

Madison foursquare

91

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 #91**. *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] May 2024 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal #454*.

Covers

[SC] Thanks, Catie, for the great vacation photo covers! Gorgeous and exotic.

[JG] The first thing I thought of when I saw your cover photo was that it resembled a likely location for an *Enterprise* away-mission. Dramatic music, fisticuffs, and laser fights with aliens will ensue.

Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Delightful description of your trip to the Chicago Tea Festival. I don't drink a lot of tea, but I don't dislike it. Jeanne and I have done British style high tea a few times with black tea, cream and sweetener. I have liked green teas, too. Tea ceremonies are interesting. As you described it, I might have enjoyed the fest myself.

It's very sad that Nick is struggling. Please keep us informed. How is your new Library Director working out?

Update on The Black Monolith, we were talking to the son-in-law of the Monolith builder recently and he said the house would be ready for move in later in May. He also said they planned to hold an open house. If at all possible, we will be there. I especially want to get more details on their spiffy, high-tech HVAC system.

I agree with you that living alone in the country is not particularly attractive. Culture and community are very important as we get older. Madison would be a cool, if expensive, new destination. You should have success selling the yurt. It's genuine, at least, in pretty good condition and designed to be dismantled.

[JG] I would have loved to watch the potter throw a tea set. I wish I'd been able to join you at the festival. I noticed a Pu'er cake in the photo on the last page of your zine. Have you ever tried fermented tea? What does it taste like?

I checked out Facebook Marketplace and eBay, and did not see any used yurts for sale, just a few new ones that could be shipped from Mongolia, alongside a bunch of roundish tents (suggesting that some people think that "yurt" is a generic term). I agree with Scott that if you clean and carefully store your yurt that you could probably find a buyer, especially one who wants to avoid the extremely lengthy shipping process from Mongolia that you dealt with. I bet that you could provide better instructions than what originally accompanied your yurt.



Georgie's comment about missing craft activities on board the *Enterprise* intrigued me too. And then I remembered: in the latest *Star Trek* franchise, *Strange New Worlds*, Captain Christopher Pike cooks elaborate gourmet meals for his crew and friends, for fun and team-building. So, there's one example of an on-board, non-holodeck craft activity. But I still hope to see an Ensign Banksy someday, who covertly decorates boring corridor walls inside the ship with illustrations, color, and commentary.

Walter Freitag

[SC] I enjoyed your eclipse adventures and I'm glad you found a good spot to enjoy the show. The post-eclipse traffic in your part of the country made the national news. Jeanne and I suspect that we may have had heavier than normal traffic coming back across Illinois from our viewing spot in Indiana, but it was hard to tell how much worse it was because we were driving around Champaign, Bloomington and up I39 during regular weekday rush hour.

Great picture of eclipse totality. When you look at the total eclipse with the naked eye (which you can safely do once it reaches totality) it looked just like the photos, except that the sky in back is not the black of night or space. It's a deep (but not too dark) blue. Which made the eclipse hanging in the sky look alien to me. Unnatural and creepy. Easy to see why our ancestors were freaked out by it.

[JG] My brother Dan also headed into the Northeast to view the eclipse, though he went a little further north than your family drove – up into Canada. I'm glad Scott and I were able to see totality where we did, in central Indiana, since our "sweet spot" was in the middle of everything and so traffic, in and out, wasn't forced to travel through a geographic funnel. Also, we had a lot of choices as to where to watch the show. I wasn't expecting to find such a beautiful park to spend time waiting for and watching the eclipse.

Gregory Rihn

[SC] *Sweeney Todd* is one of my favorite musicals. I have been entranced by it since the first time I saw a live performance many years ago (at the old Capital Theater downtown, I think.) I have probably listened to the Len Cariou-Angela Lansbury Broadway cast recording more than a dozen times. We have seen several live and TV versions over the years, too. It's grim, bloody and unexpectedly funny and, as you pointed out, there are dark elements even to sympathetic characters. These days I try to determine the likely quality of the singers before we go. Anything less than excellent singers means the show will suffer. That's the principal reason the Tim Burton movie version was such a disappointment.

The Easter buffet at Mader's sounded lush. You remind me that we have eaten at Mader's, but not in a long time. Currently I know of no good German restaurants in Madison.

[JG] Scott loves finding new opportunities to use the line from *Sweeney Todd*, "My arm is complete again!" (E.g., his watch gets repaired: "My arm is complete again!") Is that a red flag?

Re your comment to **Elizabeth** about *Hadestown*, the show came to Wisconsin fairly recently. A traveling Broadway show opened in Madison in January of 2023. Other than the fact that we were unlucky to choose seats directly in line with powerful halogen lights beamed from the stage, we liked the show a lot. I bet it comes back to the Midwest soon. I have heard that there is another traveling Broadway tour starting up.

Re the Otherwise Award's problems that you and **SteveSw** mentioned in comments.... I think that with Pat Murphy's and my exit, the remaining and new members of the Motherboard included too few people who were able to lavish a lot of time on the work. The remaining and replacement motherboard members all had, and no doubt *still* have, lots going on in their lives. I understand. But organizations with small work crews always need one or two exceptionally active members (or perhaps "true believers") in order to thrive.

I have frequently heard from people who never worked on the Tiptree Award or WisCon, that we made it look easy, that things looked as if they proceeded "automatically." (I bet that we've all heard versions of this: that veteran attendees of successful conventions seem to guide the events by their expectations, based on their memories of how things happened in previous years.) I have always taken it as a compliment to the concom or the motherboard that people noticed so few

glitches and liked how seamlessly events flowed. But that's an illusion. A good illusion for sure, but running a con or an award actually takes a lot of work. Most of the people in this apa know how much work it takes to organize a convention from personal experience, and I can tell you that Tiptree Motherboard work was nearly as exhausting (and rewarding) for me as chairing WisCon.

But without one or two rather compulsive people, things have a tendency to fall apart. For instance, every year Tiptree/Otherwise judges need to be signed up in the middle of the year for the next year's award. It is not easy getting busy people – including well-known authors – to volunteer a year of their lives to read for the award. Then, the judges need to be monitored, encouraged, given help sorting out emergencies and disagreements, hurried along, and reminded of deadlines in enough time to publish the press releases and advertise the upcoming celebration, not to mention in time to enable the winner or winners to make travel arrangements to the award ceremony and sign up for programming. Delay in any one of these steps can result in a year without an award, which is what has been happening these last couple years with the Otherwise Award. During my several decades serving on the Motherboard, judges were managed by Karen Joy Fowler and Debbie Notkin before they retired, and then by Pat Murphy until she retired. Pat took over as chair after Debbie retired, but from the very start of the award, Pat and I frequently took on the role as project managers and kept all Tiptree projects on track.

Fundraising is another huge time sink in that it pays the actual financial award that winners receive. Ellen Klages made the Tiptree Auction profitable, entertaining, and a beloved event for our supporters. But preparing for the auction took hundreds of hours; it didn't just spontaneously happen on Saturday night of WisCon. I did a lot of behind-the-scenes fundraising work before and after the auction, as well as making art and doing on-line auctions. I remember one year when Ellen Klages was the sole member of the Motherboard who planned to attend Gaylaxicon. She volunteered to do a Tiptree Auction while she was there, and told us that she felt confident that she could handle all the prep work, finances, and clean-up on her own. In her mind, the on-stage auction was more complicated than the other parts. It turned out that Gaylaxicon was a wake-up experience for Ellen and she understood for the first time how much work got done behind the scenes, that it was in no way a one-person job. The auction did not go well. Afterward she apologized to the motherboard.



Greg, you mentioned the Fellowship program. It was invented by Alexis Lothian who chaired the Motherboard for a few years, following Pat Murphy's term. Alexis' interest in doing a Fellowship program was actually the main reason she accepted an invitation to join the Motherboard. I think it's interesting that the Fellowship program currently seems to have more energy invested in it than the award, but I guess it's not surprising that things people feel the most passion for receive more of their energy.

My energy and I think most of the original Motherboard members was inspired by the idea of and writings of James Tiptree, Jr. When we turned away from our muse, Alice Sheldon, I lost interest in doing the work.

I've always felt that there is a particularly powerful kind of "true believer" energy owned by people who instigate a project – a group, a publication, a convention, an award, a business, a political movement, a religion, or whatever. When the original person or group hands off their creation to the next generation, it seems to me that the thing will succeed or fail depending on whether the new group owns it, and is able to re-initiate the project by infusing their own personal aspirations into the project's goals. So, since leaving, I have been waiting and hoping that something like that happens with WisCon and the Tiptree/Otherwise Award. I am still hopeful it's possible. But the last couple years for both organizations have been discouraging.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I enjoyed your opening poem for National Poetry Month. Clever, fun and funny.

[JG] And no porch pirates will try to steal your day because they received their own days!

"Colorblind" touted proudly, implies that the opposite – seeing color – must convey insult. Yeah.

I think that drag is a completely different thing from blackface, though it's an interesting parallel. Drag

doesn't function as cultural appropriation because drag actually attempts to heal the wounds inflicted by enforced gender roles. But blackface works differently. There are no repressed race identities to be released/healed by blackface, which never pretends to oppose racism or heal wounds. Nevertheless, I do sometimes feel uncomfortable with drag that sometimes seems to insist that being female is so much about clothing and make-up and sexuality. But then it's not my wound that is being tended by drag performances.

"EVERYTHING is Material for art." I like that a lot. I bet that **Jae** will second the notion. And thanks for telling me how you incorporated the patterns into your drawing of the Midwest winter witch. I had been thinking that the patterns looked like they had been created in Adobe Illustrator, but I have no doubt that cutting and pasting from clothing catalogs was easier and more fun. Again, well done!

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] I'm sorry for the loss of your stepmother, Steve. Very nice memorial you wrote for her.

[JG] I'm glad you and your stepmother had one another in each other's lives!

It would be nice to think of whales and dolphins being rescued by an interstellar Society for the Protection of Fellow Intelligent Beings, but most of the cetacean disappearances can be explained in another way. *The Washington Post* recently did a story about Bishop, a tagged Atlantic Right Whale, who migrated from the Bahamas to somewhere east of Nova Scotia, swimming mostly over the continental shelf. The whale's movements were shown on a video map alongside the movements of thousands of boats, most of which were speeding along at a much faster clip that is apparently legal. (I didn't know there were speed limits for boats in the ocean, but apparently the limits are set precisely to avoid collisions and injury to cetaceans.) Bishop was killed in a collision somewhere east of Nova Scotia. Looking at the horrendous obstacle course, I thought it was amazing that any whales manage to survive the journey. This may provide some explanation for whales' attacks on boats during the last couple years!

Steve Swartz

[SC] I liked reading about your Oregon road trip and your photos were great. The Pacific Northwest is such a perfect location because two things I love to see, ocean and mountains, are within fairly easy driving distance of each other. My great aunt Sarah lived for a long time in Coos Bay and I have

long wanted to drive though there on a meandering driving trip out that way someday. I look forward to your description of it if you end up going there sometime.

As always, there is far more good stuff in your zine that's ripe for response than I can possibly address. I enjoyed all of it.

Re your comment to **Andrea** about past bad behavior, I'm pretty sure she is not fooled by you and would probably not be surprised to hear that you were, more often than not, the source of much of the trouble.

Great comments to **Greg** on class in America.

Re your comments to me, on the long-term effectiveness of agitation and protest, I agree with you that the progress that has been made on rights and racism in America has not been as great or as fast as I would like, but progress has still been made over the years. I know that protest is effective because of how quickly and brutally autocratic regimes (Russia, China, etc.) move to stop it and how quickly universities here in the U.S. moved to violently repress Gaza protests. They would not do that if agitation did not work.



When you drove to Lakeland, FL with the bucket of chicken, did you eat it *while driving*, or did you pull over to eat? Driving a car while trying to eat fried chicken seems worthy of being ticketed to me.

Sometimes an ugly word, like "cornhole", is just an ugly word, Steve.

[JG] In your comments about *Little Big* (Yes, I'm reading everyone's commentary, but not the book itself) – you recalled your impatience with some of us for wishing for a map while reading Laurie Marks' novel, *Dancing Jack*. I've thought about that disagreement a few times since our zoomed book discussion. (I guess it made an impression on both of us.) It was the first time I'd ever heard anyone who disliked the idea of a map accompanying a novel, though I know plenty of

people who don't need a map. Laurie Marks is one of them. She told me she never thought about how places in her novels related geographically to one another, though she found the Shaftal map I eventually made for her very useful while writing the last two books of her *Logic* series. To me, this obviously points to the idea that different people have different ways of processing a story. For me, it all starts with images. A map published in the book, or one that I build in my imagination helps me navigate the story. "The map, [for you] is only about figuring the irrelevant bits of the world."

I recently had another conversation that feels eerily similar to the one about maps. I joined a Facebook group for swimmers. I was surprised that hundreds of people commented to me after I posted this:

"I have been swimming laps as my main exercise since the mid-1980s, always a 3-stroke crawl. I swam in Madison, Wisconsin's downtown YWCA until it closed, and then at the downtown YMCA until it was torn down, and then at the SERF, an Olympic-size pool on the UW-Madison campus for a couple years. But I've been swimming at the eastside YMCA pool for the last 20 years. It's a very nice 25-yard pool, a fine facility. Currently, I swim 50 lengths, four times a week, which usually takes me about 75 minutes. I love slipping into a meditative state as I begin my routine. My only problem over the years has been keeping track of how many lengths I have completed. I'm really bad with numbers and so I easily lose track. I enforce a cruel rule upon myself: if I lose track of the number of lengths I've completed, I require myself to *go back* to the last number I remember. That used to mean that I sometimes had to swim quite a bit further than I intended. But that rule incentivized me to find a creative way to remember numbers. My mind would drift and think about the novel I was reading or a drawing I was working on, and ... oh no! I forgot which length I was swimming. At last, I came up with a weird but effective way to keep track of the number of laps I swam—I converted the numbers to images. I called this technique "*Stations of the House.*" I assigned each of seventy-two locations in my house to a number. I mentally toured my house as I swam, thinking about each station in turn, as I swam the length with the corresponding station number. In addition, I assigned a noun to each station (and later on, I also added a verb, object, and adjective). So, as I swam, I chanted the words associated with that station/number. I found it remarkably easy to memorize a list of words, attached



as they were to images and a carefully-laid tour of my house. Does anyone else do anything like this?"

Just minutes after posting that paragraph I began getting comments from people advising me to buy an Apple watch, rely on a pace clock, or buy a clicker, or beads, or to try counting in tens, or to vary my strokes in groups to make counting easier, or hire a coach, or any of a myriad techniques they themselves use while they swim. There was a barrage of recommendations from people who read my post as a request for advice. I assured them, one by one, that I did not view my technique as a problem, thanks very much, and in fact I liked keeping track of my swimming progress with images. I wasn't interested in finding a "solution," and just hoped to hear from people who did something similar to keep track of their laps. That didn't immediately stop the recommendations that I reform my technique, that I find a way to make peace with numbers or simply dispense with counting all together or perhaps set my iPhone on the edge of the pool showing a giant clock so I could swim for a set amount of time. Finally, a few amused people wrote some supportive comments about all the advice I was receiving.... "For the most part guys stopped trying to give you advice after about the fifth time you told them you were not looking to make a change and just wanted to share your story!" Most of the problem-solvers eventually gave up, but one guy insisted that I shouldn't waste time thinking about anything other than improving my stroke.

Not everyone tried to fix my "problem." I was delighted to read responses to my query as to how they kept track of their laps. Several people said they sang songs whose length they knew. (I understand that Diane Nyad uses this technique.) One guy imagined, step-by-step, a six-mile walk through the woods. Another person ticked through their entire extended family tree, imagining each person's face and important parts of their lives. One guy had a series of affirmative slogans he recited to himself for each set of laps. Another swimmer relied on the alphabet – one letter per length – and chanted a word that starts with that letter (his rule: no repeating the same words with the next circuit through the alphabet). I had a short conversation with a guy who



complimented me for having invented a variation of a memorization technique called “Loci,” which I’d heard called “memory palace.” A few people who also had problems remembering numbers, declared they would try my technique.

But most people count laps, one way or another, with numbers. One guy counts individual strokes! Another person counts in Spanish. Others perform elaborate calculations as they swim, figuring percentage of laps completed and remaining that session, that week, that year, etc.

Now, when I walk into the pool area at my YMCA and see a bunch of people swimming laps, I sometimes contemplate how each one of them is conducting a complicated, unique mental exercise in their minds. We’re all different, and maybe most different when we’re not interacting with other people. I’m equally fascinated by the different ways each of us reads the same book. So, in summary, relying on a visual map while reading a story is not a problem, it’s just one of many ways to orient oneself within the text as I read a book.

Anyway, in my mind, that’s the current state of our map conversation by way of analogy. You haven’t had any actual input into this part of the conversation of course, so I thought I’d catch you up...

I thought your summation of the Tiptree Award’s transition to the Otherwise Award was brilliant:

“They pulled the award up by the roots and tried to transplant it into the soil of a new motherboard, and then found out how rich the motherboard needs to be in nutrients to keep such an award alive.” Yes.

Lisa Freitag

[SC] I was a bit disturbed by the advice you offered at the end of your Health Matters section. I have had two cancer encounters recently. One resulted in the removal of a skin lesion that turned out to be benign, the other resulted in surgery to remove my prostate. In neither case was I sick. Both were discovered during routine checkups when I was feeling fine. It’s my understanding that catching cancer (and other things) early can be crucial to successful treatment. Waiting for symptoms to appear before seeing a doctor to find out what’s wrong is not good advice.

[JG] Ah the eternal question: who or what qualifies as a real fan or real fannish activity. Yeah, the definition changes with time and viewpoints. Scott and I always laugh when we hear people, especially people from our own generation, get all “get-off-my-lawn” at the younger generation. In retrospect I would have criticized YOU during the nineties because of your description of fictional heroes of the 60s and 70s: “They are all white boys fated to go on quests all by themselves, lone laser-men or hackers or scientists who feel slighted by the world or universe or whatever, but will nonetheless deign to save it. They get nothing out of this except perhaps personal satisfaction. Until the late eighties, the nerd didn’t even get the girl at the end.” I would have been outraged that you skimmed over the whole feminist and humanist revolution in 70s’ science fiction and fandom. Maybe I am still slightly outraged. But yeah, you have a good point that the current generation of fans and SF is actually interested in different subjects. But I would add: – as is the case for every generation.

Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] Kim, sounds like all systems are go for recovery. Surgery that ends successfully is always a relief. Congratulations.

[JG] It’s great to hear that your surgery went well, Kim, and that they caught your cancer so early. What good news!

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] You guys have had quite a long run of “all-medical-all-the-time” that even included one of the cats. You must be ready for nice weather and



blooming flowers. It was great to see you both at the “last Wednesday night at Nick’s” restaurant thing. What a glorious mess that turned out to be. Also, Richard Russell’s 80th birthday party, which also had an impressive turnout.

Lovely memorial to Deb Geisler.

Jeanne and I watched a bunch of the early seasons of *Top Chef*. We eventually stopped for a long time. I think we grew tired of the focus on personal dramas among the contestant chefs. Now watching *Top Chef Wisconsin*, it’s nice to see that the drama has been greatly reduced in favor of more emphasis on the food, the challenges and local color. There are way more restaurant owners and James Beard nominees among the contestants now.

[JG] Thanks for printing the photos from Dr. Bill’s lamb feast!

Culture chez Union Street since last month consists mostly of streaming series and movies plus a couple excursions to the movie theater. No live plays this month. It’s been fun to watch the Wisconsin season of *Top Chef*. I’ve been enjoying the *CapTimes* coverage of the show; one of their reporters was embedded into the production of the Taliesin and Madison episodes, and shared some interesting behind-the-scenes info. (For example, diners and judges are requested not to give away their opinions when the chefs serve their dishes, not in facial expression or verbal outburst.) But I haven’t been tempted to join either of the live watch parties at Garver Feed Mill or the Memorial Union.

I don’t think I ever met Deb Geisler, but I’ve certainly heard lots of good things about her. Thanks for writing a memorial piece about your friend.

Pat Hario

[SC] You and **Andrea** did back-to-back trip reports to Vegas, and somehow managed to not do all the same stuff, though you both made time for the Hoover Dam and Cirque du Soleil. I would have, too. I was glad to see that you took some time to gamble (and win!) It would have seemed a little

weird to me to go all the way to Vegas and not throw at least a few bucks into a slot machine. Excellent trip piece.

It’s surprising what you learn about people in the course of doing a phone job. I periodically took calls from the public when I worked at DOT and it can be eye-opening what you get. I got a fair share of angry callers but I always thought the worst calls were from people who decided to multi-task by (obviously) calling from the bathroom.

[JG] Fun trip report!

Scott and I saw the Bodies exhibit in Milwaukee some years ago. Fascinating and gruesome at the same time. I remember looking at two sets of lungs, side-by-side, one previously owned by a smoker and the other by a non-smoker. What a ghastly difference.

I’ve only ever walked about 6 feet into a casino, at which point I turned around and walked back outside. Years ago, Scott and I stayed overnight in a Nevada hotel and were given tokens for free breakfasts at the casino across the street. So, the next morning we strolled over to the casino for breakfast, but the moment the door closed behind us we found ourselves in NoTime, which is the natural time zone of all casinos. There are no windows, nothing to remind you of how long it’s been since you left the real world. A cacophony of lights and sounds add to the confusion of senses. Sort of a modern-day Faerie. It made me very nervous and anxious. Scott and I drove down the street to an ordinary diner for breakfast and I breathed a sigh of relief. So, while I enjoyed yours and **Andrea**’s trip reports, I am not tempted to visit Las Vegas myself, even though I can see that this means I miss quite a few fabulous shows.

I think you’re right that “everyone” shares many fewer cultural experiences with one another. There are certainly few TV shows that achieve the kind of near-universal audiences as when there were only three TV networks on US television. Few of the movies or TV shows I list in *Madison Foursquare* are seen by the small sample set of other apa members. I could make a case for a few blockbuster movies having functioned that way today. But I think I’ve most frequently heard the phrase “Have you seen --- yet?,” about viral memes traded in social media.

Andrea Connell

[SC] Sounds like you had a great time in Vegas! I’m sure many of us are wondering what sort of “mischief” you got into on your last trip 20 years

ago, but we will never know because, as everyone knows, “what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.”

Carrie Root

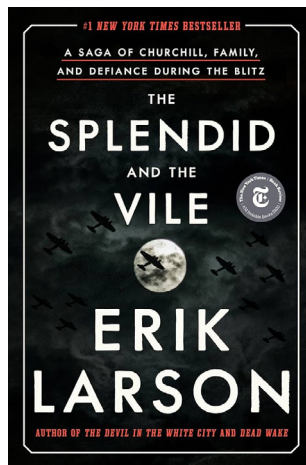
[SC] Happy 75th birthday. I hope you had a lovely trip back to Covina.

Re your comment to **Andrea**, Jeanne and I also have a pet-free household.

Re your comment to **Luke** regarding Madison vs. Seattle, I think Madison’s size also contributes a lot to how easy it is to socialize and do things here. Madison is small. Out of curiosity I checked the map and if we set aside **Andrea** and **Jeannie B.** on the extreme east and west edges of the city, I can construct a fairly easy bicycle loop ride to pass all ten of the remaining Madison *Turbo* households scattered on the north, south, east and west sides of the city.

Re your comment to me on *Little, Big* you are absolutely right that *Little, Big* does not summarize well. Communicating a sense of the book’s complexity to people who aren’t, or haven’t, read it is part of why I write my little summaries. It’s also a way for me to comment on parts I’ve read that were notable or confusing to me.

For my book report this month, I’m still reading nonfiction. As I write this, I’m just finishing *The Splendid and the Vile* by Erik Larson, an account of Churchill, his family and close advisors during the crucial first year of WWII. Fascinating depiction of the blitz and the Battle of Britain, Roosevelt and the U.S., as well a view of events unfolding from the Nazis’ perspective. It’s great.



[JG] Bits of the Richard Chamberlain version of *Shogun* came back to me as we watched this new, 2024 version (which I liked very much). When Toranaga granted Blackthorn/Angin a house and a consort, I suddenly remembered the scene in the book and the 1980 version concerning the tragedy of the pheasant hung in the yard to age. I also remembered Angin’s reunion with his former crew and how his opinion of them changed drastically because of how he’d absorbed Japanese

cultural norms. I liked both the 1980 and 2024 series, but I’d have to see the 1980 version again to be able to make a real comparison, and that’s hard to do. The 1980 version doesn’t seem to be available anywhere. I have heard that a second season is being contemplated, but I doubt that it will be a continuation of this story. The 2024 series ends just as James Clavell’s novel ends. However, Clavell wrote other books set in Asia – *King Rat* (which I thought was excellent), *Tai-Pan* (which is set in China; I remember liking this novel but have no memory of the details.), and *Noble House*. So maybe one of those will be the basis of a new season.

Re your comment to **Andrea**, no, you are not the only apa members without an animal companion. Neither Scott nor I have ever owned a pet and are unlikely to change that anytime soon. And we don’t even have allergies.

Cute Jonah pics!

Andy Hooper

[SC] I enjoyed the odd story of Joe Flaherty, Horror Host Hall of Famer who never hosted a movie.

Re your comment to **Carrie** and in our last book discussion group meeting, on *Spear* by Nicola Griffith, I liked it too. I think she is very strong at characterization. I can always count on her vivid characters to draw me through the story.

Re your reply to Lloyd Penney’s letter, we missed the 2009 Montreal Worldcon, but I might be tempted by the next one if it wins the bid. I have always wanted to visit Montreal and it’s drivable (and a nice drive, too.) I guess we’ll see. In the meantime, we are still planning to drive to Seattle in 2025 so eruptions of Mt. Rainier or landslides into Elliot Bay need to wait until sometime after the con.

[JG] The colorful objects on the cover of *Madison Foursquare* #89 are chocolate and candy-covered sunflower seeds. Not to scale. I also liked the placement of that page next to **Elizabeth**’s with the photo of painted rocks.

Re your conversation with Lloyd Penney, we may not be done with Worldcons in China yet. According to *File 770*, “On the heels of the Chengdu 2023 Worldcon Hugo Controversy ... some sharp eyes noticed an announcement that happened immediately after the Chengdu 2023 Worldcon, to the effect that China was kicking off its Tianwen project, ‘Unveiling China’s Diverse Science Fiction to the World.’” Plans to bid on another Chinese Worldcon are already underway.

Luke McGuff

[SC] The April bike ride and bowling Saturday was great fun, even if we had a small delay getting your bike tires inflated before the morning bike ride. There is no question that you out-bowled me that evening. I was a mess, but you were on fire. Our bike ride on May 4 went very well, I thought. I'm long spoiled by riding on weekday mornings when traffic is much quieter than it is on weekends. It's an adjustment for me. You will see what I mean once you're retired.

We tried grilled cheese sandwiches with mayo. We found it, in the words of the eminent Dr. Bill Hoffman, "not optimal." Sorry, back to butter for us. May will be a busy month for you, but graduation means the students will finally be leaving town, which will make biking around campus easier. Plus, more chairs for us at the Memorial Union Terrace. All good. I strolled down State Street the

other day to check out the painting project on the street beyond the Gorham St. intersection for the pedestrian mall experiment that officially kicks off May 8. The experiment became possible when the city stopped running buses down State Street beyond Gorham. I like the flamingo theme; have you seen it?

I thought *Loving Orphaned Space*, or at least the examples you cited from it, were interesting. Sad? Yes, but instructive. The story of that Amazon parking lot across from Woodmans here in town was new to me and definitely aggravating, but instructive.

My suggestion for your cemetery walk is to check out the graves of the Confederate soldiers buried there and maybe point out where the Confederate memorials that Mayor Soglin removed back in 2017 used to be. I think some famous people are buried in that cemetery, too.

What's New

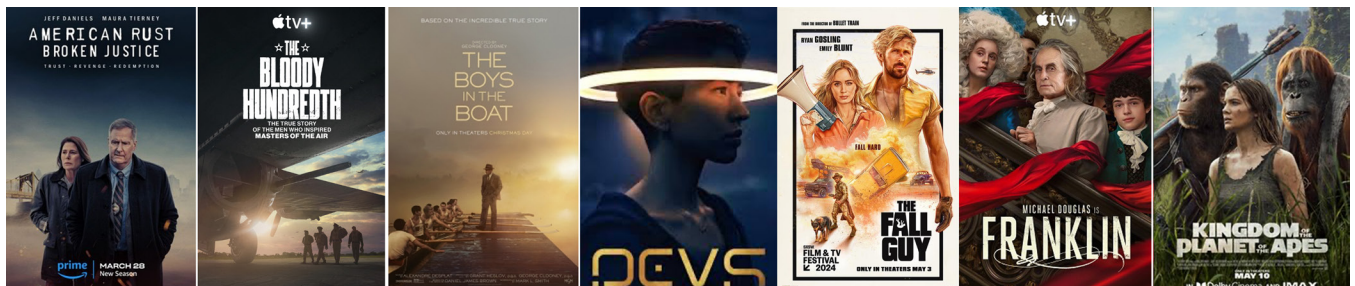
Culture notes

[JG] Before I begin summarizing stuff that Scott and I saw this past month, I want to ask you if you find these mini-reviews I've been writing to be entertaining or useful. As **Pat** was mentioning, there are very few shows that attract widespread cultural attention because so few of us watch, or even have access to the same shows. There are a couple shows listed below that I would really like to talk about with others, but know it's likely that they haven't been seen by anyone in this apa. So, the main benefit for my mini-reviews might be that a few of them might sound interesting enough to seek for one or two of you. Let me know, OK? If you don't find my comments entertaining or useful, I should probably stop including them in the apa.

American Rust, season 2 (Prime) A gritty crime drama with complicated characters and great acting by Jeff Daniels, Maura Tierney and the rest of the cast. It is set in a Pittsburgh, where jobs are scarce and corruption infects both public and private life, and every character, both good and bad, eventually decides to make end-

runs around the law. Of course, we approve of this behavior from the characters we like and judge to be morally justified, but we disapprove of the same behavior from those characters' enemies. But it wasn't until this second season, that I started to wonder if the writers have created a story arc in which the main characters – the ones we have grown to like and identify with – are slowly turning into bad guys. Certainly, in the last episode of season 2, that's what I think has happened. Has anyone else watched this show? What do you think?

The Bloody Hundredth (Apple) A documentary about WWII airmen who belonged to the 100th Bomb Group; the real-life heroes who inspired the TV series, *Masters of the Air*, which I mentioned last month. Narrated by Tom Hanks and featuring Steven Spielberg. If you watched *Masters*, you should check this show out for the historical detail and background.



The Boys in the Boat (Prime) During the height of the Great Depression, members of the rowing team at the University of Washington get thrust into the spotlight as they compete for gold at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Nothing very surprising happens in this movie. You will not find yourself on the edge of your seat wondering if our guys will win their races. In fact, the very little suspense that enlivens the story is manufactured. But it's a feel-good story, dare I say a cozy story, beautifully filmed.

DEVS (Hulu) A limited series (which means this is it, no second season) that focuses on a young software engineer named Lily Chan who works for Amaya, a cutting-edge tech company based in Silicon Valley. DEVS is the company's secret development division working on a technology that seeks to record enough data about the world to make accurate predictions about the future – so accurate, that it may as well be a time machine – with which they can view all past and future events. Lily is the Mule (as Asimov would call her) who has the power to disrupt this technology. We liked this story a lot, and especially enjoyed Nick Offerman, who portrayed the billionaire owner of Amaya as a sort of conglomeration of several familiar tech billionaires.

The Fall Guy (theater) A fun “boom” movie whose plot doesn't bear much scrutiny, but the story moves so quickly you may not notice the many plot holes until after the movie credits start scrolling. The best part of this movie about stuntmen is that it's very funny, and that is all to the credit of the actors Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt.

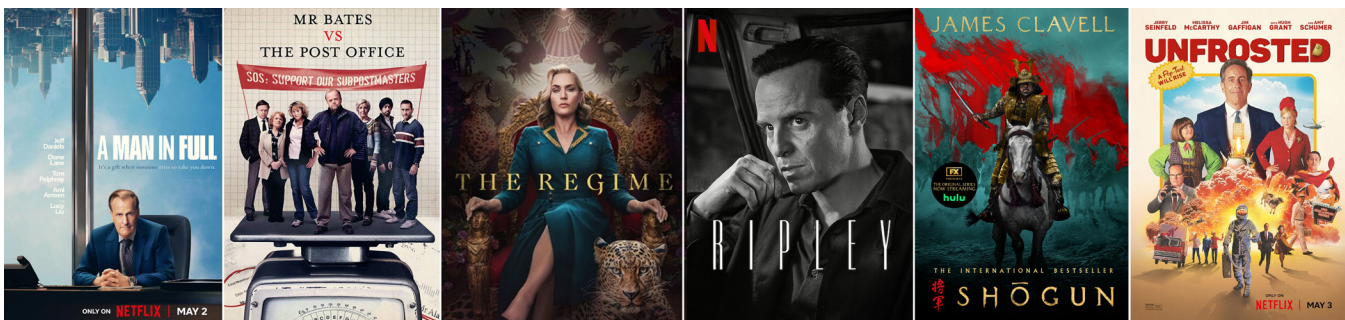
Franklin (Apple) What was going on in France during the American Revolution? Benjamin Franklin was there negotiating with whoever would donate money and/or arms to the newly declared nation. He was sent there because he was a sort of superstar to many French people – the man who “discovered electricity.” So, in the course of this 8-part mini-series Franklin provides the Marquis de Lafayette with an introductory letter to General George Washington, manages to send several shiploads of weapons to the former colonies,

and directs peace talks among representatives of the US, England, and France. The early rumblings of the French Revolution are hard to miss. A very irritating John Adams almost wrecks all of Franklin's work. We also meet John Jay, but I was surprised that Thomas Jefferson played no part in the story. I thought Jefferson's mission in France was basically the same as Franklin's. Anyway, it was entertaining, and I thought Michael Douglas did a good job portraying Franklin. But I got the feeling we were missing a lot of possibly more interesting details and were instead distracted by the rash and sometimes stupid behavior of Franklin's grandson. I guess I'll have to read up on this chapter of history to know how well or badly the series portrayed history.

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (theater) It's pretty amazing that this is this fourth sequel to a movie that was in itself a sequel to a series of 1960s' movies; the quality of the story and acting is so excellent. Apparently, this movie is actually the first of a new trilogy, one which I expect to follow with enthusiasm. I didn't know anything about the plot before we walked into the theater and found myself surprised and several points. If you liked the previous *Planet of the Apes* movies, I recommend that you go see this one.

A Man in Full (Netflix) This movie was offered to us immediately after we finished watching another Netflix series, *American Rust*, probably because both series starred Jeff Daniels. Set in Atlanta and its lush countryside, It's nothing like *American Rust*, and there is no confusion that the main character, Daniels' character Charlie Croker, is a (mostly) bad guy. But he's one of those bad guys you like to watch. He's a more likable version of Donald Trump, without the political ambitions.

Mr Bates vs the Post Office (PBS) The extraordinary and real story of one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in British legal history, where hundreds of innocent sub-postmasters and postmistresses were wrongly accused of theft, fraud and false accounting due to a defective IT system. What an epic story! ...and yet, still kind of cozy.



The Regime (HBO) The story covers a year within the palace of a modern European authoritarian regime as it unravels. This is an almost surrealistic portrait of a tiny, imaginary European country, not unlike the one portrayed in *The Mouse that Roared*, updated with a despotic leader who combines elements of Trump, Vladimir Putin, Jair Bolsonaro, and other present-day autocrats, but since this regime is led by a woman played outrageously and brilliantly by Kate Winslet, I found myself thinking frequently of Catherine the Great. The story is played for (very) dark comedy, and will not be for everyone. I don't know if it was actually for us, but I definitely wanted to see how it ended and won't forget it.

Ripley (Netflix) is an American neo-noir psychological thriller television series based on Patricia Highsmith's 1955 crime novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. A wealthy man hires down-on-his-luck grifter Tom Ripley to travel to Italy to urge his vagabond son to return home; Tom's acceptance of the job is the first step in a life of deceit, fraud and murder. It is a re-make of the 1999 film which starred Matt Damon as Tom, Jude Law as Dickie, and Gwyneth Paltrow as Marge. *Ripley* tells the same story in absolutely gorgeous black and white, with Andrew Scott (Tom), Johnny Flynn (Dickie), and Dakota Fanning (Marge). Ripley is much less likable in the Netflix version, but arguably more interesting. Scott and I were both bothered, however, by an unbelievable plot element without which Ripley would never have gotten away with his crimes. No one – not the police nor the press – ever ask for a photo of either Tom or Dickie in the course of their investigations.

Shogun (Hulu) I already wrote about this in my comment to **Carrie**.

Unfrosted (Netflix) Oh my god, this is hilarious! Jerry Seinfeld directed and starred in this parody of recent movies celebrating the origin stories of popular consumer goods (*Tetris*, *Blackberry*, and *Air* which tells the story of Nike's Air Jordans). *Unfrosted* tells a wildly fictionalized story of how Kellogg's and Post, sworn cereal rivals, race to create a breakfast food that does not require milk and can be eaten on the go—a pastry that changed the face of breakfast forever: Pop-Tarts, of course. There are so many laugh lines I was glad we were able to stream this movie so we could turn on subtitles, otherwise we would have missed half the jokes. It stars an ensemble cast that includes Seinfeld, Melissa McCarthy, Jim Gaffigan, Max Greenfield, Hugh Grant, Amy Schumer, Christian Slater, James Marsden, and more.

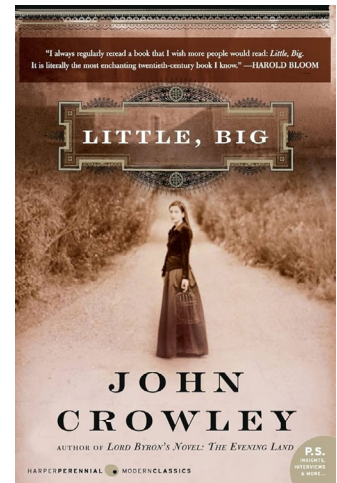
Little Big

Book 3, Old Law Farm Chapters 1 and 2

[SC] Steve, lots of interesting comments and insights from you on last months' chapters once again. I always come away from your comments with new viewpoints to consider on what we read. I don't think I wrote anything about wanting to listen to an audio version of *Little*,

Big after you warned us away from that early on based on your experience with the audiobook. This isn't the sort of book I would consider listening to anyway. Audio works best for me if the plot is fairly straightforward. On my first read-though of *Little, Big* I frequently found myself re-reading paragraphs and sections just to make sure I didn't lose track of the story, not something that I'm inclined to do with an audiobook.

I don't think I agree with you that Faerie is strictly a place and not people. I think of the menacing creature George came across sprinkling something into the children's eyes and the little people who switched out the real baby Lilac for the fake baby Lilac and Mrs. Underwood who seems to be existing and operating almost completely within the Faerie



Little, Big reading schedule

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	June: Chaps 3, 4	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>	

spectrum. They all seem like Faerie creatures to me. But maybe I will come around to your view on subsequent readings.

I liked your comment to **Elizabeth** that the book is web rather than a straight-line. This book is so rich, it's hard to take it all in. When I re-read the two chapters for this month, I was surprised yet again that there were incidents and events that I'd completely forgotten about since my first reading.

Brief summaries this time due to a lack of time. Chapter 1 moves the story 25 years forward and mostly focuses on Auberon's (grown son of Dailey Alice and Smoky) decision to leave Edgewood and travel to the city to seek his fortune. His plan is to stay with George Mouse at Old Law Farm and visit the family lawyers about his inheritance. He hopes to one day become a television writer (though he has had no experience of watching television.) We are also updated on George Mouse and the square of dilapidated buildings that surround his farm, populated by people George has collected over time who had nowhere else to go. We are also introduced to Ariel Hawksquill (a sort of witch?) who advises the Noisy Bridge Rod and Gun Club, an influential gathering of powerful people who oversee the affairs of the republic. This may be the first we hear of Russell Eigenblick, a shadowy figure who may be a threat.

Chapter 2 focuses again on Auberon, his visit to the lawyers with the help of the interesting character Fred Savage, his assignment to the folding bedroom at Old Law Farm and his first meeting with the enchanting Sylvie, who has a Destiny and who ends up moving in with Auberon...and so much more.



It's Spring! Morels (left), sumac (above), and other trees

