term protest, agitation and political pressure can work (as it did for women's suffrage, abolition, civil rights, and temperance) but in the course of the story Kuang changes the debate by introducing a time limit, Britain's imminent attack on China, to make violence the only practical option under the circumstances. I was not fond of that development, but the story was exciting and I thought the resolution was satisfying.

Re: your comments to me, our Christmas wreath is still there. As are a few blue lights on our front porch. We usually leave them up until the weather “gets better” but as we are headed for highs in the 40’s in 50’s soon, we can probably take them down anytime. In the photo, Jeanne was supposed to be checking to see if the wreath was straight, but when I stepped down a couple rungs and looked back at her she was taking my picture instead. It’s hard to get good help these days.

In my view, “messing” with trick or treaters should carry some risk. Isn’t this how people get their houses egged, pumpkins vandalized, or toilet paper strung over their trees? You should be more careful.

Yes, I once thought that a tired old institution like marriage would end up in the historical trash bin. I underestimated the drag that giant corporations, law and government bureaucracies would be on ditching it. It’s just so much easier to go along than fight it, especially as we get older. I don’t think the relationship agreements consenting adults make with each other are anyone’s business except the people involved, unless they want to make it public. I suspect that the ceremony that Daily Alice and Smokey performed might be described as a “marriage” by us muggles, but might represent something different and deeper in the Fairie world.

Great photos, once again. Best wishes and a swift recovery to Allison, as always.

[JG] I thought your summary of *Babel*’s plot and comments on it were excellent. I also read some of the criticism of the book (specifically, Paul Kincaid’s review) and laughed out loud at the irritation he expressed about what Kuang got wrong about Oxford, remembering how I felt about what Shepherd got wrong about the UW-Madison campus in *The Cartographers*. The fact that *Babel* was declared ineligible for the 2023 Hugos (among other works, also declared ineligible), has turned into a major controversy that has overflowed from fannish publications to mainstream media. There are reams of material written about it – including statistical analyses that suggest the results were messed with, stonewalling by those who were involved in the nomination and voting process, suspected political pressure from the Chinese government, and an exposé of how several giant Chinese media corporations seem to have gotten involved to engineer winners that would provide bigger profits. Just today, one of the non-Chinese administrators turned over her emails that

gave us a glimpse into how other non-Chinese Hugo Committee members acted – doing “research” in politically sensitive content in Hugo nominated works and handing over that research to higher-ups. It is a really nasty business involving several American and Canadian administrators bending over backwards to accommodate perceived Chinese preferences. I think that it is likely that the Hugo administration will soon no longer be a responsibility of worldcon committees.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] Congratulations on being included in the *Worlds Beyond Time* collection, very cool.

[JG] As you say, we don’t get rich on proceeds from secondary publication of our work. But it’s incredibly flattering nonetheless. I’ve been asked for permission to republish my work a couple times too.

Andrea Connell

[SC] Hey, welcome back! I thought you sounded a bit shy in your first paragraph when you said you felt weird about commenting to us because you didn’t know a lot of us. But in your second paragraph you made your case for how we were all more “Cozy-Charged” than “Turbo-Charged”. Wham! Pow! We had that coming. In my defense, in December I wrote about a scary encounter with a deer, last month I had a close call with a pack of dogs, I can’t put myself out there like that every month. The rest of you guys will have to help amp things up. Someone needs to slug a loudmouth in a bar, or kick over a line of motorcycles in the street. We need to recover our *Turbo-Charged* mojo.

Loved your book reviews. At first, I thought “Zs” were bad and the fewer the better, but by the end I realized “Zs” were a plus. I think we are set to read the Becky Chambers for the book group, so I guess some of the rest of us will find out where we stand on “cozy” SF. Personally, I think “cozy” fiction sounds awful, but I have liked lots of books that other people thought moved slowly. I think it’s the other elements like the necessary animal(s) (including cats) and “warm food and friendship” vibe that put me off. I’m always up for more explosions, battles and stabbings.

[JG] Oh my god, you are right. *Turbo* zines are cozy books! Looks like SF Without Borders is going to read the same Becky Chambers book to which you gave two Zs (possibly three). I have only read one other Becky Chambers book – *To Be Taught if Fortunate* – and

while it had a mildly interesting idea, I don't know that I would have looked for another book by the author. I might have given it one or two Zs (or three if Zs equals sleepiness) if I had known about your rating system. However, I share Scott's confusion about the system. It would seem that more sleeping, more Zs, would be a bad thing, not a good thing. We will see.... Great, funny reviews. (I loved this line: "Recommended for people locked in a small room.") Thanks!

Pat Hario

[SC] I didn't make any New Year resolutions this year. Your resolution sounded sensible, very like something I would quietly decide for myself at the end of the year. But not this year. On New Year's Eve Jeanne and I stayed up to midnight and we each had a (very bubbly, very sweet) glass of Asti Moscato. We were watching something on TV. Pretty subdued New Years Eve for us. It's possible we were not in any hurry to start 2024, so maybe not in the mood for a big celebration. At any rate, I decided that I wasn't going to make it harder on myself than what we were already in for (two wars, Trump/'24 election, WI state legislature, next wave of extreme weather somewhere via climate change, etc.)

Awesome comment issue!

Re: your comment to **Andy** for #449, you inquired about a *TurboCon* program with former OEs telling stories about our tenures. Mine was 30 years ago. I barely remember it.

I'm glad you shared with us your struggle with OCD. Your comment to **Jae** for #449 was powerful.

[JG] I need more information about the issue of the "question mark with the letters on phones the way God intended". I don't understand.

The remodeled YMCA is very nice. It opened a week late, but I was enjoying swimming at the Sun Prairie YMCA during the interim so that wasn't a problem. The new floors and walls in the locker rooms are a definite improvement. The lights in the pool area are brighter. But the most appreciated improvements are the renovated and re-plumbed showers. Much better water pressure. Nevertheless, during the weeks when the east-side YMCA was closed, I discovered that I really like the locker rooms at the Sun Prairie YMCA. So, once a week, when there is not enough time in the morning schedule for lap swimming at the East-side YMCA on Cottage Grove Road, I have been driving out to the Sun Prairie YMCA. It's nice to have options.

Re "nudifying" software – I read that nudified images of Taylor Swift have been posted all over the web, but that her fans have flooded those websites with zillions of other images with similar tags, so it's now almost impossible to find the inappropriate ones.

OK, I can understand not liking to read books if you don't like any of the characters. (Though, "like" to me can mean so many different things: What if a character makes admirable choices, but you wouldn't want to sit down and talk with them in a coffee shop?) I find myself interested sometimes in the lines that people draw when it comes to whether or not they are willing to read a book or an author. You know Becky Johnson, right? Her no-go line is if a bear is mistreated. She won't read any further if that happens; she didn't finish Kim Stanley Robinson's novel, *New York 2140*, because of the scene in which polar bears were bombed by terrorists. Anyone else have no-go lines when it comes to reading? I don't know if I have any hard and fast no-read lines.

Could your found multi-tool be a spoon-fork-knife/ toothpick to take with you on picnics instead of disposable plastic utensils?

The biggest barrier preventing me from zoning out and meditating during mass was actually not all the stand-up-sit-down-kneel business. It would begin when the priest said something during the homily that grabbed my attention and I'd want to argue with him. Which is, of course, Not Done. So, I'd spend the rest of the mass staging an imaginary argument in my mind. A foiled argument is an irritating thing.

Ruth & Jim Nichols

[SC] I'm writing this comment during the second week of that thaw you mentioned, following our two weeks of heavy snow and bitter cold in January. Looking forward to February, an experience like that makes me wonder what the rest of winter this year is going to be like. It's probably likely we will see another bitter blast like we had, but how long can it last? It almost feels like 30+ degree highs during the day and twenties for a low at night is the new winter normal and cold weather only happens when we get a polar vortex or an extra big wobble in the jet stream. I've been getting out for a lot of walks in the neighborhood at least.

I love your photo of the snow on your deck. I also admired how you lease cars so you can get a new one every couple of years. As fast as technology changes these days, updating often is tempting. I'm



Bridge over the Yahara River, photo by Scott Custis

still in a place where any color car works for me so long as it isn't white or beige.

[JG] These last couple weeks of melted snow and unseasonable warmth (and the corroborating information that January the warmest January in recorded history) is both comforting and discomfiting. We are glad for **Luke** that he is not breaking his back out there in pre-dawn hours, clearing snow on campus. But we feel very sympathetic towards the guys who clear our snow (TJ's Snow Removal and Landscaping, great guys) whose business is doing poorly. A couple days ago, they posted a plaintive message on Facebook: "Is it ever going to snow again?"

But boy, that January blizzard and the week of icy roads afterward was hard. It was scary driving to the Y every morning, seeing cars in the ditch and skidding through intersections even though I was driving slower than 20 mph.

I don't believe that I have ever heard someone complaining that the addition of bacon had ruined a recipe, and that next time she would cook it without bacon. It is a first in human history I think.

I also need supplementary iron and know how tired you can feel as a result of iron deficiency. I didn't get tested until the lack of iron actually started affecting my muscles and climbing steps began to pose a difficulty for me. I was in my twenties at the time. Happily, iron supplements worked for me. How often do you need to go in for infusions?

Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] RE: your comment to me, you are welcome for the book recommendation. I liked it a lot. It took me to places I would never have thought of going and showed me some things I would not have otherwise known. Having just seen the movie *Origin*, I now may have to look for the book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson.

RE: comment to **Lisa**, Matt is going to medical school? Will that mean they have to move? Maybe to Madison?

RE: your comment to **Steve Sw**, yes, you are right that the books vs. chapters as listed in my *Little, Big* schedule last month was backwards. I will fix it this month. It was Steve's fault, though. It's his schedule and I simply copied it.

[JG] I will get you Joe Siclari's address whether by text or by telephone. But I hope you will already have it by the time you read this comment and can send him the *Cube* issues

Luke McGuff

[SC] We were thinking of you a lot during our snowy week-from-hell in January. After the cold blast, the weather has been pretty mild. Maybe that one week will be all the snow for the rest of the winter this year! All Hail Julie for being such a champ as well.

The only non-book-discussion book I read last month was the 1995 novel *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson. Jeanne had it on her to-read shelf but decided to let it go. I picked it out of a stack of books headed for either Frugal Muse or Little Free Libraries. It's a murder mystery/court room drama set in 1954 on a fictional island community in Puget Sound. A dead white fisherman is pulled out of the water and murder is suspected. The main suspect is a Japanese-American man believed to have a grudge. The island has a largely white population with a significant ethnic Japanese minority. A lot of issues are involved including interracial relationships and the Japanese internment during WWII. It's well written. A movie version was made in 1999 but I have not seen it.

[JG] I didn't know that WI-FI mattresses existed and I think I was better off not knowing. But perhaps you are joshing.

Speaking of Aud Torvingen ... Did you know that Nicola Griffith created a LinkedIn page for Aud? I accepted an invitation to link with Aud many years ago. Don't know if the page still exists or if Nicola kept it up.

I thought I remembered that Joanna Russ had also written about Hild. But then I realized that I was confusing Hildegard of Bingen with (Griffith's) St. Hilda of Whitby. And then I further realized that I'd made an even bigger error of memory: when I looked, it turned out that the Russ story I was thinking about, "Souls," was set in 12th-century *Germany*, and was about Radegunde, an abbess whose abbey was invaded by Norsemen. The chief Viking, a perceptive fellow, discovered Radegunde's true alien nature. I think I combined the memory of Russ's story with Nicola's *Hild* because both authors went looking for extraordinary women in the past.

Re: "gentle exercise" – I recommend swimming. It's hard to get injured while swimming. Well, you can drown I suppose, but if you tend to sink and that's an actual risk, you probably don't think about swimming as a pleasant activity. I got injured while swimming for the first time in my life last week when I tried to



duck beneath line marker floats and was surprised to find that there wasn't just one sting of line markers, but seven. (While I'd been swimming laps, the rest of the pool had been converted for a jazzercise class and the lifeguards had shoved all the line marker floats together.) So, I emerged from beneath the floats in the middle of a whole bunch of them and ended up with several scratches on my chest. Not too bad; sort of looks like a frenzied cat swiped at my chest a few times. A couple drops of blood, maybe. But I didn't actually notice the wounds until I was showering. It's a pretty gentle form of exercise, meditative actually. It usually doesn't matter if I'm mostly blind while I'm swimming.

Andy Hooper

[SC] I enjoyed your latest horror host installment once again. It's frustrating that photos or video of this month's subject in costume no longer exist. I also hope we see more from William M. Breiding.

Re: your comment to **Marilyn**, we enjoyed the latest season of *Fargo*. We've never watched *Mad Men*, but we have seen Jon Hamm in quite a few things lately. He strikes me as a rather blandly handsome guy, but I've been impressed by how good (and surprisingly versatile) an actor he actually is.

Re: your comment to me on *The Dawn of Everything*, thanks for the additional comments on the book. When I wrote about it, I thought it was unlikely anyone else in the apa would have read it. Glad to see I was wrong about that.

[JG] The nearly slow-glass level of communication between written correspondents (or even slower: between members of an apa), lends itself to Life Happening (and ending) in between conversations. I feel for Breiding missing the chance for a longer correspondence and friendship with Justin Busch. I've had similar experiences, most recently when I sent a letter to Steve Stiles that failed to reach him before he died.

This makes the second review of a Becky Chambers' novel in this issue of *Turbo* (first being **Andrea's**). I don't remember hearing anything about this author before someone suggested that we read one of her books for the book club last year, and now I am noticing references to her books all over the place.

I loved this year's season of *Fargo*. I'd classify it as a feminist fable.

I would add Thomas Berger's 1978 novel, *Arthur Rex*, to your list of Arthurian mythos revisions. That one meant a lot to me when I read it during my college years.

Your wargame of the Battle of Degsastan is set just prior to *Memewood*, but the battle you describe seems very different from those that in Griffith's novel. I am eager to hear what you think of the two great battles described in *Memewood*.

Carrie Root

[SC] I'm glad that your knee is doing better. I wondered if the bothersome knee is the leg you use to work the car accelerator and brake. I remember how unpleasant driving was for me when my osteoarthritis knee was acting up.

Re: your comment to me, the surprising answer is yes that was my first deer collision, though I have had a few close calls. My roadkill numbers are pretty low considering how much country driving I did when I lived in Iowa (and driving at all hours.) I have hit one or two small animals, a squirrel or opossum, I think. My most spectacular hit was not long after I got my license. I was accelerating out of Anamosa up a long straight hill and I spooked a pheasant who chose to fly straight in front of my car. I was startled and started to brake but the bird hit the top of my windshield. I remember looking in the rear-view mirror to see it pinwheeling behind me in a cloud of feathers. Nothing I could do.

As I said to **Greg** above, please join us for *Little, Big*.

[JG] The only animal I hit while driving was actually during a drive to Seattle in 1979, when Dan Steffan, Lesleigh Luttrell, and I delivered a drive-away vehicle to a buyer in Seattle. It was dark and raining hard, and the expressway was busy. There were cars on both sides of us and behind us. Suddenly something white and large loomed ... or perhaps, "flashed" is the better verb. I only saw it for a second and never found out what kind of animal it was. It may have only appeared to be white because it was caught in the headlights. I thought it might have been a very large dog, but it could have been a deer. And then the van thumped over its body, and my hands were locked onto the steering wheel, keeping us in our lane. I hadn't attempted to swerve to miss the animal. We would have crashed into another car if I did. But I screamed and my heart seemed to jump into my throat. Dan Steffan was sitting in the passenger seat and saw it all and spoke very calmly, urging me to breath, praising me for having done the right thing, but it took a while before I breathed easily

again. I still wonder what I killed back there. I don't remember if there was any damage to the car, but considering how poor we all were back then, I suspect I would remember if we'd been charged any kind of penalty.

We will start watching the current season of *True Detective* soon, since we heard that the final episode drops this week. Can't wait. Yes, Jody Foster!

You should thank me for not having printed the rest of that chapter about my health issues. Too many pages.

At least in this one banking thing, I may be on the cutting edge: I use our credit union's app to photograph checks and deposit them on-line. I actually like doing it this way much better than tossing checks into a night deposit bin.

Walter Freitag

[SC] I don't think I feel quite as far out of step with the world around me that you seem to, but I have struggled a bit with the pace of change. Cell phones still seem like a sort of miracle device to me that I know I have not fully accepted. Several times in recent years I have been stopped on the street and asked for directions that I carefully explained only to later remember that the cell phone in my pocket is connected to the Internet and has a nice map and I could have much more easily shown them instead. Or when I am shopping and I have a question, how long it sometimes takes for me to remember to just look it up on my phone. Or to just take a picture of something I want to remember instead of looking for something to write on. It's incredibly powerful. Some of it is just my reluctance to change, but I know the world is not going to wait for me, or change back.

[JG] We may have caused a bit of cognitive dissonance for our neighborhood with the painting we commissioned for our garage. The lady who lives across the street asked Scott if it had been done with our permission. Apparently, the style suggested graffiti/vandalism more than art/decoration.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Thank you for the detailed update on Diane's surgery and recovery. How tiring and frustrating it has to be for Diane and you that a procedure that goes fairly smoothly and routinely for most patients turns complicated for you guys. I'm sure you are right that things will improve with time. We are

looking forward to dropping by for a visit and anything else we can do.

[JG] Sigh. Take care, you guys.

We've seen all the Oscar-nominated best movies, and will have seen all the movies with best actor nominations, except for *The Color Purple*. Still in pursuit of that one.

We're ready for Oscar night!

Here's a list of movies and shows we've seen this past month:

American Fiction (theater) Loved this one. Parody hailed as literature is an idea that fits in perfectly with today's truthiness culture. Recommended.

Anatomy of a Fall (Apple) I like this one a lot. It came down to whether the community and the courts were willing to believe the woman's description of her marriage or the presumed point of view of her husband. Tricky, complicated, really fascinating. Recommended.

Dune, part I (Netflix) Getting ready to see part 2, which hits the theaters in March, we refreshed out memories. Fun. Gorgeous.

Leave the World Behind (Netflix) We'd heard good things about this end-of-the-world movie, and were impressed by the complicated relationship between the white couple (wife and husband) and the black couple (father and daughter), but we were really disappointed by the half-baked science fiction aspect.

Mistress America (Max) It was fun to see Greta Gerwig in this early, wacky film (2015). We had fun getting to know the two characters, but finally it was a bit forgettable. I had to google the title to remind myself what it was about.

Origin (theater) Brilliant. Incredible. Recommended.



Oscar nominees for best picture

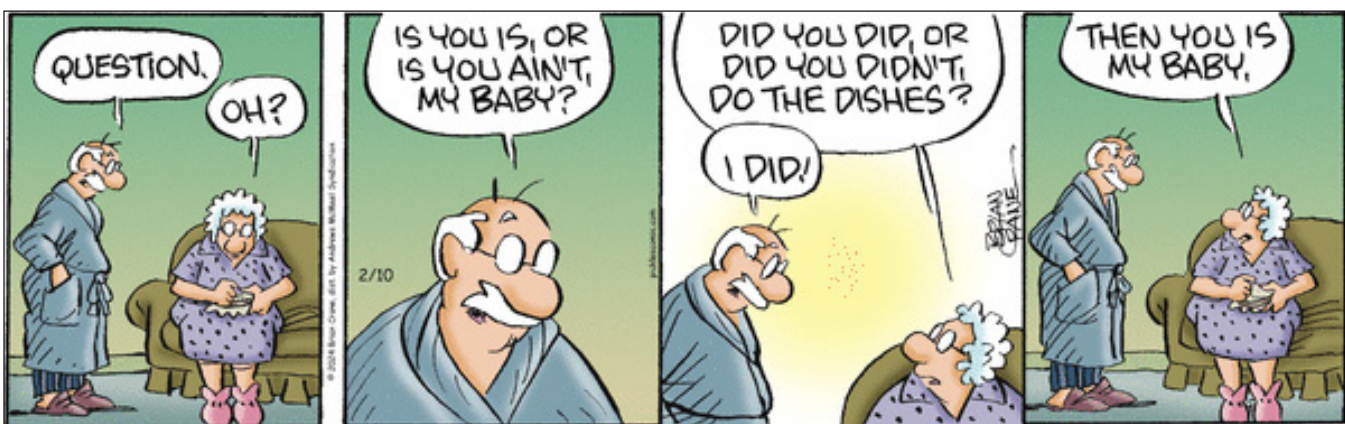
Past Lives (Showtime) We see three characters chatting together at the beginning of the film, two men and a woman, though we can't hear them speaking. We hear, instead, someone observing them from the other side of the room, speculating on their relationship to one another. The rest of the movie follows

their entangled lives and at the end of the movie we get to hear their actual conversation. It was a lovely film with excellent acting, beautiful camera work, and a very thoughtful idea. Recommended.

Peggy Sue Got Married (Prime) The song got ear-wormed into my head one day, and then we happened to talk about Nicolas Cage movies we liked (hint: not most of them). And it's sort of a time travel story. That's why we re-watched this 1986 movie. It was fun. I love Kathleen Turner and had forgotten that Helen Hunt was in it too.

Rustin (Netflix) We probably wouldn't have streamed this except that Colman Domingo is up for an Oscar Award for best actor for his portrayal of the civil rights activist, Bayard Rustin, who organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. What an amazing history lesson. I didn't realize how much I didn't know about that event. And like the next movie on this list, *The Greatest Night in Pop*, it tells the backstory of how a very complicated event was planned and executed. Recommended.

The Greatest Night in Pop (Netflix) This documentary gives us the backstory of how a very complicated event – the recording of the tune, *We Are the World* – which included the participation of more than 45 of the most famous pop singers of the 1980s was done in the space of a very long, single night, immediately following the 12th Annual American Music Awards which was MC'd



by Lionel Richie and which presented Richie with several awards. Richie left the stage and went directly to the studio where he stage-managed the recording of *We Are the World*. During both *Rustin* and *Greatest Night* I was occasionally reminded of the invisible but essential human machinery that makes every big event possible, including conventions. Recommended.

The Zone of Interest (theater) *None* of the characters in this film is likable (OK, maybe the dog is likable), especially not the wife of commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss, who views their home and grounds as a “perq,” not in spite of, but because it directly abuts the walls of the death camp. She receives first pick of clothing and valuables stolen from new inmates; and it turns out that human ash makes excellent compost for her beloved garden. She and the rest of her family seem able to comfortably ignore the screams and cries that float over the wall incessantly. I do recommend it, but it’s a hard movie to watch. Beware.

This Is Us (first season) (Netflix) This series received a ton of awards in its time (2016-2022), but we’d never seen it. Each season contains 18 (!) episodes, so we’ve decided to watch them one season at a time and watch other shows in between. I’m definitely hooked on the great (very likable) characters. Recommended.

Jeanne Bowman

[SC] Interesting photos! I don’t think you explained what is going on with those leaves. Spores? I hope you are not feeling pressure to do more mailing comments, your art and writing are perfectly delightful. The clueless tech bro was annoying in your story about the adventures of Christmas the cat, but y’all should feel good about being the heroes of this tale.

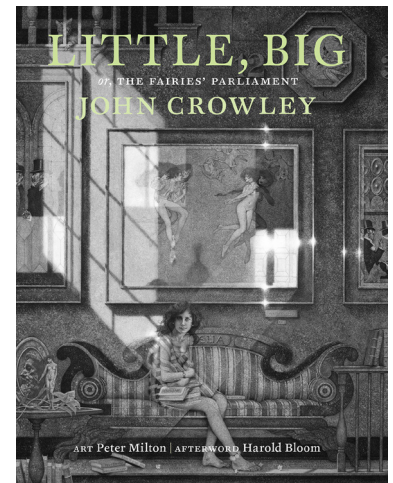
[JG] Or maybe eggs on the leaf??

Little, Big reading schedule (revised)

Book One: <i>Edgewood</i>	Book Three: <i>Old Law Firm</i>	September: Chaps 1, 2
January: Chaps 1, 2, 3	May: Chaps 1, 2	October: Chaps 3, 4
February: Chaps 4, 5	Book Four: <i>The Wild Wood</i>	Book Six: <i>The Fairies’ Parliament</i>
Book Two: <i>Brother North: Wind’s Secret</i>	July: Chaps 1, 2	November: Chaps 1, 2, 3
March: Chaps 1, 2	August: Chaps 3, 4	December: Chaps 4, 5
April: Chaps 3, 4	Book Five: <i>The Art of Memory</i>	

Little, Big comments: Book One, Chapters 4,5

[SC] **Steve Sw**, re: your comments on Chapters 1-3, what a great introduction you provided to the book. It was exactly the sort of Tour Guidance I was hoping you’d provide! I loved observations such as “I embrace the fact that Tales and Life are not to be understood the same way that addition can be understood” and “you can understand like Daily Alice, or you can understand like Smoky. Both are OK.” I find this sort of guidance helpful and reassuring as I make my way through this dense story. More please!



Last time I wrote that Crowley’s prose style seemed rather old-fashioned. Thinking more about this and reading further I agree with you that it’s brilliantly written (so far). With many of the books we read for the book discussion group, it often feels to me like the writer got up in the morning from a good sleep, drained a large cup of coffee, sat down and blew out a couple thousand words in storm of inspiration, then edited it later, somewhat. In contrast, Crowley feels like he carefully carved his story out of a block of wood. He builds his intricate sentences, sketches out the details of his characters, arranges his plot like pieces on a chessboard, inserts his literary references and manages to finish perhaps a couple pages per day. It feels so crafted.

Jae, wow, you got your magnifying glass out for this, I’m impressed. I appreciated how you were catching references to other works such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Winnie the Pooh* like butterflies in a net. I’m not well versed in these classics or the works of J.M. Barrie, L. Frank Baum, Jonathan Swift, etc. so your knowledge is a great help. I had two responses to points you made, one is that the “I” states should include Idaho, too. The other was your thought about whether Smoky was black. Having never read this book before, I don’t know if race may become an issue later on, but I assumed that the name “Smoky” referred to his ghostly lack

of definition, his near invisibility. But your point is quite interesting.

A lot happens in Chapter 4, the wedding of Daily Alice and Smoky (why the repeated reference to Harry Truman's suit?), the visit with old Auberon (the photograph was a test?), the introduction of many characters along the way to the wedding most of whom I presume are Fairie creatures, Doctor Word's funny, garbled service (as it sounded to Smoky), the marriage consummation under Sophie's envious gaze, and finally an introduction to Grandfather Trout who appears to be the lost August transformed. The Tale moves on along with a great many other curious details. As you can see, I have not arrived at a lot of conclusions from all this but I'm ready to continue on.

Chapter 5 begins with Daily Alice and Smoky leaving on a long hike (their honeymoon?), Auberon dies, Smoky gets separated from Daily Alice and has a sinister meeting with the Woods family who give him gifts that turn to junk, Smoky hears the story of how the Drinkwaters' little school was declared religious so they were excused from state standards, and Smoky is invited to stay at Edgewood and teach in the little school. And lots more. I find myself looking at one of the blank walls in my office and imagining that I should create a large cork-board filled with scribbled notes, drawings, and photos with lines of colored yarn stretched across it connecting things, like those evidence boards in police procedurals. More and more I'm feeling that I need to read through the whole book before more of the hints and details can come together for me. It's starting to feel like I will hugely appreciate my second read-thru of this book.



Mattress painted by Triangulador

What's New

Triangulador Art on Our Garage

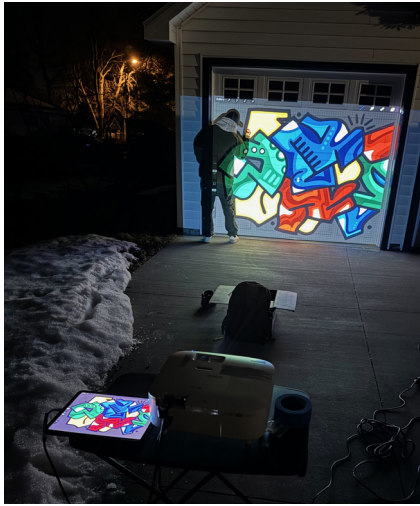
[JG] I bet you thought that Scott and I were done improving our garage, right? Turns out that we decided to do one more thing. For several years I have admired (loved, loved, loved) the work of Triangulador (aka, Liubov Szwako), who is an amazing Madison artist. I first noticed his work while driving past a discarded mattress leaning against a tree on Johnson Street -- one of Madison's main thoroughfares. To most of us that mattress looked like what it was -- trash waiting to be picked up on garbage day. But Liubov Szwako saw it as a canvas, all set up in a very public gallery, which he could paint legally, while improving his spray-painting technique, and have fun. Over the last couple years, his technique has improved dramatically. He says he's painted more than 200 mattresses and has also branched into doing commissioned murals and paintings. He is responsible for some of the most striking murals in Madison. (To see them, check out his Facebook page, web page, or the Channel 3 news story, whose URL is typed at the bottom of this story.)

Liubov posted an article on his (Triangulador's) Facebook page saying that he was open to accepting commissions from anyone that had a wall they wanted painted. Since I'd been admiring his work for several years, I impulsively sent him a photo of our garage and asked him about his rates. It was only then that I asked Scott what he thought of the idea of having a mural painted on our garage doors. I felt a little guilty for not asking Scott first. Scott came around slowly, and then very quickly after seeing the proposed artwork and meeting Liubov. I had pointed at one of my favorites of Liubov's pieces and asked if he could adjust it so that part of it "squirted" into the right-hand door.

After Scott and I approved the artwork, Liubov spent several nighttime hours tracing his artwork with a sharpie onto our garage doors from the iPad on which he created it, via a projector. He finds it easiest to do this when it is dark. It rained the next day, so he arrived two days later to do the actual painting. It was cold, around freezing I think, but Liubov said he didn't mind it at all, which I found remarkable since he grew up in Mexico City, a place that doesn't see freezing temps very often. I bundled up in my winter parka, woolen hat, and thick gloves and sat on a chair watching him work, talking with him about his history, philosophy, and technique. It was a *great* day. I was amazed how skillfully he used cans of spray paint to do the work, how smooth and perfectly controlled each

stroke was. He painted in very short bursts. If you heard him painting you might think he was painting dotted lines. This method prevents too much paint from being applied at one time and causing drips.

Here's a fascinating story he told me about the many mattresses he has painted over the years. (He painted mattresses, by the way – not train cars – because he didn't want to get arrested, as he is an immigrant pursuing US citizenship. It's legal to paint junk that has been discarded by the owners, sitting on the verge which is city-owned. And to make sure he was in the clear, he consulted with and made friends with Madison cops, who have become very protective of him, defending him the few times people complain.) He always understood, as he painted the mattresses that his artwork would be visible for only a couple days, at best, and that they would be picked up on trash day and recycled. But he never thought about what happened to them or whether workers at the recycling center might have been surprised to receive them. ("Hey Joe! Here's another one of those weird mattresses!") But one day, out of the blue, he received a text message from a mattress recycling center in northern Michigan, where he had developed



Liubov traces outlines onto garage door



–unknown to him – an enthusiastic group of fans. The workers couldn't bring themselves to recycle the mattresses that Liubov had painted, but instead stood them up against walls inside the center, making for an truly unique art gallery. The recycling guys sent a video to him, panning around the space, showing his work preserved and displayed. Liubov is planning to visit the center when he can and see for himself. Scott and I would like to visit the place too, someday.

I think the painting he did on our garage doors is stunning and gorgeous. We're hoping our neighbors enjoy it too.

Here's a short time-lapse video showing Liubov painting our garage:

<http://tinyurl.com/TrianguladorArt>

Channel 3 video featuring Liubov Szwako:

<https://fb.watch/q8D49TgIQS/?mibextid=UVffzb>

Triangulador facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/triangulador>

Triangulador web page:

<https://www.triangulador.com>



Garage doors painted by Triangulador