



# Madison foursquare

89

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

Scott@unionstreetdesign.com  
Jeanne@unionstreetdesign.com

This is **Madison Foursquare #89**. *Madison Foursquare* was created using a Mac Studio with

InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2024, and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer.

All contents ©2024 by Scott Custis [SC] & Jeanne Gomoll [JG] March 2024 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* #453.

## Cover, Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] Beautiful and funny winter witch, **Georgie**. I loved the jumper cables around her waist!

[JG] I love it! A portrait of a Wisconsin winter witch riding her trusty snow shovel, wearing a jumper-cable belt, carrying salt just in case, and armed with an ice scraper! I liked the patterns on her mittens, scarf, and typically witchy, conical, pointy-tipped woolen hat. Your drawing of her coat and boots had more 3-D effects than I've noticed in your work before. Are you experimenting with a new technique?

## Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Thank you for your lovely report on your Christmas trip to Canada. Moving and bittersweet. Too bad about the Covid, it seems almost everyone we know who goes traveling ends up getting Covid. It makes me very cautious about travel.

Thanks also for keeping us updated on the struggles of poor Nick the Greyhound. Whenever I start to feel sad about our Lost Winter this year, I think at least it's a little easier for Nick. Also, sad news about your plans for your land, and your yurt. Rest assured, if you choose to retire to Madison, we will welcome you with open arms.

I liked your defense of the oral tradition in your comment to **Georgie**. Your photos were great, once again.

[JG] I'm sorry to hear that you're going to sell your land and give up plans to build an eco-house. It must make you sad to give up on a dream that you've been working toward for so long. That must have been a hard conversation to have with your brother. However, I also admire you for being realistic and acting proactively, and not allowing that dream to prevent you from moving forward with other fulfilling activities. I expect that you will find new nourishing life goals and pursuits. And I like the idea of you eventually retiring to the Madison area!

I'm very sorry to hear that Nick the Greyhound's health continues to falter. This must also be a very hard thing for you to bear. I'm glad you had a good visit with your family and were able to scatter your dad's ashes. Sounds like it was a good trip, and much needed.

## Greg Rihn/Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] Thanks for another list of great shows. I particularly enjoyed Georgie's *Penelopiad* presentation for the Bardic Dinner. That sounds fun. Also, your presentation, Greg, especially since Jeanne and I both liked Miller's *Circe*. "The Fourth Wall" show sounded wild, too.

To me the point of Turbo-Con is to give those of us currently contributing to the apa the chance to meet and socialize face-to-face, and I think the events we organize should be selected based on how they contribute to socializing in larger or smaller groups. As you pointed out, Wil-Cons were too un-programmed, but the idea of doing stuff together (including working on a joint project like a fanzine) should be the focus.

I liked your comments to **Steve** re: *Babel* and I loved your Halloween in Oz photos.

[JG] Georgie: Thanks for the summary of Atwood's novella, *The Penelopiad*. I wish I'd heard yours and Greg's readings! I was sure that I must have read Atwood's story before because I was familiar with the story from Penelope's point of view, especially Odysseus' astonishing cruelty when he condemned Penelope's maids. But after searching my bookshelf and not finding it there, I began to doubt whether I had actually read it. I think I may be thinking of a 2-person play at American Players Theater done in the Touchstone theater that featured James DeVita as Odysseus and told Penelope's story in play-form, couched as a lecture given by a literature professor. I will look up Atwood's novella soon.

Greg: Nope, the Moguhl Lamb recipe did not appear in the first cookbook (*The Bakery Men Don't See*, which was all desserts). Bill's recipe appeared in the second cookbook, *Her Smoke Rose Up from Supper*. Moguhl Lamb was the main course of the first of Dr. Bill's post-WisCon feasts. The China Mountain Chow feast took place the next year, coincidentally in the same month and year that the second cookbook was published, March 1993. (Your question sent me down a rabbit hole, trying to figure out the sequence of events.)

As for Bill's technique of converting a wok into a smoker, Bill lined the inside of my wok and the inside of the wok's cover with aluminum foil. He tossed in several handfuls of jasmine tea leaves, brown sugar, orange & tangerine peel, cinnamon sticks, and Chinese cassia bark into the bottom of the wok, and then, with several chopsticks, he constructed a platform over the herbs, and laid two marinated ducks (using

peppercorns, orange & tangerine peel, and fresh ginger) on top of it. Then he placed the wok cover on the wok, leaving a very small amount of space for smoke to escape, and let the ducks smoke for most of an afternoon. After it was all over, my wok was in perfect shape; the aluminum foil had protected it.

I was invited to Wil-Con one year but something came up and I wasn't able to attend. Too bad, it always sounded like a lot of fun.

Wow! Georgie made a great Wicked Witch of the West!

The collection of artists' comments about their work was fascinating. I would have liked to sit down with quite a few of them and explore the ideas with them. ...I'd like to talk with the person who proactively collects titles to assign to future paintings, or the person who considers the ideal viewer as someone like themselves. And several others. But I wish the comments had been identified by artist.

## Steve Swartz

[SC] Thanks for the review of *Mr. Breakfast* (it's been on my to-read shelf for a couple months.) It was kind of a risky purchase based on an interesting review I read. Now I'm looking forward to it a little more. I also appreciated your additional comments on *Biography of X*, a book that I'd file under "unpleasant reading experience that I respect in theory far more than I liked." I'm deleting it from my electronic library.

I support your interest in pursuing the "Naturalist" certification. I have often been tempted to take some classes, online at least, but pandemic and dithering over other personal projects have held me back. Jeanne and I have even discussed taking a class together in something we are both interested in. That could happen. Anyway, I think it's a useful and positive thing to do in retirement. Best wishes. I also like your decision to include recipes in your zine. I don't cook, but I like looking though recipes. I also like reading/watching mountain-climbing stories even though I have absolutely no interest in ever doing it.

Re: your comment to **Greg** on whether Jan. 6 was an insurrection, the courts have had ample opportunity to strike down the "insurrectionist" language in court cases and they have either deliberately avoided doing it (ex. U.S. Supreme Court) or agreed with it (ex. Colorado Supreme Court). That works for me.

Re: your comment to **Pat** on your new Oregon drivers license, I have snacked on foods while

driving, easier to do if Jeanne is with me and pouring snacks into my hand, but I realize I have never driven down the road while trying to eat a sandwich, or a slice of pizza. Seriously eating while driving eliminates the pleasure in doing either of those things (I generally like driving and I LOVE eating). I always pull over to eat anything substantial. So, I think I'd be okay with Oregon's law. Snacking would be just enough law-breaking to be fun, while the law would work in the public interest if it discouraged people from driving down the road while trying to eat a container of hot pasta with a fork (I worked for the Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles for over 20 years, I know people would do just about anything in their car).

Great zine, comments and photos once again, Steve.

[JG] *Mr. Breakfast* sounds interesting. Thanks for the recommendation.

I love the idea of 5-Minute bread ... fresh, warm bread for any meal. For us, this would work best during winter months, when we could keep the dough on the porch. I will transcribe your recipe into my recipe app and try it out late next fall.

I also lost interest in the Otherwise Award, formerly known as the Tiptree Award, when the name was changed. It was surprising to me how easily I turned away from it. It now appears that the Award is having trouble. (See the statement in the sidebar, published by the Otherwise Motherboard on March 7, 2024.) Your interpretation of what happened when Pat Murphy and I gave up the fight to keep the Tiptree name feels mostly right. But I think for both Pat and I, our decision not to fight to keep the name was bolstered by our estimation of how much energy we had to give the award. Both of us had been talking about retiring from the Tiptree Award for more than a year, well before the controversy shook the motherboard. I had already been involved for more than 25 years. Pat, of course, was one of the Award's founders, so she'd been on the motherboard for 28 years. When I realized that the three other motherboard members, who were all younger than me and involved for only a year or two, all favored the name change ... well, I decided it was futile to engage in a furious battle over the name of the award, only to announce my retirement a little later. Especially if the furious battle resulted in the resignation of the younger motherboard members, which seemed to be a likely consequence.

We tried mayo on grilled cheese sandwiches, and have not been converted. I think I will stick with butter.

Re Dr. Bill's Chinese feast ... I didn't leave the kitchen when you spilled the oil; I wasn't there at all. I was sitting in the dining room with my back to the door into the kitchen. I never actually saw the extent of the accident and was happier for it.

Neither of Dr. Bill's other two feasts happened at our house. I think the Mideastern feast took place at **Kim** and **Kathi's** house and was the first of three feasts. Scott and I hosted the second year, the Chinese feast. I don't remember where the feast involving a smoked pig happened, but it did not happen at Scott's and my house. I don't remember if there was a fourth feast. But I think not. We were all sad about that.

## Otherwise Statement

As has been the case for many volunteer-run organizations, the Otherwise Award has struggled since the start of the pandemic in 2020. Our (volunteer) board and other volunteers have had to juggle many more issues than previously around health, paid work, and caretaking concerns than previously, which has resulted in our falling behind on the administration and maintenance of the Award. We're sorry that we didn't communicate about this earlier—that made it hard for readers, authors, and publishers to know what to expect.

Our Motherboard met recently to discuss how to move forward. We remain dedicated to our mission: *to celebrate science fiction, fantasy, and other forms of speculative narrative that expand and explore our understanding of gender*. But we're discussing how, as an organization, to continue to pursue that mission in a sustainable way, given our limited resources.

Here are the decisions we've made so far.

Most of our programs are paused. This is us acknowledging what's already been happening. We were later than usual at deliberating and announcing the Awards for work published in 2020 and in 2021, and did not run a Fellowships process in 2021 or 2023. We have not yet convened a jury to consider works published in 2022, 2023, or 2024.

We intend to run the Fellowships this year. We will open applications in several months—August at the earliest, October at the latest.

We may honor 2022 and 2023 work in a different way. We're exploring various approaches to celebrating work from those years. That celebration may end up taking a very different form than usual.

We're considering alternative approaches to the Award in the future. It could be that we'll convene a jury soon to read 2024 work and deliberate towards an Award, but if we do, we may change our practices to reduce the workload on individual jury members and to make our procurement system for recommended works less laborious. Also, we currently rely on volunteer work for almost all of the organization's labor (exceptions being technological work on our website, and art commissioned to give to Award winners); we may try to find ways to focus more on paid labor.

I think I read the same essay by Le Guin that you referenced (about how Le Guin “researched” fantasy worlds in her mind). I also found it mind-altering; it changed the way I thought about fiction.

There is a huge amount of material available on-line about the Hugo controversy and how it affected authors and books like *Babel*. In fact, it looks like *all* the award categories might have been affected by chicanery; sadly, many winners now question the value of their awards. The story of how this information came to light is complicated to say the least (especially the statistical analyses done by several people). I think the best summary of the situation so far can be found in the March 2024 issue of *Locus*: “Hugo Awards Tampering Revealed.” Or, if you are feeling masochistic, you can plow through the many articles published in Mike Glycer’s online newszine, *File 770*, which were posted as information (and emails, the smoking guns of our age) surfaced. But yeah, *Babel*, is just the tip of the iceberg of a huge mess. (I see that **JimH** wrote up an excellent summary too.) I suspect that more awfulness will be revealed in the future.

I really disagree with your comments about January 6th not being an insurrection. I think we came incredibly close to seeing a disruption in Congress that could have forced the election to be un-done. If a congressperson or senator had be killed or seriously injured, or if Pence had been whisked out of Washington DC which seems to have been the plan, I think the election certification could have easily been delayed or even stopped, and that the chaos of the day would have (once again), led to the Supreme Court or Congress making a decision instead of the electors. Trump’s minions came much too close to seeing their plans succeed.

Re your comment to **Pat**, I wish I had read your short, clear description of Medicare’s alphabetized levels back when I was about to retire. Instead, at the time, I decided that I needed to do extensive research and requested information from a bunch of health insurance companies to help me figure out what I needed to do. Not long afterwards, I discovered that my current enrollment in a health co-op – a high-end, a comprehensive health care coverage provided to Wisconsin state workers, which has covered me since 1979 (Scott and I know that we are incredibly lucky to have such good coverage) – would in fact simply continue to do so if I did nothing at all after I retired. This plan takes care of Medicare parts A, B, C, and D. The only thing I had to get extra coverage for is dental. Nevertheless, because I requested info from all those

other insurance companies, my mailbox, voice mail, texts, and email inbox were inundated *for years* with offers from those companies.

Re your comment to **Jae**, about switching to a different, living timeline ... this is sort of the idea of a book that Scott and I are listening to, *Outland* (book 1 of the *Quantum Earth* series) by Dennis E. Taylor. It is read on audible by Ray Porter, the same entertaining actor who read Andy Weir’s *Project Hail Mary*. *Outland* follows two stories: (1) a group of young scientists experimenting in quantum uncertainty who build a gate to an alternate earth whose human population was wiped out several hundred thousand years ago by the apocalyptic, super-eruption of Yellowstone volcano. Except for the alternate geological history, missing human population, and surviving megafauna, this alternate Earth (*Outland*) is the same as our Earth; and 2) the eruption in our current-day earth of that same Yellowstone super-eruption, which of course, allows our clever young scientists to survive by evacuating to *Outland*, the alternate Earth. It’s disaster-porn for sure, but we’re enjoying it.

Re your comment to **Carrie** about spinach lasagna, I recommend the recipe published by the *NYTimes* for Spinach-Artichoke Lasagna. I made it as part of our Thanksgiving dinner last year. It is delicious and definitely easier to make than the Café Lago Lasagna you described.

By the way, I made a batch of the Mexican chocolate cookies you recommended. Yum!

### Carrie Root

[SC] Re: your comment to **Pat** on likable characters, I was a big fan of *The Sopranos* series on TV but I would not describe any of the characters as “likable.” Tony Soprano could be charming and funny, but he also took time out of a trip with his daughter visiting colleges to strangle a rival with telephone wire. He lost a lot of hugability points there.

Re: your comment to **Jae**, I also avoid the Internet insofar as social media. I’m really only on FB because of family and I seldom share, post or comment. The only other social media I belong to is LinkedIn which I ignore. Joining was a mistake and I should drop it. We also have the Nextdoor app which is often deeply annoying but occasionally funny and useful. I never comment or post there either. I do respond to email, which I like partly because few people bother with it anymore.

[JG] Your list of shows that you and Andy have seen recently echoes our own TV-watching/streaming habits. It's really remarkable how those habits have changed over the years from the days of my baby-boomer childhood when there were just three channels, all of which stopped broadcasting around midnight. Now, rather than watching weekly installments of our favorite broadcast or cablecast TV shows, we have become accustomed to watching a few series in their entirety, with a few movies sprinkled in between, before searching for the next show to watch. We were vastly frustrated last week when we invited **Pat** to come to our house to watch the Academy Award show and were unable to watch the show live. None of the (many!) streaming apps we subscribe to carried the show live. I finally signed up for a 1-month free subscription to Hulu, but was frustrated there too, because you need Hulu + Live TV to watch it on Sunday night, Oscar night. We watched it the next night, when it came available, but we were really frustrated not to have been able to see it with Pat, especially since we were soooo prepared! This year, we actually saw *every one* of the movies that had been nominated as best pictures, plus all the movies that had nominations in the best actor, and best supporting actor categories. Ah well. With our brand new, temporary Hulu subscription, we watched the first two episodes of *Shogun*, which was a different kind of fun.

By the way, we loved this year's seasons of *Fargo* and *True Detective*. Both were very much feminist tales, I thought.

### Andy Hooper

[SC] I'm looking forward to your comments on Corflu in Las Vegas. I hope everyone got home safely and with no Covid.

I enjoyed your piece on Joe Fortier and "The California Mercury." Congratulations on getting to auction #6 with the great group of writers and articles. The details of Fortier's life were kind of sketchy, which makes it more interesting. Four wives, but apparently no kids. Died young at only 56.

Re: your comment to **Jae**, croquet vs. "competitive cornhole," the fact that I know what game you mean by cornhole does not change the fact that it's still the ugliest game name in all creation and the idea of publicly promoting an additionally competitive version makes me want to bang my head on a table.

Your letter column was very impressive. I liked the Bob Leman poems, too.

[JG] Thanks for what I hope is the first column of many more stories recovered from fannish pubs. You do this research so well. It got me thinking about what gets remembered and what doesn't, what gets preserved in print and what doesn't. Will there be a similarly focused history about current fannish activities that depend on future historians' access to electronic records?

Thanks also for your comments on TurboCon and especially for copying your comments into an email. I will join that email conversation eventually, rather than reply here.

Wow, mailing comments from someone outside the apa. Thanks for reprinting William Breiding's great letter.

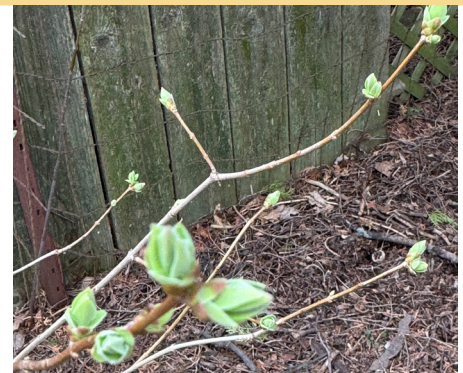
### Catie Pfeifer

[SC] I enjoyed your write up of your trip to Capricon. I have seen a number of Victor's posts on FB about his experience as GoH there, he clearly had a good time, too. I am a little curious to see a few examples of suggested books from your "Bad Books, Good Reads" panel. Please include a few of them in your zine if you kept a list. My first reaction from reading your panel description was, aren't badly written books too annoying to enjoy? I usually complain about books that have bad prose or big plot holes, but I suspect I have encountered books I liked despite big flaws. I just can't think of any offhand.

[JG] Finding it difficult to keep track of time? Me too. Our lost winter has provoked lilac bushes to begin budding out in *mid-March* (!). (see photo) Also, there's this (copied from Facebook):

Daylight Saving Time is increasingly hard to notice when my digital devices are like, "What? Nothing happened. We know what time it is."

And my stove is left blinking and screaming, "IT HAPPENED! TIME SHIFTED UNNATURALLY! THEY'RE ALL LYING! ONLY I KNOW! ONLY I REMEMBER!"



Lilac budding out way too early (mid-March)

## Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] Kim, your possible cancer problem is very worrying even if the treatment seems straightforward. Best wishes to you on the outcome. Please keep us posted and let us know if there is anything we can do for you guys. Congratulations on the new kitty.

[JG] Kim: I hope the biopsy results are negative for adenocarcinoma. It does sound like it's been caught very early, whatever the nodule is, which I assume is very good thing.

## Steve Vincent Johnson

[SC] Best wishes on resolving your hernia condition. What a drag. It did not seem to slow down your bowling performance. I had no such limitations and I ended up scoring at the bottom of both games. Perhaps more concerning was your diverticulitis attack after our bowling alley celebration dinner. You were not the only person to order a less-than-healthy meal. I think I had a bacon cheeseburger, fries and a consolation-for-dismal-performance beer. The restaurant was not bad for a bowling alley, healthier food options were available on their menu.

[JG] May your truss ease your pain; may your hernia be vanquished, and may you overcome your PC woes. What a month it's been for you!

## Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Thanks for the health updates. Let's hope it's all progress from here.

We have been following the Chengdu Hugo drama, mostly via File 770. Thanks for the organized listing of bullet points. Although Jeanne and I are not regular Worldcon attendees (and we have never worked on a Worldcon) we feel the whole affair is pretty sad for fandom. My first reaction was to be surprised at how anyone voting for Chengdu could have really expected any other outcome considering that China is a profoundly authoritarian state, sensitive about its image and vindictive towards its enemies. Despite the popularity of SF there and the high quality of SF fiction coming from there, holding the Worldcon there seemed to me a bad idea from the beginning. We will probably never know exactly what happened.

Regarding your comment to me about waiting for books in a series to come out, back when Parrish Johnston was our book discussion group leader,

we waited in anticipation every month for the moment in the discussion when Parrish or someone would bring up George R.R. Martin, his *Game of Thrones* series, and when (or whether) he would ever finish writing it. This went on for years. I was so determined to not fall down that rabbit hole that I have not only never started his book series, we never watched the TV show either. I am still waiting.

[JG] Jim, thanks so much for your comments about the 2023 Hugo controversy. I really appreciated your insights into those people involved that you know, and into a process you've actually been involved with in the past.

## Movies, series, and plays that we've seen this month:

**Dune 2** (theater) Gorgeous. Obviously, part 2 of (at least) 3 parts in which Paul begins his turn to the dark side. I felt slightly uncomfortable through the whole movie, though I can't really explain why except for the very abrupt edits that sped up the action but also camouflaged explanations for how or why some important things happened. Scott was entirely enthusiastic about the movie. I am still trying to figure out why I was left uneasy.

### **The Hello Girls**

(Four Seasons Theater) musically chronicles the story of American women employed during WWI on the front lines as telephone operators. It was inspired by historical events that I thought I was unacquainted with ... except then I remembered a poster at the Kansas City WWI Museum that I'd photographed in 2016. The play was fun to watch, and included several great singers, which we have grown to expect and appreciate from the local Four Seasons Theater. But the songs themselves were a little forgettable.

**Shogun** (Hulu) This show wasn't on our list to see right away (but eventually, when we decided to sign up for Hulu for a month or two). But in an attempt to watch



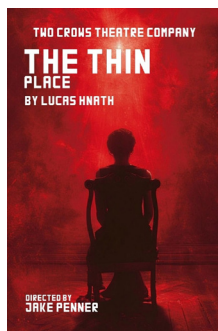
the Academy Awards on Sunday, Oscar night, I signed up for a free month. We were unable to see the Oscar ceremony, because we would have needed to sign up for Hulu +Live, but there we were, on Oscar night and a brand new, temporary subscription to Hulu. So, we started watching *Shogun*, and are loving it. Our free month will end two episodes before this season ends, so we will have to decide what to do. But in the meantime, we will watch a few other Hulu shows like, *The Bear*. But back to *Shogun*, it's masterfully produced and acted. I remember loving the novel by James Clavell and the 1980 mini-series with Richard Chamberlain. This new version is really well done, with much more attention to getting 1500's Japanese culture right than I recall in the 1980 version. Recommended.

***The Taste of Things*** (theater) A sensual movie about cooking, but really about all five senses and ostensibly about the process of creating several amazing meals and the love affair between the cook, Eugenie, and her gourmand employer, Dodin. I loved this movie.

***The Color Purple*** (Max) This was the last movie we needed to see in preparation for watching the Academy Award show. It was well done, with excellent acting, singing, and dancing. However none of the songs was particularly memorable, and I think the emotional impact of the book and the 1985 (non-musical) movie will stay with me far longer than will this version.

***The Thin Place*** (Two Crows Theater company) Two American Players Theater actors (Rob Doyle and Marcus Truschinski) started this Spring Green troupe the year before the pandemic, which also nearly killed it. But the company rose again this year with the play, *The Thin Place*, a mysterious story that might be classified within the horror genre. The play was presented in APT's Touchstone Theater. The "thin place" refers to a spot in the world or in our minds, through which the dead may or may not be able to reach out to us. I liked the play, though I thought the ending was a bit weak. Still, we are enthusiastic about this new troupe which specializes in contemporary plays in a deliberately intimate setting.

***This Is Us*** (Netflix) We've seen four of six seasons (each with 18 episodes). I'll say more when we've finished watching it. I'm really hooked on it.



## Lisa Freitag

[SC] I liked your typically thorough description of the musical *The Last Five Years*, which as you correctly predicted, I've never heard of. As for seeing it myself, I don't think the story would grab me but the main attraction to a musical is the music, and I'm not sure that sounds attractive enough either. It makes me wonder if it will ever show up in Madison. Plays that have very small casts are cheaper to mount and may seem less risky than bigger shows, but the burden of success falls very heavily on the few actors. If one of them is weak, the whole production is in serious trouble.

Good luck with your performance at Minicon.

[JG] Your summary of *The Last Five Years* reminded me of a less violent and gender-swapped version of a brilliant, Oscar-nominated movie, *Anatomy of a Fall*, that portrays a married couple, both of whom are writers, when the jealousy of one spouse for the more successful spouse leads to his death. Murder or suicide, that's the mystery. I suspect that the playwrights of the play you saw and this movie, were both fascinated by how creativity and artistic production intersect with relationships.

## What's New

### On the Oscars

[SC] We finally saw the Oscars, a day late (we are so sorry, **Pat!**) We were unable to watch them live because we seem to lack the means to see much live TV. It turns out we had this same problem last year and we managed to forget about it until confronted with this same problem again.

That said, we watched them on Monday night while fast-forwarding through most of the acceptance speeches. Having seen a lot of the nominated films (including all the Best Picture nominees) we were interested how the awards played out. The show itself turned out well and moved along at a good pace. Jimmy Kimmel was an amiable and confident host. His inspired moment of reading Trump's actual Oscar post criticizing Kimmel's performance was fascinating, and Kimmel's slap-back "Aren't you up past your jail time?" was brilliant. The nominated songs were fun to watch, but they messed up the In Memoriam section by inserting a pointless dance sequence that not only diverted attention but made it difficult to read the names on the screens.

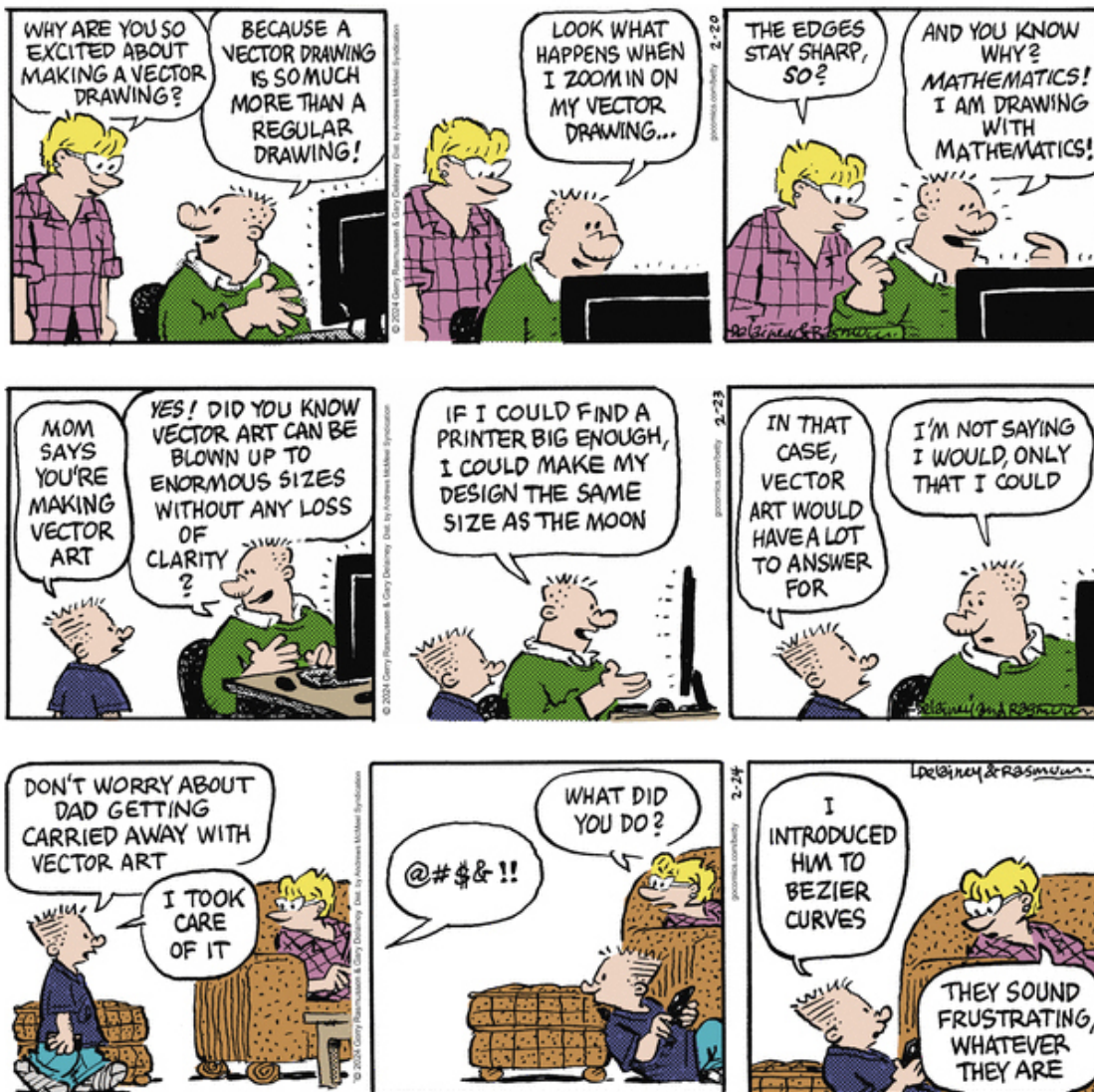
I long ago gave up being personally invested in who wins. Out of the 18 categories I voted on (using our home-printed ballots), I managed to correctly guess the winner 7 times. That's probably about average for me. This year I liked all the Best Picture nominees, but I thought *Past Lives* was the weakest entry. It had a rather languid plot compared with the others. I was stunned to find out that Best Actress nominee Sandra Huller was not only in two Best Picture films, she was the central character in both (*Anatomy of a Fall* and *The Zone of Interest*). Her characters were so utterly different that we did not recognize that she was in both films. She should have been awarded Best Actress, in my estimation, out of a very impressive field.

*Oppenheimer* won Best Picture, as I predicted. It struck me as a very traditional choice, though I was not unhappy it won. I was very pleased that two very weird movies, *Barbie* and *Poor Things* were also nominated and their selection (along

with *Everything Everywhere All at Once* last year) are positive signs that the future is looks bright for inventive new ideas in the movies. Especially when great women characters are at the center of them.

### Little, Big reading schedule (revised)

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



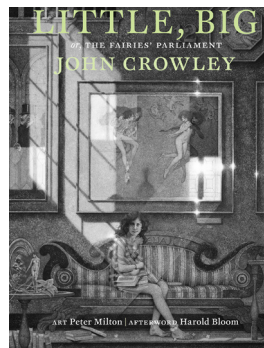


[SC] **Steve**, your February comments were illuminating again. I liked your discussion of reading SF and fantasy as types of reading rather than types of books. I have probably done that too to some extent, without realizing it. I definitely go into reading a fantasy novel with different expectations than what I expect from an SF novel. You were interested in how I'd view *Little, Big* as a fantasy story in the context of my fairly limited exposure to the fantasy genre. I have read a surprising amount of fantasy despite the fact that it's usually not my first choice of genre. I've read *The Hobbit* and *LoTR*, the Harry Potter series, scattered horror stories (a type of fantasy) and a variety of fantasy novels by way of the SF Without Borders book discussion group (our former group leader, Parrish Johnson, was a fan of fantasy fiction and typically made at least half his book selections fantasy.) I have read fantasy novels that were duds and some that I have liked a lot, a few I thought were brilliant.

One thing that screams "fantasy" to me is magic. If magic shows up somewhere, I slide into fantasy mindset and magic is definitely happening in *Little, Big*. It was subtle for a while, but when August was transformed into a fish, that decided it for me. That said, in most fantasy novels I have read, magic is usually restrained by rules. The author gradually tells us what the rules are, who has magic, how they control it, what it can be used for, etc. We are not going to get much of that from Crowley. Magic in *Little, Big* exists as part of the Tale, and it is just as unconfined and inexplicable as everything else in this world. In a way, that frees the author to tell a different kind of fantasy story and, so far, I'm enjoying the ride.

At one point I remembered a book we read for the book group a while ago called *All the Birds in the Sky* by Charlie Jane Anders. That story was about a battle between the worlds of science and magic. *Little, Big* is not a battle, so far, it's more about how the magical Tale exists within or near the world of science. The story seems to be about the conflicts and connections between the two worlds.

Interesting comments from **Greg**, about characters having both "little" and "big" characteristics and how the houses are very big for the people living in them, but the extra space is used for history/memory and myth. More please.



Chapter one presents us with the state of affairs of the Drinkwater family after the passing of John Drinkwater in 1920. The children have reached adulthood and Violet is growing more and more withdrawn. This chapter mainly focuses on August's story. His rather sensible ambitions are denied by both parents and an

attempt was made to distract him by buying him a car. August makes a deal with the Kingfisher to steal his mother's Tarot cards in exchange for power over women. It does not go as he expected as he genuinely falls in love with every woman he has sex with, but is compelled to break up with them in order to move on to his next conquest. The women, in turn, all fall in love with him. In this way he impregnates women all around the area. Driven to despair, he eventually throws himself into the pond to be transformed into Grandfather Trout. August and Amy's (August's first true love) illegitimate son (Dr. John Storm Drinkwater) eventually becomes patriarch of Edgewood and the father of Daily Alice and Sophie. The other August progeny are scattered around the area. The cards are eventually returned to Violet (because of a "bargain" that was broken, perhaps when August jumped into the pool), but the cards are changed. A couple other things that emerge from this chapter are that the Fairies are hard to nail down to particulars and most interactions with them involve a lot of guessing. Violet eventually decides how best to live with "them" (answering my question of whether Violet herself was a Fairie.)

Chapter two takes us back to the present with Smoky leading a class of children who are reading aloud one of Dr. Drinkwater's stories "Brother North-wind's Secret." We learn Smoky's teaching routine. Smoky feels that once he entered Edgewood, he has never really left again. Daily Alice thinks about how the world is different as an adult than it was when she was a child. Smoky and Dr. Drinkwater go hunting. Smoky turns out to be a "natural" shot. Dr. Drinkwater explains who he really is (the missing August's illegitimate son) to Smoky. The Harvest supper is a celebration. Smoky drinks wine and dances. Pregnant Daily Alice has a crisis when she realizes that she and Grandfather Trout are trapped in the Tale. My summaries of both chapters barely skim the surface of what is covered.