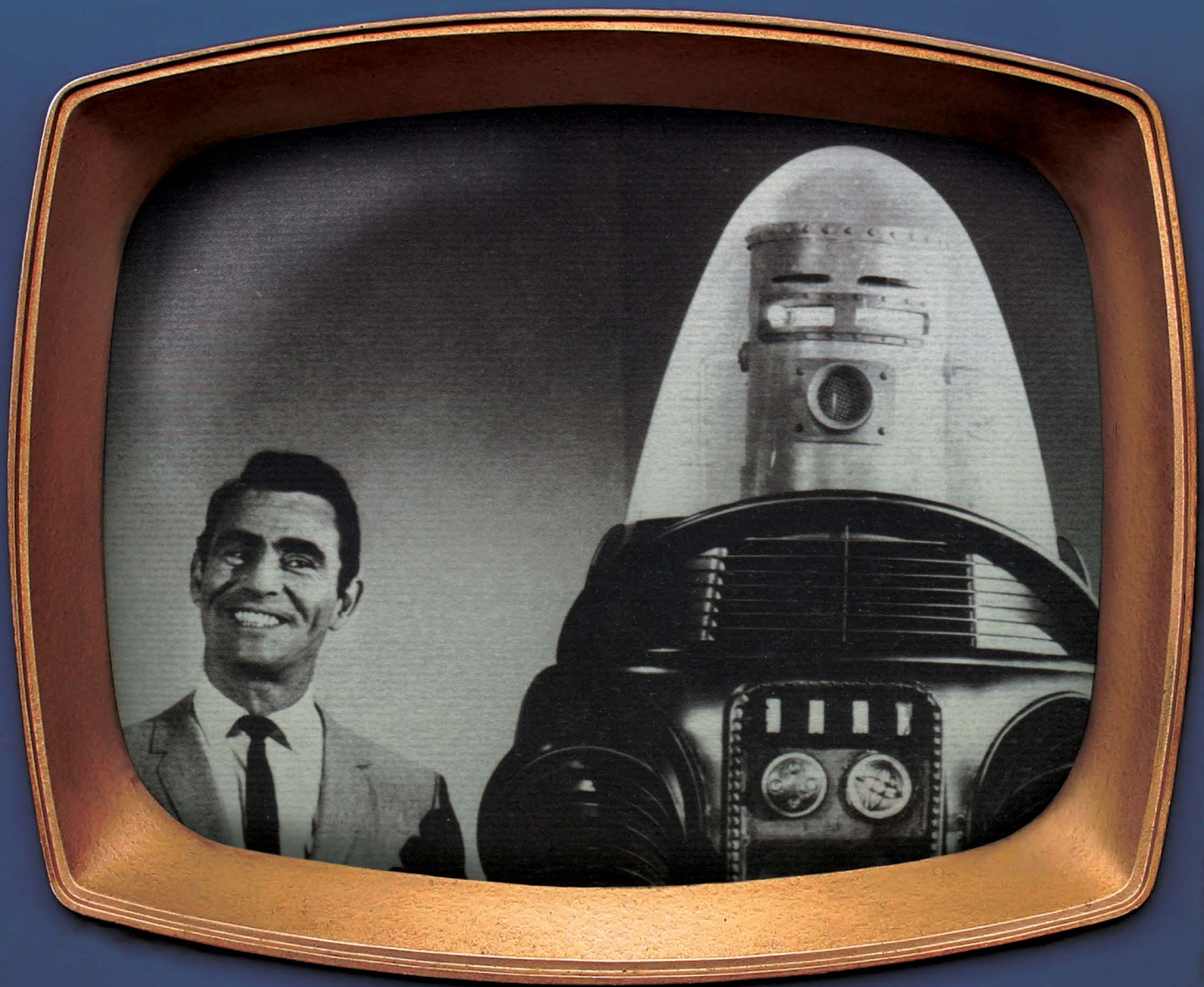


OHIO *ana* QUARTERLY

WINTER 2024 | VOL. 67 NO. 1



Collecting, Preserving, and Celebrating Ohio Literature

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OHIOana QUARTERLY

WINTER 2024

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From the Director

Dear Friends,



“Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science Fiction is the improbable made possible.”
—Rod Serling

When *TV Guide* published its list of television’s “25 Greatest Sci-Fi Legends” in 2004, it included such popular characters as George Jetson and the crew of *Star Trek*. But the legend who came in at number one was the only real person on the list: Rod Serling, the creator and host of *The Twilight Zone*, probably the most iconic science fiction/fantasy program in television history.

Serling, whose early success in the 1950s included some of live television’s greatest plays (*Patterns*, *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, *The Comedian*, etc.), began his writing career in Ohio, first as a student at Antioch College and then in radio and television in Cincinnati. This year marks the 100th anniversary of Serling’s birth, and we’re launching the celebration of his life and work with an article by Cleveland author and television critic Mark Dawidziak.

The Twilight Zone is the perfect jumping off point for this issue’s theme—speculative fiction and science fiction, which have been popular for more than a century, going back to the classic novels by Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Ohio has produced some of the genre’s most celebrated contemporary authors, and we’re delighted to feature six of them in a discussion we’re sure you’ll find fascinating.

As I’m writing this, we’re in the middle of a cold spell—which reminds me that winter is a great time for curling up inside with a good book! You’ll find reviews of a number of new books in this issue, along with a list of titles recently added to our collection.

This year is not only the centennial of Rod Serling’s birth, but also the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Ohioana Library Association. One of the highlights will be the presentation of the 2024 Ohioana Book Festival on Saturday, April 20, at Columbus Metropolitan Library’s Main Library. It will be a fabulous event to celebrate Ohio books and authors—and it’s free! Keep watching our website and social media for details in the coming weeks. We’d love to see you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Weaver".

David Weaver
Executive Director

ON THE COVER

Rod Serling, creator of television’s iconic *The Twilight Zone*, with another iconic sci-fi figure: Robby the Robot, who appeared in three episodes of the series. Image by CBS Photo Archives. Design by Kathryn Powers.

ROD SERLING: SUBMITTED FOR YOUR APPRECIATION

By Mark Dawidziak

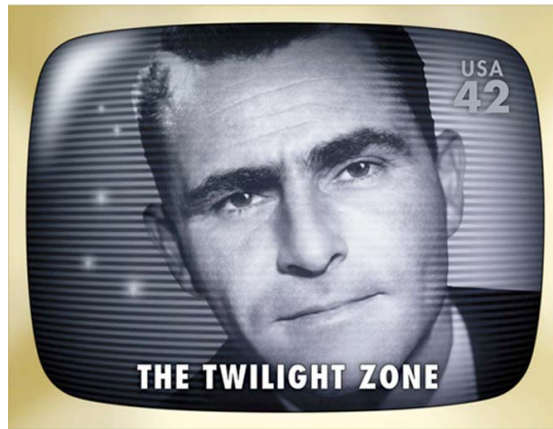
Rod Serling unquestionably is best remembered as the creator, host, and principal writer of the landmark 1959-1964 anthology series, *The Twilight Zone*. And small wonder. The worldwide fame and enduring popularity of that celebrated fantastical show has demonstrated many times over that Serling's "fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man" truly is "as vast as space and as timeless as infinity." Or, as Stephen King once observed, "That *The Twilight Zone* is damn near immortal is something I will not argue with."

Two notable Serling-centric dates await us in 2024. Those are the signposts up ahead, reminding us that October 2 marks the 65th anniversary of *The Twilight Zone* premiere on CBS, and December 25 will be the 100th anniversary of Rodman Edward Serling's birth in Syracuse, New York. He liked to joke that he was the Christmas present delivered unwrapped.

Serling proved to be a gift that kept on giving—a remarkably prolific and important American writer whose pre-*Twilight Zone* credits included some of the most acclaimed live television dramas of the 1950s. Yes, even before opening his mysterious middle ground between science and superstition for business, Serling electrified viewers with such TV triumphs as *Patterns*, his 1955 play about a young executive from Ohio hired by the hard-hearted president of a major Manhattan corporation, and *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, his searing 1956 story about an aging boxer.

If you're tempted to think of Serling as a writer completely defined by his "wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination," consider that he won five Emmys for writing, and three of those golden

statuettes were claimed before *The Twilight Zone* premiered. Many have cited F. Scott Fitzgerald's line about there being no second acts in American lives. It is a maxim thoroughly demolished by a close look at Serling's career: *The Twilight Zone* WAS the second act. Serling lived such a crowded life, he even managed a post-*Twilight Zone* third act before his death at the age of fifty in 1975. It featured honored TV movies, screenplays, and his contributions to the NBC horror anthology *Night Gallery*.



But what triggered that renowned second act was frustration with increasingly intrusive network censors demanding changes in his socially-conscious dramas. His answer to this dilemma was *The Twilight Zone*. The thirty-four-year-old Serling took a gamble in 1959, betting that, under the guise of fantasy, he could address the exact same issues and themes that were making those censors so nervous: prejudice, racism, greed,

scapegoating, how we treat children and the elderly, authoritarian dangers, and the human race's penchant for war. The gamble paid off—big time. The censors didn't raise an eyebrow when the life lessons, social criticism, cautionary tales, and morality plays were served up by aliens, angels, and not-so-grim reapers.

In this year of the Serling centennial, it is also worth noting that the writer's path to *The Twilight Zone* ran through Ohio. Indeed, he became a writer in the Buckeye State.

Growing up in Binghamton, New York, which he always considered his hometown, Serling enlisted in the Army after high school graduation in 1943 at the age of eighteen. He joined the 11th Airborne Division's 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, even though, at five foot

four, he weighed only 118 pounds. Serling served in the South Pacific until the end of World War II. An exploding mortar shell sent shrapnel into his knee and wrist. He was awarded the Purple Heart for his injuries and the Bronze Star for bravery. He also returned from the war coping with the profound psychological impact of hellish battle experiences.

The coping process is what turned Serling into a writer, and Ohio is where this occurred. He enrolled at Antioch College in Yellow Springs in 1946. His plan was to major in physical education. Describing himself as “bitter about everything,” he “turned to writing to get it off my chest.” He was in the ideal environment for this cathartic revelation. “The seeds of his strongly felt convictions, understanding of human nature, and ability to see beyond the obvious were nourished at Antioch and would become the trademarks of his work,” his daughter, writer Anne Serling, observed in her foreword to my 2017 book, *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in The Twilight Zone*.

Serling switched his major to language and literature. During his first year at Antioch, he met Carolyn Louise Kramer, a seventeen-year-old education major. They were married in June 1948. Serling’s true apprenticeship as a writer began when he was named manager of the campus radio station. He was writing and directing a new show every week, often acting in the productions that were broadcast on Springfield station WJEM. He also managed to sell scripts to national radio anthology shows while in Yellow Springs.

After graduation in 1950, he moved to Cincinnati, where he found work as a staff writer at AM radio station WLW. While at WLW, he started contributing scripts to *The Storm*, a new anthology show on Cincinnati television station WKRC. In late 1951, he decided the WLW job had to go. He quit the station, completely focusing on his career as a freelance writer. For three years, he commuted between New York and Ohio as he sold script after script to network television shows. The Serlings moved to Westport, Connecticut, in 1954.

Ohio may not be the first state you associate with Rod Serling, yet, all told, he spent eight of his adult years here. For someone who only lived to be fifty, that’s hardly an inconsiderable amount of time. More importantly, it was

in Ohio that he discovered and developed the writing skills that would lead to *The Twilight Zone*.

“I just want them to remember me a hundred years from now,” goes the famous quote from Serling’s last interview. Approaching the 100th anniversary of his birth, we remember. And we remember primarily because the lessons first penned for *The Twilight Zone* during the Eisenhower administration were valuable to a generation that didn’t know an Internet, home computers, or smart phones. They’re valuable today. And they’ll still be valuable when we’re colonizing Mars and wary of aliens revealing the monsters on Maple Street or dropping by with cookbooks.

Mark Dawidziak is the author or editor of twenty-five books, including Everything I Need to Know I Learned in The Twilight Zone. A board member of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, he spent forty years as a TV and film critic at the Akron Beacon Journal and Cleveland’s The Plain Dealer. His most recent book is the biography A Mystery of Mysteries: The Death and Life of Edgar Allan Poe.

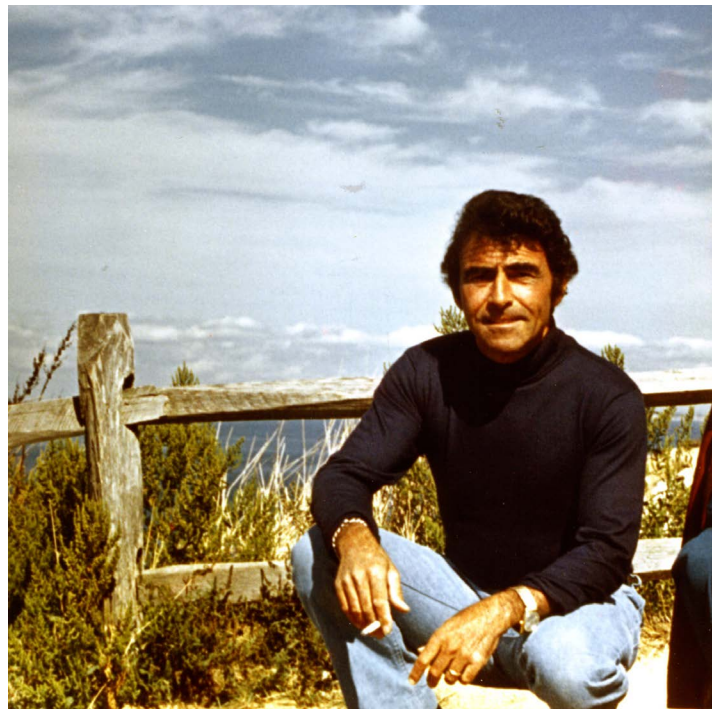


Photo courtesy of Anne Serling

THE DIMENSION OF IMAGINATION: WRITING SPECULATIVE & SCIENCE FICTION

By Kathryn Powers

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination.

—Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone*

Now, picture our signpost up ahead, surrounded by floating buckeyes and a door that opens to an eerie lake—erm, I mean, Lake Erie. You've just crossed over into . . . the Ohio Zone!

At first glance, Ohio may not seem like a “dimension of imagination.” But from the colossal basket-shaped building off State Route 16 to Dublin's sprawling field of concrete corn, our little corner of the Midwest is home to *plenty* of imaginative—and weird—things.

It's also home to imaginative minds—minds that reach across space to chronicle the edges of the universe. That give life to technologies, creatures, and worlds never seen before. That dream up alternative histories and timelines, forever asking, “What if?”

These are the minds of speculative and science fiction writers.

Six of those writers have offered us a rare peek behind their creative curtains. If you find concrete vegetables and basket-impersonating buildings beyond your comprehension, then buckle up. That's nothing compared to what these wildly imaginative—and wonderfully weird—minds can conjure.

There's no turning back now. Hold on tight and enjoy our journey through the dimension of imagination.

Q: What got you started as a writer? Did you always know you wanted to write speculative and/or science fiction?

David Arnold

I've always been an avid reader, but for most of my life, writing a novel felt impossible. Like, who even does that? I toyed with writing for years, but it wasn't until 2011, when my wife and I found out we were going to have a baby, that I got serious about it. We were in Nashville, and I was a freelance musician producing and recording music in my home studio. Since my wife's job was a bit steadier (health insurance for the win), we decided I would stay home with the baby. The thing about making music, though, is that it's an inherently noise-based endeavor—you're either making noise, or you need silence, and neither is happening with a baby in the room. So, I turned my attention to something that wouldn't require noise or silence.

For the next two years, my life revolved around taking care of our baby and working on a book that would become my first novel, *Mosquitoland*. Looking back, those years are among the most precious of my life: learning to be a dad, learning to write a book, learning to let go of one dream in pursuit of another. Five books and ten years later, I feel so fortunate to have stumbled into a career I once thought impossible. (Though I still sometimes stare at the blank page and wonder, *who even does this?*)

Tobias S. Buckell

As a kid, I remember how upset I was that adults had access to a whole secret world that lay right in front of me, if I could just decipher all those marks. I would beg my teachers to re-read stories. When I unlocked reading, I unlocked entire worlds, and I wanted to replicate that! Additionally, when I was learning to read, my mom used to sit me down with a matchbox full of printed words on

paper, and I'd assemble sentences. My impulse to play with sentences goes back as long as I can remember.

The first "big" novels I read were by Clive Cussler and Arthur C. Clarke. I remember how the visuals, locations, and wild ideas in science fiction felt like they blew my head wide open, and that my brain never returned to the same shape. By the time I was in seventh grade—reading science fiction novels on my lap in class—I knew I desperately wanted to write it as well.

Melissa Landers

My career as an author was a happy accident. Growing up, I displayed a talent for writing, but I can't honestly say that I enjoyed it. Writing was a lot of work—it still is!—and "young" Melissa didn't want to spend her free time doing any sort of labor. (To be real, "old" Melissa doesn't, either.) So, I attended college, earned an English degree, and spent the next ten years teaching middle school. Fast forward to 2009. I was four years into an extended maternity leave and missing the creative outlet that teaching had given me. Then I heard about a thing called "NaNoWriMo," an acronym for National Novel Writing Month. It's a bonkers challenge to write 50,000 words in thirty days. I decided to give it a shot . . . and for the first time in my life, writing was fun. More than fun, it was euphoric. I wrote a horribly sloppy first draft of *Alienated* during that month, and five rewrites later, it sold to Disney Hyperion in a multi-book deal that launched my career as a science fiction author. Fourteen books later, I can't promise that writing is always fun, but it is the best job in the world!

Nnedi Okorafor

I wrote a whole memoir to answer this question because it's a long and important story. It's called *Broken Places and Outer Spaces*. The way I came to write was not "normal." My visits with my family to Nigeria, particularly the town of Arondizuogu, were what led me to write science fiction and speculative fiction as a whole. At first, I wanted to explore in fiction those cultural practices and cosmologies that I was often

told were forbidden. When I presented these things to writing workshops and, later, editors and publishers, they all saw what I was writing about as "fantasy," though much of it was not. When I saw cell phones start showing up in the more rural parts of Nigeria, I began to speculate about what these places would be like in the future. You had these places where there was little infrastructure for running water and electricity, yet suddenly everyone there had these portable, chargeable supercomputers. I wanted to read stories about this, and since I saw none being told, I decided to write them myself, so I could read them.

John Scalzi

I got started as a journalist in the 1990s and fully expected that to be the majority of my writing career. But then I detoured into tech, and after that, freelance writing. I wrote my first novel mostly to see if I could do it. Since I was mainly reading thrillers and science fiction at that point, I flipped a coin to decide what genre the novel I was writing would be in. It

came up heads, and I wrote a science fiction novel. I still sometimes wonder how my life would be different if it had come up tails.

Marie Vibbert

I started writing stories almost as soon as I started learning my letters. I suppose this was because of my grandfather. I remember him telling us endless stories as we sat in his lap, stories he obviously made up about my twin sister and me going on adventures with Kicky the Kicking Elephant and Billy the Flying Camel. In second grade, I got a chance to write a story for school, and it was called "Jimmy's Planet." It was about a boy making a rocket ship. I made the letter *J*s all backward. From that moment onward, I was writing stories about space and robots. It was never a decision for me; I was just drawn to those kinds of stories. This might be because the one exception my dad made to his rule—"You should only watch PBS and the news on television"—was *Star Trek*, which we religiously watched as a family on Sundays at 6:00 p.m.

When I unlocked reading, I unlocked entire worlds, and I wanted to replicate that!
– Tobias Buckell

Q: What kind of research do you do? Do you world-build through facts and science, or do you let your imagination guide you?

David: Every book is different. My fourth novel, *The Electric Kingdom*, is a post-apocalyptic story set in the woods of New Hampshire. The characters walk along the Merrimack River, through Concord, and into Manchester. So, I took a couple of trips to the area, walked my characters' path to make sure I was describing everything accurately, and aimed to get a general sense of things. As far as the science fiction aspects, I think it's a combination of facts and imagination. For example, in Manchester, I toured a few old mills which had been repurposed into high-end shops and offices. Since my book was set in a bleak imagining of the future, a few of those mills became ground zero for a geological anomaly that may or may not be sending characters back in time. I started with what was real and then, within that framework, imagined what could be.

Tobias: I'm a magpie, constantly collecting shiny bits of information and storing them away in my notes. I cross-reference those with other ideas to build a rather large database of connections and things that occur to me. The research is, much like me as someone with ADHD, wildly undirected and random, and it goes on all the time. I'll hear about a good nonfiction book, or article, or study, and off I go to explore it. All of that piles up, like a good compost pile, and that becomes the soil I plant story ideas in. It is always happening in the background. I joke that I'm a writer as a way to justify all the information I read. It has to go somewhere!

Melissa: My world-building always starts with characters and imagination, and then I go from there. Of course, I do my best to make sure the science is plausible, but I don't sweat the details. I doubt that my audience wants to read a whole lecture about how artificial gravity works on a spaceship. (Maybe I'm projecting, though. I have ADHD, so when I read, I tend to skim over long sections of exposition.) Anyway, I've probably done more research on human behavior than on the laws of physics. I view science as more of a resource to enhance my stories than a defining focal point. I guess that makes me a "light" science fiction writer, and I'm okay with that. Labels don't matter. I write the books I want to read, and then I hope the right people will discover them.

Nnedi: I am a curious person. Oftentimes, something will interest me, and I'll research it. Or I will learn about something in my travels or when I meet people, etc. I won't be thinking about writing about it at the time; I'll just be genuinely interested in it. Then later on, when I sit down to write (I don't outline, I'm a "pantser"—one who flies by the seat of her pants), that thing I learned about will come forth and wind up in my story. Usually when this happens, I'll then have to go and learn even more about it. That's how it goes. Is that "research"? I guess, but not in a linear way where I go around looking for information to validate what I suspect. It's more freestyle. This way, I learn more things that I don't plan on learning.

John: It depends on the project (a phrase which will crop up many times when asked variations of questions like this). Sometimes, I start writing and then do research as I go along to make things sound plausible. Other times, I have a piece of research that is the grain upon which the story begins to accrete. I don't have any set system, which means I have a fair amount of flexibility to take stories on their own terms.

Marie: Sometimes, the research comes first. I am always reading science articles because they interest me. I'll read about, say, a gravity interferometer in Italy, and think, "Wow, if that were in space instead of on our planet, it would work much better!" or, "How would you set that up?" Bam, I wrote a story about some workers building a space interferometer array. Other times, I end up having to research as I write. I'll get to a point and ask, "Can they do that in zero gravity?" or, "Wait . . . how long would that message take to get to earth?" We are really spoiled by Google in this day and age.

The most research I ever did for a short story ended up being about an alchemist in the 1500s. I also spent weeks exploring Blackpool in the 1920s for a story about mermaids. For me, the research is its own fun. I've spent a couple years reading about early steel worker strikes because it just interests me, and now I'm thinking maybe I should write a novel about that.

Some of my stories don't need research. I swear there must be some . . . but the truth is, who can keep that many facts in their mind? I have to look things up all the time, even if it's just the proper usage of a word.

Q: While you craft stories about fictional people, places, and events, are there any aspects of your personal life and experiences that are reflected in your books and characters?

David: I basically stole my kid and put him in my most recent book, *I Loved You in Another Life*. The main character has a six-year-old brother who's based on my son at that age. Actually, one of the seeds of this novel came during a time when my kid would only ever watch one movie: *E.T.* We watched it once a week for about five months, to the point where I had an idea for a book set in the *E.T.* universe. I typed up a paragraph outlining the idea and sent it to my agent, who sent it to my film agent, who said, "Let me check with Steven." As in Spielberg. I was like, "Um, okay yeah, just, you know, check with Steven." A few days later, I got an email saying, "I'm sorry, but Steven said no." We had an absolute party in our house that night because I'd asked a question and Steven Spielberg had answered me! But in the process, I realized I didn't want to write a book set in the *E.T.* universe; I wanted to write a book about the bond between two people who watch *E.T.* once a week for months. So, I did.

Tobias: Everything goes into that compost pile of creativity, but I don't mindfully try to use my personal life or experiences in particular. By this I mean, of course my life influences my work. I am from the Caribbean, and so is a lot of my family. That has influenced my work in obvious ways, as well as buried itself so deeply in all my work in ways more obvious to Caribbean academics or myself. I think of it like it's background radiation from the cosmos. My experiences get added to the things I read—that giant compost pile of creativity—but by the time my personal life appears on the page, it is often unrecognizable where the inspiration came from. My least Caribbean-appearing story, *Zen and the Art of Starship Maintenance*, is about a robot maintaining the hull of an intergalactic starship, but it was the most influenced by Caribbean research.

Melissa: Oh, absolutely. My personality comes through in everything I write, from futuristic science fiction to archaic fantasy, to contemporary romance, to murder-mystery. Traces of me are always peeking through the pages. I don't plan it that way; it's just inevitable. All writers are so uniquely shaped by our own life experiences that if you gave us the same writing prompt, you would get back a completely different story from each author. My husband has told me his favorite thing about reading my books is finding hints of me in the material. He'll smile and say, "I can hear you in that line."

**The stories influence
my world, and my world
influences my stories.
– Nnedi Okorafor**

Nnedi: Yes. In everything I write. I'm not just making things up out of thin air. The stories influence my world, and my world influences my stories.

John: Occasionally, but probably not as often as people might think. I very rarely base characters on real people, mostly because real people are usually not quite on point for the story I want to tell or what I need the characters to do. I will sometimes name characters after friends (or people who win charity

auctions), but when I do, I warn them that the characters might end up as terrible people and/or may die horribly. One friend I killed twice. He began to wonder if I was angry with him. As for me personally, bits and pieces of my own life experience do show up in my work, because how could they not? But if I want to write about myself, I can always write a memoir.

Marie: I grew up below the poverty line. Like, no heat in winter and no electricity because we paid the rent first-level of poverty. My family was kicked out of the projects! I even had some brief experiences with shelters and sleeping outdoors. That kind of stuff sticks with you. Though I'm crazy well-off now—I'm a computer programmer and can't remember the last time I was afraid I wouldn't make my mortgage payment—my characters are likely to come from backgrounds similar to mine. I'm very conscious of the existence of social class in the worlds I build.

Q: Are there any speculative or science fiction writers who have inspired you? What are you reading right now?

David: I'd be hard-pressed to think of two authors who have inspired me more than Ted Chiang and Emily St. John Mandel. I found Ted Chiang after seeing the movie *Arrival*. His short story collection, *Stories of Your Life and Others* (which includes the original story *Arrival* was based on), is still an all-time favorite. His more recent collection, *Exhalation*, is equally brilliant. Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* was just an absolute game-changer—a quiet, mind-blowing, character-driven post-apocalyptic book like nothing I'd ever read. And her latest, *Sea of Tranquility*, only solidified her as one of the greats.

Tobias: I was in high school when the cyberpunk writers were in high form, like William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and Walter Jon Williams. They had a big impact on my writing, at the time. Later, reading Octavia Butler showed me how much bigger science fiction could be. Nalo Hopkinson's novels gave me proof that I could take my Caribbean background and fold it into my love of science fiction. Without Hopkinson's books, I don't think I would be here.

Today, I'm really enjoying Adrian Tchaikovsky's Children of Time book series. They're amazing. I could gush. I'm also reading *The Blue Beautiful World*, the latest novel by Karen Lord, a Barbadian science fiction and fantasy author. Her novel *Redemption in Indigo* is what I would consider a classic in any field. It is an amazing tale, and amazingly told.

Melissa: I grew up on a steady diet of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, and the first novel I remember reading for pleasure was *The Hobbit*. When I was older, I devoured the Dune series. (The first six books, anyway. I've lost count of how many there are now.) Bottom line: I've always been drawn to speculative fiction more than any other genre. My tastes have diversified with time, but I still love the extraordinary. Even if I'm in the mood to read romance

or mystery, I prefer novels with a science fiction element, like the *Outlander* series. Right now, I'm reading nonfiction . . . but only out of necessity! My husband and I want to sail around the world, and in order to make that happen, I should probably learn how to sail. After I master that new skill, I'll go back to the delightfully weird and outlandish stories that call to my heart.

Nnedi: I love plenty of science fiction writers, but my greatest influences, as a writer, are Ben Okri, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Buchi Emecheta, and Stephen King. If I need to name a science fiction writer who has deeply influenced me, that would be Nalo Hopkinson. Science fiction is a label, but it doesn't describe every aspect of my writing. The label actually leaves a lot out. And just because I write science fiction does not mean that's all I read, or what I love to read most. I also write a lot more than just science fiction.

What am I reading right now? I just finished a Saudi Arabian fantasy novel called *HWJN* by Ibraheem Abbas. It was brilliant.

John: There are lots of science fiction writers I took inspiration from, but I think it's equally important to acknowledge that my development as a writer was informed by authors and writers outside the genre. Nora Ephron (essayist, humorist, and screenwriter) was as important an influence on my writing as, say, Robert Heinlein or Susan Cooper, to name two genre writers. I recently had a chance to briefly meet Carl Hiaasen, whose sense of humor and of the absurd informs my work, even though the two of us work in separate genres. Influence and inspiration can come from anywhere.

What I'm currently reading: a book I can't tell you about because it's not out yet, and I'm reading it for potential blurb purposes. I get asked to do that a lot. It's fun to get sneak previews.

Marie: Right now, I'm reading Terry Pratchett's biography, because I got it for free with my Hugo voter's packet! (Plug: Vote for the Hugo Awards! It costs \$50, but

**Influence and
inspiration can come
from anywhere.
– John Scalzi**

you get free books, graphic novels, and art!) When I was a kid, I snobbishly chose all my books based on whether there were numbers in the title or stars on the cover. Or robots. I would forgive no numbers or stars if there was a cool robot on the cover. So, I had never read the works of Sir Terry, though many of my friends in college grew up on him. I'm now reading his early works, along with the biography, and finding it great fun.

My big inspiration as a little kid was Andre Norton. I had a crush on "him" and thought, "He writes women so sensitively!" I was actually disappointed to learn she was a woman. But now I can think of no greater role model—a woman from Cleveland who blazed trails in the genres of science fiction and fantasy!

Q: What is your latest book? Is it a continuation of an existing series, the start of a new one, or a standalone novel?

David: My most recent novel is *I Loved You in Another Life*, a standalone, speculative love story. It's about the only two people who hear the voice of a mysterious singer, whose lyrics bring their souls together time and again through the ages. Every book feels personal, but this one cuts deep. As I already mentioned, there's a character based on my kid. But there's also a love based on my love, and original songs I wrote and recorded for the novel. There's a ton of *E.T.* and deep friendships and banter and music and birds, and these little vignette short stories about people across time and space who fall in love in supernatural ways. It's sad and hopeful and (I hope) funny. I basically sobbed my way through writing it. Not saying you'll sob your way through reading it, but I can't promise you won't.

Tobias: My latest novel, *A Stranger in the Citadel*, is the story of what happens in a world where literature and all forms of writing are banned by powerful, godlike entities. The first line is, "You shall not suffer a librarian to live." It's in a conversation with the end of *Fahrenheit 451*, where the characters are memorizing novels to keep them alive. I found that idea to be wild and began to do some research into oral tradition, and how even when not written down, stories can live for thousands of years.

When I wrote it, it was an interesting thought experiment. Now that it's out in print, the reviews note how timely the book's main idea is, which I found a bit

depressing as a supporter of libraries and librarians. I'm pretty sure there are places where this book won't be allowed today. That wasn't the case when I first started writing it.

Melissa: My newest book is *Make Me A Liar*. It's about a girl who uses her power of transferrable consciousness as a side-hustle, taking over her clients' bodies to do the things they're too scared to do for themselves, like confront a bully, break up with a manipulator, etc. But while she's in the body of a client, someone uses *her* vacant body to commit murder—on camera, in public—and she has to prove that someone else is the killer. It's a standalone novel with series potential. Basically, the ending is complete, no cliffhangers, and the figurative door is left open for the main character to stumble across new crimes to solve. *Make Me A Liar* is the most fun book I've ever written, so I really hope it does well enough to justify a sequel.

Nnedi: My latest work is the Desert Magician's Duology, the second of which was released in November 2023. The first book is *Shadow Speaker* and the second is *Like Thunder*. This is a young adult series. My next novel is an adult novel, releasing in 2025.

John: My latest book is *Starter Villain*, the elevator pitch of which is, "Down on his luck average guy inherits his mysterious uncle's supervillainy business. Hijinks ensue." It's a standalone novel, but then many of the books that are now the first in a series started off as standalones. If the public loves them (and buys them!), then the publisher will often ask for more in that world. Then it becomes a series. No matter what, however, every novel has to be enjoyable in itself. In that respect, they all have to stand alone.

Marie: My latest published novel is *The Gods Awoke*, which came out last year. It is a standalone, secondary-world exploration of what a world with real gods would look like . . . and why maybe it would be a bad idea to worship them. Yes, a fantasy! But it's a fantasy with a science fiction fan's heart. I think "fantasy for science fiction fans" may be its own genre? I really wanted this book to be about communication, and how easily we fail to do so. It's a touch philosophical.

I also need to plug that my first novel, *Galactic Hellcats*, is on Audible now. It's about a female biker gang in outer

space rescuing a gay prince. (It's not so philosophical.) I'm working on a sequel, *Hellcats in Love*, which is mostly done and told from the point of view of a sassy sex robot. Wish me luck on selling that! The original publisher for *Galactic Hellcats* folded up shop after agreeing to buy it.

Q: Do you have any advice for aspiring writers of speculative or science fiction?

David: I think there's an impulse to overly explain and describe the worlds we create. Whether it's science fiction, speculative fiction, or even fantasy, we feel the need to explain the rules of this made-up place and describe all the ways it's different from the real world. Certainly, there is a place for explanation and description, but I'm constantly reminding myself to let the characters do the heavy lifting. A well-developed character is the easiest cheat for "show don't tell": as they see and experience the world, the reader will, too.

Tobias: Read as much as you can get your hands on. Then read some more. It's simply the best way to cram our heads full of words, and how words work, and more. It's our apprenticeship, reading as much as we can.

Besides that, the next piece of advice is to not wait for permission, or the perfect moment, or the perfect project. Perfect is the enemy of good, and no one is going to show up and tell you to start that story or submit something to a magazine or publisher when you're done. You have to do it, and waiting for the perfect moment means you may end up waiting a long time. You don't need anyone to tell you it's okay to write; just start playing with stories and see where they take you.

I started with printed-out words on cut up pieces of paper, after all. It's the journey, not the destination.

Melissa: Don't let anyone convince you that your story idea is too weird. In fact, make it weirder—the weirder, the better! Just imagine a young Frank Herbert at a cocktail party, sipping his wine and telling his friends about the extended story he was plotting for the Dune series. Imagine the look on their faces when they hear about book six, where Leto II has morphed into a human-worm hybrid who repeatedly kills and re-clones Duncan Idaho because he both loves and hates the man. (There's a lot more to it than that, but still.) If a murderous, tyrannical, precognitiant man-worm with an unhealthy

obsession for a clone isn't too weird for the Dune series' fans, then your idea isn't too weird for the market.

Nnedi: My advice to aspiring speculative fiction writers is the same as my advice to all aspiring writers:

Write. Do the work.

Have the courage to tell your story.

Excuses change nothing.

Hone your craft before trying to get published.

Instant and early validation can be toxic.

Ignore trends.

Relax your ego.

Experiment.

You can always edit.

You have your own specific path.

There's no formula.

There's no rush.

Be okay with writing something bad.

Things may not go as you expect. Learn to go with your flow; don't force it.

Leave the AI alone; don't be lazy.

First and foremost, have fun.

John: Read widely, in the genre and out of it. Understand the current mechanics of the publishing world. Put your butt in a chair and write. Finish what you write; it's okay if it's terrible, because that's what revision is for. Send yourself out. Rejection happens to everyone, and it's never personal. When you're done, read another book, as a treat. Then write some more.

Marie: Embrace your weird. What you obsess over, what you can't help but read about. You might think there's nothing special about you, but that's because you're very familiar with you. Every human is a unique universe, and there are people out there who will be fascinated by your particular take on things. Don't, under any circumstances, try to write something "commercially viable" or what you think the public wants. You'll always guess wrong, or at best, finish the novel just as the trend dies.

Meet the Authors

David Arnold is the *New York Times* and *USA Today*–bestselling author of *Mosquitoland*, *I Loved You in Another Life*, *The Electric Kingdom*, *Kids of Appetite*, and *The Strange Fascinations of Noah Hypnotik*. He has won the Southern Book Prize and the Great Lakes Book Award, and was named a *Publishers Weekly* Flying Start for his debut. His books have been translated into over a dozen languages. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Arnold lives in Lexington, Kentucky, with his wife and son. Visit him online at <https://davidarnoldbooks.com> and follow him on Instagram @iamdavidarnold.

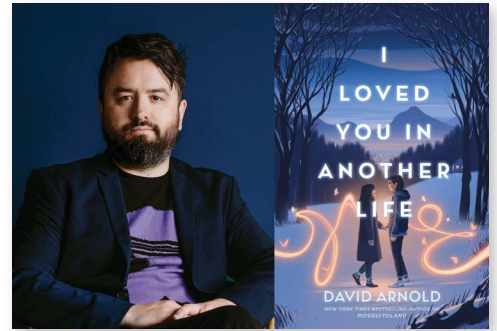


Photo by Ayna Lorenzo

Tobias S. Buckell is a *New York Times*–bestselling author and World Fantasy Award winner born in the Caribbean. He grew up in Grenada and spent time in the British and US Virgin Islands, which influences much of his work. His novels and almost one hundred stories have been translated into twenty different languages. His work has been nominated for awards including the Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy, and the Astounding Award for Best New Science Fiction Author. Buckell currently lives in Bluffton, Ohio, with his wife and two daughters. He teaches Creative Writing at Bluffton University and is also an instructor at University of Maine’s Stonecoast MFA Program in Creative Writing. Visit him online at <https://tobiasbuckell.com>.

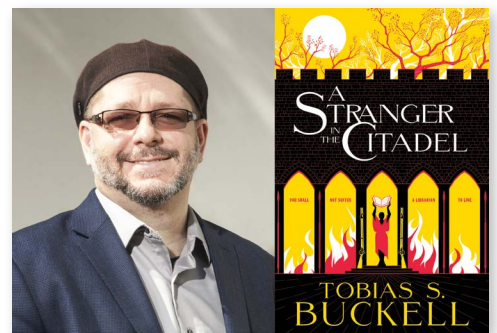


Photo by Marlon James

Melissa Landers is a former teacher who left the classroom to pursue other worlds. A proud science fiction geek, she isn’t afraid to wear her Princess Leia costume in public—just ask her three embarrassed kids. She lives in Cincinnati, where she writes fantasy and science fiction adventures for the young at heart. Visit her online at <https://melissa-landers.com> and follow her on X/Twitter @Melissa_Landers and Instagram @melissalanders.

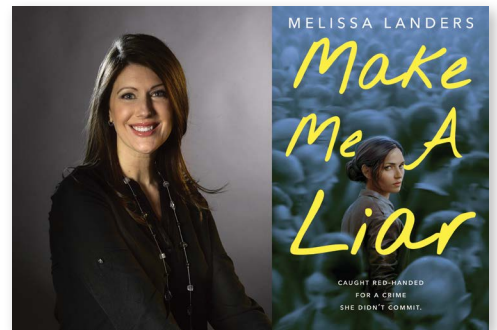


Photo by Gene Mollica

Meet the Authors

Nnedi Okorafor is an award-winning, *New York Times*–bestselling novelist of science fiction and fantasy for children, young adults, and adults. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Nigerian immigrant parents, Okorafor is known for drawing from African cultures to create captivating stories with unforgettable characters and evocative settings. Okorafor has received the World Fantasy, Nebula, Eisner, and Lodestar Awards, and multiple Hugo Awards, among others, for her books. Nnedi holds a PhD in literature, two master’s degrees (journalism and literature), and lives in Phoenix, Arizona, with her daughter. Visit her online at <https://nnedi.com> and follow her on X/Twitter @nnedi and Instagram @nnediokorafor.

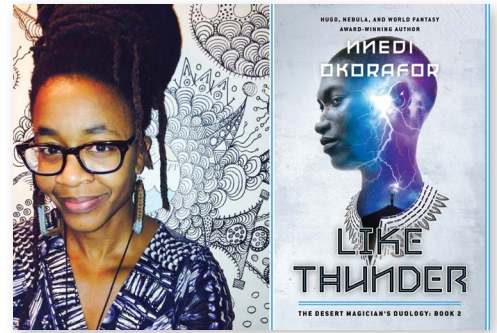


Photo by Picasa

John Scalzi has written nearly all of his science fiction from a home office in Bradford, Ohio, where he can look out the window and see Amish buggies clopping by. *Old Man’s War*, his 2005 debut novel, was a finalist for the Hugo Award for Best Novel and helped him win the John W. Campbell/Astounding Award for Best New Writer. *Redshirts*, his *New York Times*–bestselling novel, won the Hugo Award for Best Novel in 2013. *The Kaiju Preservation Society* was a 2023 Alex Award recipient, 2023 Ohioana Book Award winner, and is currently optioned for television. His most recent novel is *Starter Villain*. Visit him online at <https://whatever.scalzi.com>.

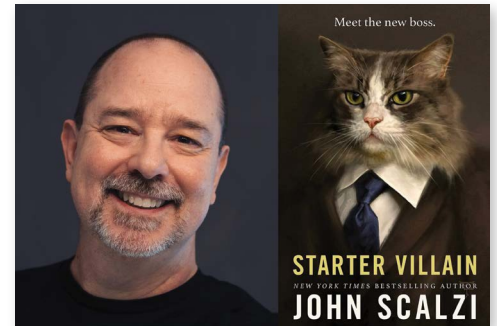


Photo courtesy of John Scalzi

Marie Vibbert is a Hugo and Nebula–nominated author. Her short fiction has appeared in top magazines such as *Nature*, *Analog*, and *Clarkesworld*, and been translated into Czech, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Her debut novel, *Galactic Hellcats*, was long-listed by the British Science Fiction Award, and her work has been called “everything science fiction should be” by *The Oxford Culture Review*. Vibbert also writes poetry, comics, and computer games. By day, she is a computer programmer and lives in Cleveland, Ohio, with her family. Visit her online at <https://marievibbert.com> and X/Twitter @mareasie and Instagram @marievibbert.



Photo by Christina Ramirez

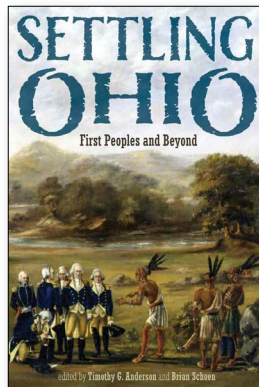
Book Reviews

NONFICTION

Anderson, Timothy G., and Brian Schoen, eds. *Settling Ohio: First Peoples and Beyond*.

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2023.

Inspired by the 2019 *New York Times*–bestselling book *The Pioneers: The Heroic Story of the Settlers Who Brought the American Ideal West* by David McCullough, the editors and authors of *Settling Ohio: First Peoples and Beyond* first gathered at a February 2020 conference on the Ohio University campus in Athens. Presenting their research related to aspects of the settlement of Ohio, they demonstrated that McCullough’s work, though compelling, represented an “incomplete account” of its stated topic.



In his review of McCullough’s *The Pioneers* for the summer 2019 *Ohioana Quarterly*, Bill Eichenberger, Editor-in-Chief of Ohio History Connection’s *Echoes* magazine, wrote about the presence of Native Americans in the Pulitzer Prize–winning historian’s final book: “He dispenses with them quickly in order to tell a different story.”

Those absent stories are the ones told in *Settling Ohio*—the stories of Native Americans, African Americans, and other immigrant groups that are frequently silenced. These communities were the first to construct dwellings, farm the land, and utilize Ohio’s resources. By compiling the work presented at the 2020 conference, the editors bring forth aspects of American history that are too often ignored in favor of the narrow accounts and contributions of “pale-skinned peoples,” challenging the reader to rethink the concept of who and what a settler is.

Thirteen thousand years ago, as the last of the glaciers melted from the landscape, the first humans arrived

in North America. Evidenced by the existence of Clovis (fluted) points in nearly all of Ohio’s eighty-eight counties, these hunter-gatherers were the first to populate the Ohio River Valley. It is their descendants, those of the Adena culture, who created the first earthworks in the form of conical burial mounds, and the Adena’s descendants, the Hopewell, who constructed monumental ceremonial earthworks circa 1–400 CE. These Native Americans evolved over thousands of years, building the region’s first homes, introducing the first crops, and farming the land. Their story is told in part one of this book, “First Nations.”

In part two, “American Foundations,” the Northwest Ordinance and the beginnings of the state of Ohio are examined. European Americans, expanding from New England, resettled the lands Native populations were driven away from. German Americans brought their Pennsylvania-German culture and built rural churches with adjoining cemeteries to support Lutheran and Reformed congregations. From the south, free and literate African Americans arrived. Over ninety early Ohio communities were home to farmers of African descent, who owned the land they farmed and paid taxes in support of schools their children were not permitted to attend.

Part three, “Alternative Histories,” further examines the diverse peoples who settled Ohio and their institutions, while also analyzing the removal of the remaining Native population. Most compelling is the afterword, “History vs. Legacy,” by Chief Glenna J. Wallace. She discusses her experience discovering her ancestry, and how across Ohio, she encountered the word “savages” as the term most frequently used to describe her people. Wallace was a pivotal advocate for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks being granted UNESCO World Heritage status—monuments constructed by her ancestors. She recounts a moment during this advocacy when she met an archaeologist who described her ancestors as “geniuses” instead of “savages,” bringing her to tears.

Though academic in form, one of the editors, Brian Schoen, expresses in the introduction that this book’s

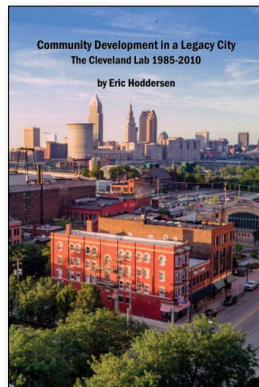
aim is to produce a text free of the jargon that would turn away a larger community of readers, while still engaging with scholars. I believe they succeeded in making *Settling Ohio: First Peoples and Beyond* a book for all readers interested in expanding their understanding of Ohio history, the people that first settled the land, and those who followed.

REVIEWED BY DAVID DISTELHORST, THE LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARIAN AT BEXLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Hoddersen, Eric. *Community Development in a Legacy City: The Cleveland Lab 1985-2010*.

Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland State University, 2023.

Community Development in a Legacy City takes readers through the creation of Cleveland’s highly-coordinated and productive community development system, the continued evolution of this network, and its impact on city neighborhoods over a quarter century. This system rests upon a foundation of active residents and grassroots community development corporations, is serviced and nurtured through a few city-wide nonprofit organizations, and reaches up to the supportive C-suites of Cleveland City Hall, corporations, and philanthropic foundations.



For over twenty years, Eric Hoddersen served as President of Neighborhood Progress, Inc.—a city-wide nonprofit organization playing a critical role in pooling private dollars, aligning with government policy and programs at all levels, and most importantly, working with neighborhood-based entities to coordinate strategic investments in Cleveland neighborhoods. Hoddersen brings his vast personal experience to bear in this thoughtful, well-written memoir.

Hoddersen expresses justifiable pride in the national recognition the Cleveland community development system has garnered, the substantial redevelopment activity that occurred during his tenure (\$750 million invested in 6,433 units of housing, 2.5 million square

feet of commercial and industrial space, along with 100 businesses supported, resulting in 3,200 jobs created or retained), and the numerous public-private partnerships formed in the era to make Cleveland’s neighborhoods increasingly livable and economically competitive. Yet, the author remains objective and clear-eyed about how all that has been accomplished at the neighborhood level ameliorates, but does not solve, the decades of industrial decline, persistent poverty, and the lingering effects from the 2008 mortgage foreclosure crisis. In addition to giving a detailed recounting and analysis of past events, Hoddersen offers reasons for his continued optimism about Cleveland’s future and expert suggestions for moving forward toward safer, more livable, and equitable neighborhoods.

Community Development in a Legacy City is an important addition to the list of engaging books about this era of Cleveland’s civic history written from a variety of perspectives, including: *Empowering the Public-Private Partnership* by George Voinovich, *Making Equity Planning Work* by Norman Krumholz and John Forester, *Rebuilding Cleveland: The Cleveland Foundation and Its Evolving Urban Strategy* by Diana Tittle, and *Democratizing Cleveland: The Rise and Fall of Community Organizing* by Randy Cunningham.

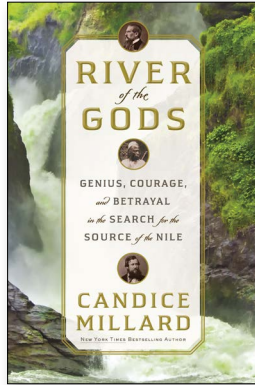
Not only is *Community Development in a Legacy City* a valuable guide for local government officials, city planners, community organizers, and development practitioners, but it is also accessible to the interested general reader. Cleveland State University has made the book available as a free download for anyone to read at: <https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/community-development-cleveland-eh/>.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT JAQUAY, A RETIRED LAWYER WHO COMPILED THE CLEVELAND NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRESS RESEARCH COLLECTION AT THE WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND AUTHORED THE ENTRY ON NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRESS, INC. IN *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CLEVELAND HISTORY*

Millard, Candice. *River of the Gods: Genius, Courage, and Betrayal in the Search for the Source of the Nile.*

New York, NY: Doubleday, 2022.

2023 Ohioana Book Award finalist *River of the Gods* is a riveting read, taking the reader deep into the African jungle along with the intrepid (vainglorious) explorers searching for riches, tribes to conquer, and, in this book's focus, the source of the Nile River—much like the quest for the Northwest Passage in North America, only far more dangerous.



Author Candice Millard writes of mid-nineteenth-century Europe, “Europe’s fascination with Egyptian history and the Nile Valley had grown into a full-scale frenzy.” Finding the source of the Nile—the longest river in the world—was equated with the finding of the Holy Grail. Ventures to reach its origins were attempted and defeated countless times. Amidst this fervor, the British Royal Geographical Society (RGS) resolved “to mount one of the most complex and demanding expeditions ever attempted” in Africa.

Enter Richard Burton, genius scholar, writer, and linguist—he spoke twenty-five languages and a dozen dialects. When Burton learned of the Nile expedition, he wrote, “I shall strain every nerve to command it.” Burton selected Jack Speke as his second-in-command, a lieutenant in the Bengal Native Infantry. Sidi Mubarak Bombay was hired as the trip’s guide and proved essential to whatever success the trek can claim.

Prior to the expedition’s official departure, their camp was attacked one night. In the heat of the battle, a javelin was thrust through Burton’s face from cheek to cheek. The spear could not be removed amidst the chaos, and with excruciating pain and loss of blood, he somehow staggered to safety. Speke was also badly wounded, stabbed eleven times by Somali warriors, and barely crawled to safety himself. This setback was deemed too severe to continue, and the Nile expedition was postponed. Both leaders returned home, barely speaking to one another.

This enmity carried over to the subsequent expedition. Another Burton/Speke venture was planned, underwritten—and underfunded—by the Royal Geographic Society. The second expedition left in June 1857, with neither enough supplies nor enough men. Only 136 men set off, while Burton felt they needed at least 170. No one in the party thought they’d succeed, or even survive. The exploratory efforts were negatively affected by disastrous desertions with critical supplies stolen, adding to the threat of starvation and disease.

The expedition slogged through wetlands and was often plagued by swarms of insects. Weather was unpredictable and temperamental, alternating between scorching heat and brutal, drenching storms. “Furious blasts battered raindrops like musket bullets,” wrote Burton, who made copious notes every day during the journey.

Millard recounts the many illnesses and injuries that also plagued the expedition. Six months into the journey, Burton was almost paralyzed from disease, while Speke suffered from near blindness. At times, they were so sick they had to be carried in hammocks, semi-conscious. In one camp, a small black beetle crawled deep into Speke’s ear canal. Many methods were tried to get it out, including stabbing the beetle with a knife, which only did more damage. In addition to being nearly blind, Speke also became partially deaf.

Their problems seemed to never end: low personnel and morale, meager food reserves and supplies, tensions with the native peoples, poor health, as well as extreme weather ranging from horrid dry spells to monsoons. The expedition was a series of mishaps, disappointments, desertions, fatigue, and tragedies.

When they finally reached Lake Tanganyika, Burton claimed—without evidence—that it was the source of the Nile. After hearing rumors of another lake, Speke decided to trek further. Bombay joined him, but Burton was too ill and was forced to stay behind. Speke’s small expedition reached Nyanza, and he named the body of water Lake Victoria, declaring it to be the source of the Nile.

Speke beat Burton back to the Royal Geographic Society in London, claiming to have found the source which they had been seeking. He received credit and awards for the discovery of the Nile’s source. Burton refuted

Speke's claims, believing "his" Lake Tanganyika was the correct source of the Nile. Immediately, Speke began lobbying the RGS for another expedition to substantiate his claim, this time with him in charge. They did choose Speke to lead the next expedition, which infuriated Burton.

During that next difficult expedition, which left Burton behind to recuperate (and fume), Speke and Bombay reached Nyanza again. However, they did not have the supplies, the scientific measurements, or complicated navigation equipment that Speke needed to definitively determine that the Nile flowed out of Nyanza.

Another expedition was then funded to verify—with certainty—the source of the Nile. This time, David Livingstone was appointed the commander, which angered Speke. With all the needed specialized equipment, Livingstone was assigned to circumnavigate Nyanza and *prove* the Nile source. However, he disappeared into Africa for years without contact. Henry Stanley was finally sent to find Livingstone, and he did, on the shores of Nyanza, uttering the famous words, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

By the time of Burton's death in 1890, Africa had been explored, mapped, and colonized by European countries.

Millard's book is both readable and informative. She anticipates the reader's interest and fills that expectation wonderfully. Her extensive research is evident throughout, including six pages of bibliography. The endpapers feature a broad map of Eastern Africa on one page facing another page with a closeup of the area from Lake Tanganyika to the Indian Ocean, both of which I frequently referenced throughout my read.

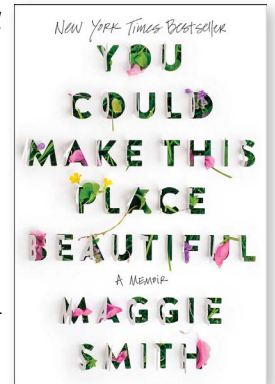
As the well-read Burton quoted St. Augustine, "The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page."

GEORGE COWMEADOW BAUMAN WAS TAUGHT GEOGRAPHY BY HIS FATHER, WHO WOULD GIVE HIM A QUARTER EACH TIME HE COULD LOCATE A SPECIFIC MAP FEATURE HIS FATHER ASKED HIM TO FIND.

Smith, Maggie. *You Could Make This Place Beautiful*.

New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2023.

Maggie Smith's memoir, *You Could Make This Place Beautiful*, draws its title from the very end of her 2016 viral poem, "Good Bones." From this optimistic title to the white dust jacket flecked with tiny pink and yellow flowers, it might be hard to imagine the heartbreak between the covers. The acclaimed central Ohio poet opens the door to her inner world, unraveling the impact of her dismantled marriage—a marriage, she says, that was never the same after that poem.



Despite Smith's literary success, her husband's resentment seemed to cast a shadow over her writing achievements. Smith's portrayal of this pivotal moment and its aftermath may resonate with readers who have found themselves, or their friends, in a similar situation. She candidly guides readers through the devastation of discovering her husband's infidelity, navigating the struggles of divorce, grappling with the effects on her two young children, and questioning her identity as a writer.

But rather than a chronological blow-by-blow of traumatic events, Smith explores the devastation as only a poet could—in a series of impressions. She tells the story in pieces, crafting it through short chapters, recurring chapter headings, flashbacks, and the measured use of white space. In a chapter titled "This Moment Isn't For You," the author refrains from sharing an emotional moment that occurred with her children. "I'm offering the absences, too—the spaces I know aren't empty, but I can't see what's inside them. Like the white spaces between stanzas in a poem." While she doesn't share that particular story about her children, she does offer many sweet moments with them throughout the work. Some surprisingly humorous moments surface as well. In the chapters called "Some People Ask," Smith grabs the chance to share how she'd really like to respond to the probing questions people ask when someone is going through a divorce.

Some readers will undoubtedly relate to the Ohio setting of the memoir. Smith weaves her Columbus connection throughout the narrative. From the tree-lined streets of Bexley to the curves of State Route 315 near the hospital, specific shops, and an interview with the *Columbus Dispatch*, the local elements provide a vivid backdrop and add to the authenticity of Smith's introspective journey.

Her exploration runs even deeper as she also reflects on how stories develop, dissecting the structure of her experience in terms of foreshadowing, inciting incidents, rising action, conflict, and conclusion. This self-awareness adds enjoyable layers to her storytelling, which seems to unfold like a mystery novel, a ghost story, or even—as she aptly describes it—a play.

Early in the memoir, Smith acknowledges there are many sides to a story, and with this book, she's after self-understanding, not revenge. "There's no such thing as a tell-all, only a tell-some—a tell-most, maybe. This is a tell-mine, and the mine keeps changing because I keep changing." She's settling on her own version of what happened and where to go from there.

With *You Could Make This Place Beautiful*, this *New York Times*–bestselling author goes beyond the traditional memoir, offering a poetic exploration of love, loss, and self-discovery, while demonstrating how writing can be a form of healing. Smith invites readers to reflect on their own narratives and find solace in the universal experiences of change and resilience.

REVIEWED BY BECKY HIRN, WRITER, TEACHER, TRAVELER, GARDENER, AND NATURE ENTHUSIAST IN COLUMBUS, OH

FICTION

Kass, Linda. *Bessie: A Novel*.

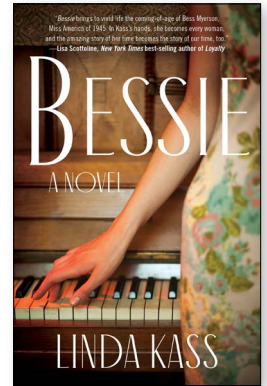
Berkeley, CA: She Writes Press, 2023.

In *Bessie: A Novel*, author Linda Kass presents a new fictionalized biography of Bess Myerson, the first and, to date, only Jewish Miss America.

The book chronicles Myerson's life as a first-generation American: her time growing up in the Bronx, playing piano and flute extremely well, and her dreams of becoming a professional musician, conductor, or music

teacher. Through an interesting set of circumstances and being in the right place at the right time, she becomes Miss New York City and then Miss America.

Kass focuses on Myerson's formative years, which she spent in an insulated, secular Jewish community in the Bronx. It was here that she learned to play the piano and gained an impressive understanding of music. After attending high school at the School for Music and Art (M&A) in Manhattan, Myerson continued her studies at Hunter College in the Bronx, receiving a broad liberal arts education.



Myerson entered the beauty pageant world hoping to use the prize money to continue her education. Many readers will be interested in the historic Miss America pageant and all the behind-the-scenes details. But this is where antisemitism and bigotry rear their ugly heads.

Counter to all expectations, Myerson was crowned Miss America in 1945. She and the runners-up were sent to tour the United States just as World War II was ending—a precarious time full of discrimination, fear, and misjudgment of the Jewish community around the world. After experiencing this firsthand, Myerson became a spokeswoman for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), speaking out against hatred and antisemitism, and working on their campaign to combat prejudice, segregation, and racism.

Kass ends her tale here and touches on the rest of Myerson's life and career in an epilogue, including information about her time in radio, television, and then in New York City government.

While *Bessie* draws on life in New York City in the 1930s and 1940s, the story of Bess Myerson will resonate with today's readers amidst the worldwide rise of bigotry and prejudice. It will especially appeal to a Jewish readership for its focus on Jewish life in the United States in the mid-twentieth century.

Kudos to Linda Kass for writing another engaging novel that shines light on an influential figure and time from Jewish history.

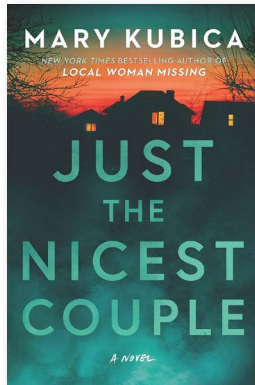
REVIEWED BY MIRIAM KAHN, LIBRARIAN, COLUMBUS, OH

Kubica, Mary. *Just the Nicest Couple*.

New York, NY: Park Row Books, 2023.

Allow me to start with a summary. Allow me to end with a confession.

Just the Nicest Couple begins with Lily Scott returning home from a local park. She's distraught. She shares with her husband, Christian, that Jake Hayes dragged her into the woods and tried to rape her. Jake Hayes is the husband of Nina, who teaches at the same school as Lily. Lily was able to escape. Jake doesn't return home.



Kubica masterfully blends the stories of the couples, serving a psychological tale that throttled my nerves into a state of anxiety and at the same time lifted my sense of whimsical excitement. If I wasn't thinking about the story, then I was talking about it at work, the dinner table, the grocery store checkout . . .

Now, my confession.

I wish I could send this review back in time. I wish I could read it before I first opened the novel's cover. But, alas, I cannot. I can only impart my words to you.

Reader, learn from my mistakes. Sit back and enjoy this novel. Trust the author!

Reviewer's mistake number one: No author can pull off first-person storytelling to satisfy me unless that author's name is Bret Easton Ellis. Kubica's story revolves around two couples: Lily and Christian Scott, and Nina and Jake Hayes. Christian is one of the two first-person narrators. Nina is the other. This narrow perspective of only knowing what two people know will certainly dilute a novel that strives to exist on bookstore shelves labeled "suspense" or "thriller."

Wrong. Don't be me. Read Christian's chapters and Nina's chapters as if those two characters are sitting across the table from you. Kubica knows what she is doing.

Reviewer's mistake number two: I know this two-narrator story will end up a cheap writer's gimmick. One of these narrators is going to be unreliable. I'll find so

many holes in this story, in this plot, my copy of the book is going to look like a block of Swiss cheese when this read is over.

Wrong. Don't be me. I'm ruining nothing when I say that these characters are sharing their truths. And they have some disturbing truths.

Reviewer's mistake number three: The crime and confession come early in the story. It's impossible that Kubica is going to maintain suspense, and my attention, over the next three hundred-ish pages of the book.

Wrong. Don't be me. There's so much to unpack in this Chicago suburb that the story is like a *Dateline* episode on steroids. *Just the Nicest Couple* makes *48 Hours* seem like an *ABC Afterschool Special*.

If I wasn't such a pessimist, I could have enjoyed this story even more. This was my first Kubica novel. Lucky for me, she has seven others and a new title forthcoming.

REVIEWED BY J. M. GREEN, WRITER AND POET, MIAMI UNIVERSITY

Montgomery, Jess. *The Echoes* (Kinship #4).

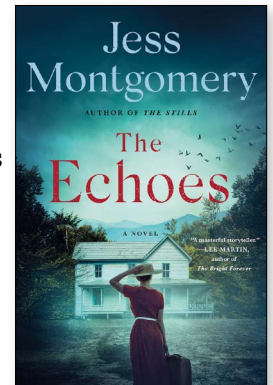
New York, NY: Minotaur Books, 2022.

Ohio author Jess Montgomery continues her Kinship series with the fourth installment of Sheriff Lily Ross and her investigations. Family secrets are the theme of this book, set in the hills and hollows around Athens, Ohio, in 1928.

Sheriff Lily Ross and her team of deputies are ready to protect the town during the July 4th celebrations at a new amusement park. There's much to be cautious about, particularly with big crowds and fireworks.

When Lily is told a girl has drowned in the lake of the park, she immediately takes action. But her investigation turns up nothing—not even a body. Yet, the informant is insistent there's trouble afoot.

Meanwhile, Lily's mother is anticipating a special arrival: nine-year-old Esmé. Unbeknownst to Lily, her



brother conceived a child in France during World War I. But when Esmé arrives in Columbus, she's kidnapped.

On July 5th, someone else reports a dead body floating in the lake at the park. And when Lily learns of her kidnapped niece, she suddenly has multiple crimes to deal with. Never one to back down from a challenge, Lily summons her deputies and family, doles out assignments, and works hard to investigate and locate both her niece and the killer.

Told from three different points of view, *The Echoes* weaves together action and heart with the topics of World War I veterans and their shell shock (what we call PTSD today), the drowning of a young woman, a kidnapping, and the repercussions of family secrets. Montgomery's writing will draw you in with interesting history, authentic details about life in rural America, and plenty of mystery.

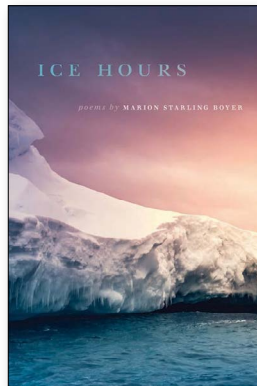
REVIEWED BY MIRIAM KAHN, LIBRARIAN, COLUMBUS, OH

POETRY

Boyer, Marion Starling. *Ice Hours*.

East Lansing, MI: Wheelbarrow Books, 2023.

When I saw the cover of this book, I immediately wondered what *Ice Hours* was about. I looked at the back cover and read that the book follows the story of "The Ross Sea Party." I knew nothing about Sir Ernest Shackleton or his research in Antarctica, but this was about to change as my interest piqued. I quickly found myself watching restored footage of the men and ship described in this book.



I then shifted my frenzied curiosity to Marion Starling Boyer's mesmerizing poems. Despite my own penchant for research, truly no background knowledge is required to enjoy this book. The author graciously guides the reader through the history of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

While *Ice Hours* has poems that will stop you in your tracks, the book reads like a narrative. From the first few pages, you will be hooked—wondering what's to come for the men of the Ross Sea Party.

Brimming with alliteration, the first poem's speaker is Antarctica herself. I was struck by this character's revealing voice. Most sections of the book begin with a poem voiced by Antarctica, illustrating how the crew was constantly at the mercy of her harsh terrain:

The ice gives birth to ice.
The first filaments of ice mating are frazil ice.

Once it develops and grows muscular
ice battles ice.

The ice barrage explodes
in a din of booms, cannonades, cracks loud as rifle
shots.

And when the ice buries ice
it is entombed with ancient atmospheres.

All my hours are ice hours.
All my flowers are ice flowers.

Boyer is both a masterful poet and an amazing storyteller. She spares no detail in examining how the men and their sledging dogs struggled to survive. Much seal meat was had by all, scurvy affected many, and some even lost their lives. I once knew nothing of these brave people, yet I found myself desperately wishing for relief and safety for each of them. This effect is achieved through Boyer's holistic care for the subject matter, as the poems include letters from the Ross Sea Party crew to home, letters from their wives and other family members, and personal journal entries.

Each character in this book surprises and inspires the reader. Whether it's Gladys Mackintosh's beautiful letters to her husband, the Commander of the *Aurora*, or Ernest Wild's valiant sacrifice for the group, these men are sure to capture the reader.

The book's pace will keep you on your toes. It's impossible to be bored as you read about killer whales breaking the ice—creating water lanes as they swim—making it even more treacherous for the Ross Sea Party to sledge across the ice.

As for my favorite voice in the book, Antarctica is not solely depicted for her unforgiving elements; she also has a past. The poem “Learning Detachment” offers a glimpse of life as Pangea was slowly breaking apart:

In the dark, the whole crevasse
of space glinting, it helps to remember
how South America lingered,

her peninsula locked
fingertip to fingertip with mine,
holding on, until bit by bit, we slipped
and, cold and alone, I fell away.

The creativity Boyer has imbued in these poems will enchant readers as they come along for this icy expedition. The relentless perseverance of the Ross Sea Party and the ever-contemplative Antarctica will leave a lasting impact on readers. I share Ernest Shackleton’s sentiment when he spoke of those involved: “No more remarkable story of human endeavor has been revealed than the take of that long march.”

Marion Starling Boyer lives in Northeast Ohio, where she conducts workshops for Lit Youngstown and Literary Cleveland. She is a professor emerita for Kalamazoo Valley Community College, and the author of several poetry collections including *Composing the Rain*, winner of the 2014 Grayson Books Poetry Chapbook Competition.

<https://www.newscientist.com/video/2311544>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqJDqjS8RLE>

REVIEWED BY MIRIAM NORDINE, OHIOANA LIBRARY
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Sabol, Barbara. *Watermark: Poems of the Great Johnstown Flood of 1889*.

Boulder, CO: Alternating Current Press, 2023.

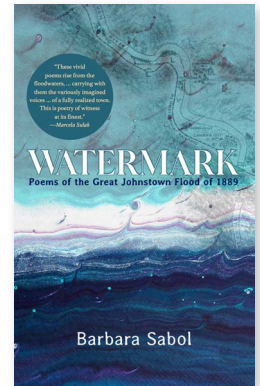
Watermark resurrects the voices of those who experienced the disastrous 1889 flood of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. While author Barbara Sabol currently lives in Akron, Ohio, this collection of poems brings her back to her hometown roots. Drawing from historical sources, Sabol’s poems in *Watermark* are full of emotion, imagery, and sensory description. But she also includes poems with a more modern perspective and setting—a subtle reminder of how historical events still impact our modern world. Throughout the collection, Sabol grapples

with the realities of loss, trauma, and guilt, both during a disaster and in its aftermath. Even in the darkest moments, she incorporates notes of hope, perseverance, and camaraderie, speaking to human nature’s ability to carry on.

Watermark is, at its core, a work of critical fabulation, a type of storytelling that reimagines historic events from perspectives that don’t survive and/or are often underrepresented. Sabol draws on archival materials including the “morgue book”—the record of flood victims—using the descriptions in the book to imagine their lives and actions before and during the flood. By doing so, Sabol creates a narrative that goes far beyond the meager historical facts but is still faithful to the surviving historical record. She considers the flood from many different perspectives: not just victims of the flood, but survivors including the engineer of the dam that burst and the local telegraph woman, as well as aid workers who arrived in the aftermath including Clara Barton.

Sabol introduces us to a large cast of characters and voices, skillfully telling the stories of young children as well as older residents of Johnstown, often from the characters’ own perspectives. She returns to several of these characters throughout the collection, sharing their perspectives at different points in the disaster: their actions in the face of crisis, their emotions in the immediate aftermath, and their reflections from years after. In many cases, her characters speak from beyond the grave, providing their own accounts of how they died. In other poems, readers are placed alongside the characters as they experience the flood, acting to save themselves and others. Sabol brings the reader not just into the events, but into the thoughts and feelings of the victims and survivors.

It’s impressive how Sabol tells the story of the flood from so many perspectives without it feeling repetitive. She accomplishes this by varying the structures and types of poems, using both narrative and abstract forms, as well as epistolary prose (letters). The narration shifts between first and third person, bringing additional variety to the diverse perspectives that make up the core of the story. Beyond the “morgue book,” Sabol incorporates further primary sources, including



telegraphs and witness statements. She also interacts with other written sources in interesting ways: a few of her poems are erasure poems of more modern works, while others integrate lines from other poets or are written in another poet's style, all of which Sabol credits in her endnotes.

With her rich imagery and diverse perspectives, Sabol has presented in *Watermark* an intimate and emotionally rich new reflection on the Johnstown Flood, bringing life to an important historical event that has been forgotten in many history books.

REVIEWED BY CHARLOTTE HOUGHTON, OHIOANA LIBRARY ASSISTANT

MIDDLE GRADE & YOUNG ADULT

Haddix, Margaret Peterson. *Falling Out of Time* (*Running Out of Time* #2).

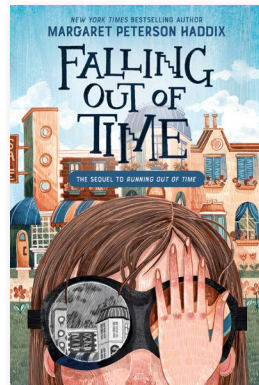
New York, NY: Katherine Tegen Books, 2023.

This long-awaited sequel to *Running Out of Time* (published in 1995) is another cautionary tale taking on society, the environment, and even family.

Instead of a troubled past, this time, author Margaret Peterson Haddix has written a tale of an alternate future in 2193. Zola is twelve and living in a utopia, her every whim satisfied through the help of technology. But there's trouble in this paradise—first with a quirky computer, then the appearance of a paper book, and finally with the discovery of a hidden world behind the walls of her home.

Puck lives in this hidden place. Unlike Zola's utopia, his life is one of hunger, excessive work, and virtual slavery. When Zola and Puck meet, their worlds explode. They escape their villages, discovering more secrets hidden behind walls and fences. But when the world is a lie, how can you convince everyone of the truth?

Haddix's storytelling captivates readers with this tale of an alternate future that's not-so-far from now. The writing grabs you with the first chapter and holds you



enthralled until the very last word. You don't need to read *Running Out of Time* first to understand this sequel, but you'll probably enjoy it even more if you do.

Haddix has written over forty books for young readers. Like *Falling Out of Time*, many of them deal with alternate futures and social issues. *Running Out of Time* was Haddix's debut novel, setting her up as a writer who tackles difficult questions about society's current issues and potential decisions that could change the world as we know it.

Margaret Peterson Haddix grew up in Washington Court House, graduated from Miami University (of Ohio), and has lived in Columbus for many years.

REVIEWED BY MIRIAM KAHN, LIBRARIAN, COLUMBUS, OH

JUVENILE

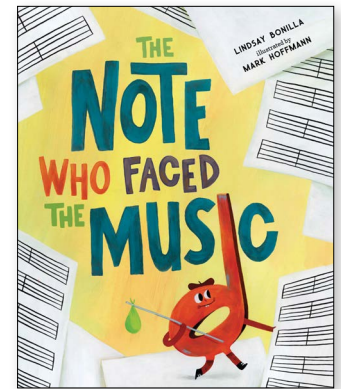
Bonilla, Lindsay. *The Note Who Faced the Music*. Illus. by Mark Hoffman.

Salem, MA: Page Street Kids, 2023.

Half Note didn't feel whole.

As a fan of music, wordplay, and anthropomorphism, I knew I was going to love *The Note Who Faced the Music* just from reading those five words. This perfect first line introduces readers to the book's woebegone protagonist, Half Note, who starts the story feeling a bit lacking as she compares herself to Quarter Note and Eighth Note. An illustration shows her standing alone as Quarter Note and Eighth Note perform a toe-tapping tempo with Composer. Some notes assure Half Note that she'll be in the next song, while others remind her that Composer says they're all important to the musical staff.

But being told one is important and *feeling* important are very different things. Half Note doesn't have a cute little flag, nor is she upbeat. And don't get her started on how awesome all the other notes are—like Whole Note, who can hold four entire beats just by himself. Convinced she'll never “measure up,” Half Note decides to “go solo”:



she packs her bag and runs away, certain the staff will be better off without her.

Half Note may be a sentient music note, but her feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt are universally human. What child (or adult) hasn't felt like they don't belong from time to time—that there's nothing special about them?

Ohio author Lindsay Bonilla touches on these themes in a playful and creative way with her anthropomorphic musical world, rendered in colorful and friendly illustrations by Mark Hoffman. The story feels like a Pixar movie in the spirit of *Inside Out* (anthropomorphic emotions) and *Elemental* (anthropomorphic elements of nature). It's wonderfully fun to see how the notes interact with each other, their human Composer, and different music elements like the staff bars and coda (a.k.a. "the end of the line").

Bursting with musical puns and witty writing, the book is also a joy to read. The music terminology and concepts are cleverly conveyed through context clues in both the prose and illustrations. A glossary at the back of the book provides additional information on music theory including definitions, a diagram labeling the different parts of the staff, and a visual breakdown of note beats.

Of course, anyone who has seen a Pixar movie knows that they tug at your heartstrings as much as they tickle your funny bone. *The Note Who Faced the Music* performs on this level, too. With some help from Composer—and a not so melodic rendition of Half Note's favorite song—the little note comes to realize her self-worth and how much she truly is needed for everyone to achieve harmony.

The Note Who Faced the Music is the perfect book for kids who are interested in learning music (or already love it!), as well as readers who need a reminder that they have an instrumental part to play in the symphony of life.

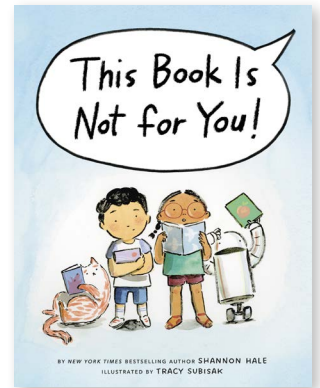
REVIEWED BY KATHRYN POWERS, OHIOANA LIBRARY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND SCBWI REGIONAL ADVISOR

Hale, Shannon. *This Book is Not for You!* Illus. by Tracy Subisak.

New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2022.

Has anyone ever assumed you would not like a book based on how you looked? 2023 Ohioana Book Award

finalist *This Book is Not for You!*, written by Shannon Hale and illustrated by Tracy Subisak, is a lighthearted and amusing story about the freedom to read. In the story, a boy named Stanley is excited to read a book from the local bookmobile about sandwiches, but the old man running the bookmobile refuses to let him check the book out because the main character is a girl. Every subsequent visitor is only permitted to check out a book related to themselves: a cat checks out a book about cats, a robot is given a book about robots, etc. Only when a loud, stubborn, prehistoric patron comes to the bookmobile with a surprising request does the old man give in.



Subisak, an award-winning illustrator and Ohio native, paints a watercolor scene of a grassy summer meadow and a tree that is the perfect cozy reading nook. The creatures reading with Stanley under the tree are cute and lovable, and the human faces are kind and inviting. There is no better place to park a bookmobile, and readers will want to jump straight into the book's pages.

All of the characters are kind and well-meaning, even the old man. Stanley learns the importance of choosing the right book for himself, and the old man learns that it is okay to make mistakes. Later in the story, when the man asks to join the rest of the readers, they welcome him with open arms. It is encouraging to see a picture book demonstrating kindness to those who admit that they were wrong.

This Book is Not for You! is upbeat, but it also gently addresses important topics like bias and censorship. As a librarian working in a time when book challenges are on the rise, *This Book is Not for You!* strikes a chord. Librarians try to match children to books that will be special to them. Sometimes, that means finding a book that reflects their own experiences, but oftentimes, that means finding a book that opens a window to something new. This story is a beautiful reminder of the power of books and libraries to bring people together to read and learn.

REVIEWED BY JESSICA SMITH, YOUTH LIBRARIAN, COLUMBUS, OH

Book List

The following books were added to Ohioana's collection between September and November 2023. Look for them at your local library or bookstore!

NONFICTION

Ambrosini, Lynne D. **Taft Museum of Art: Highlights from the Collection.** Cincinnati, OH: Taft Museum of Art, 2020.

This new volume presents highlights of the Taft Museum of Art's collection, which spans over 750 years of creative endeavors.

Benedict, Jeff. **LeBron.** New York, NY: Avid Reader Press/Simon & Schuster, 2023.

From the #1 bestselling author of *The Dynasty* and *Tiger Woods*, this biography of basketball superstar LeBron James is based on three years of exhaustive research and more than 250 interviews.

Boling, David, et al., eds. **Lakeside, Ohio: From Camp Meeting to Chautauqua.** Lakeside, OH: The Lakeside Heritage Society, 2023. *Lakeside Ohio: From Camp Meeting to Chautauqua* celebrates Lakeside's 150th birthday with 618 photos, maps, illustrations, and extensively researched text.

Burry, Richard W. **Art and History in the Ohio Judicial Center: A Visual Tour.** Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2023. Featuring more than 100 photographs taken by Richard W. Burry, *Art and History in the Ohio Judicial Center* is the first book to celebrate the building's impressive

architectural detail and highlight its 200 murals, reliefs, and mosaics in the Art Deco and Beaux Arts styles.

Cargle, Rachel Elizabeth. **A Renaissance of Our Own: A Memoir & Manifesto on Reimagining.** New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2023.

A Renaissance of Our Own is a deeply personal and insightful testament to dismantling the frameworks and systems that no longer serve us, while building new ones that do.

Cook, Renee Casteel. **Ohio Buckeye Candy: A Sweet History.** Charleston, SC: American Palate/The History Press, 2023.

Join Renee Casteel Cook, author of *Ohio Ice Cream* and co-author of *The Columbus Food Truck Cookbook*, as she unfolds how the bite-sized buckeye candy has become Ohio's sweetest symbol.

Dellinger, Jade, and David Giffels. **The Beginning Was the End: DEVO in Ohio.** Akron, OH: The University of Akron Press, 2023.

Featuring more than eighty never-before-seen images of DEVO band members and their visual history, *The Beginning Was the End* tells the unlikely story of creative misfits who formed a musical kinship, drawing material and inspiration from the industrial Midwestern environs of Northeast Ohio.

Fox, Kathleen Stuckey. **Remembering Stella Weiler Taylor, Hamilton's "Lady of Letters."** West Chester, OH: Ketmoy Printing, 2023.

The biography of Stella Weiler Taylor, a native of Hamilton,

Ohio, who was an author, teacher, and popular columnist with the *Hamilton Evening Journal*.

Goodyear, C. W. **President Garfield: From Radical to Unifier.** New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2023.

The first comprehensive biography in decades on the extraordinary, tragic life of James Garfield, America's twentieth president.

Grover, Stacy Jane. **Tar Hollow Trans: Essays.** Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2023.

In *Tar Hollow Trans*, Stacy Jane Grover explores her transgender experience through common Appalachian cultural traditions, reflecting on her memories and discovering that group identities like "Appalachian" and "transgender" are linked by more than just the stinging brand of social otherness.

Hershey, William. **Taking the Plunge into Ethiopia: Tales of a Peace Corps Volunteer.** Akron, OH: The University of Akron Press, 2023. From 1968 until 1970, William Hershey served as the only Peace Corps volunteer in a small Ethiopian town, teaching English to seventh and eighth grade students. *Taking the Plunge into Ethiopia* reflects on this once-in-a-lifetime experience, immigration, and global goodwill.

Hinds, Conrade C. **Made in Ohio: A History of Buckeye Invention & Ingenuity.** Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2023.

From Sherwin-Williams paints to Play-Doh, *Made in Ohio* spotlights the all-American goods and brands that originated in the Buckeye State.

Huber, Sonya. *Love and Industry: A Midwestern Workbook*. Lakewood, OH: Belt Publishing, 2023.

Sonya Huber offers a candid, lyrical look inside the unsung world of exurban Illinois.

Keller, Julia. *Quitting: A Life Strategy: The Myth of Perseverance—and How the New Science of Giving Up Can Set You Free*. New York, NY: Balance, 2023. Diving into the neuroscience and cultural messages that drive our reluctance to throw in the towel, Julia Keller dismantles the myth of perseverance once and for all.

Lambert, Joseph, Jr. *The Political Transformation of David Tod: Governing Ohio During the Height of the Civil War*. Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2023. *The Political Transformation of David Tod* chronicles Ohio's twenty-fifth governor, whose unwavering support for the Union is a timeless lesson in the importance of loyalty to country over partisanship.

Louis, Matthew J. *Hiring Veterans: How to Leverage Military Talent for Organizational Growth*.

Newburyport, MA: Career Press, 2023.

Hiring Veterans is the definitive guide to hiring and retaining members of the military community by Matthew J. Louis, the foremost authority on the transition from military to civilian work life.

Majmudar, Amit. *Black Avatar and Other Essays*. Cincinnati, OH: Acre Books, 2023.

The first nonfiction collection by internationally acclaimed writer and translator Amit Majmudar, *Black Avatar* combines elements of memoir, biography, history,

and literary criticism to reflect on American, European, and Indian traditions, as well as the author's experiences in suburban Ohio and the western Indian state of Gujarat.

Majmudar, Amit. *Twin A: A Memoir*. Seattle, WA: Slant Books, 2023.

Shortly after learning they would become the parents of twins, physician-writer Amit Majmudar and his wife received a devastating in utero diagnosis: one of the twins had a potentially fatal congenital heart defect. Written in the form of an extended letter, *Twin A* recounts the open-heart surgeries, complications, and prolonged recoveries that Majmudar's son survived in infancy and early childhood.

McClain, Steve. *The Music of My Life: Finding My Way After My Mother's MS Diagnosis*. Akron, OH: The University of Akron Press, 2023.

This memoir follows the life of Steve McClain after his mother is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis early in his childhood, recounting her struggles at a time when there was little to no treatment for the devastating, chronic illness.

Meckler, Laura. *Dream Town: Shaker Heights and the Quest for Racial Equity*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2023.

Award-winning *Washington Post* journalist Laura Meckler examines the ideals and realities of the decades-long pursuit of racial integration in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Mould, David H. *Mission to Madagascar: The Sergeant, the King, and the Slave Trade*. Charleston, WV: Blackwater Press, 2023.

This account of early nineteenth-century Madagascar is based on the

journals of James Hastie, a sergeant in the East India Company, and other primary sources, weaving a narrative of hazardous travel, court intrigue, and colonial geopolitics.

Neumann, Caryn E., Lori L. Parks, and Joel G. Parks. *Global Dishes: Favorite Meals from around the World*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2023.

Featuring more than 100 recipes, this book explores the history and cultural context surrounding favorite dishes from across the globe.

O'Keeffe, Patrick. *History of Ottawa County: The First 175 Years*.

Brookfield, MO: Donning Company Publishers, 2016.

This coffee table-style book celebrates the first 175 years of Ottawa County history with photographs and narrative.

Ruhlman, Michael. *The Book of Cocktail Ratios: The Surprising Simplicity of Classic Cocktails (Ruhlman's Ratios Book 2)*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2023.

New York Times-bestselling author Michael Ruhlman applies the principles of his innovative book *Ratio*—about the relationships of ingredients to each other—in this delightful back-to-basics cocktail book, sharing the simple recipes and fundamental techniques that make for delicious and satisfying libations.

Rush, Amanda Irene. *The Gathering Girl: A Memoir*. Stillwater, MN: Publish Her, 2023.

With the death of her parents as a catalyst, Amanda Irene Rush sifts through the relics of her family's fragile past, discovering an alternate truth buried within the deepest roots of her family tree and a path to forgiveness.

Smith, Maggie. *You Could Make This Place Beautiful: A Memoir*. New York, NY: One Signal Publishers/Atria Books, 2023. Through one woman's personal heartbreak, this memoir explores contemporary womanhood, traditional gender roles, and the power dynamics that persist even in many progressive homes.

Sorrels, Katherine, et al., eds. *Ohio Under COVID: Lessons from America's Heartland in Crisis*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2023.

Ohio Under COVID tells the human story of COVID in Ohio, America's bellwether state. Scholars and practitioners examine the pandemic response from multiple angles, and contributors from numerous walks of life offer moving first-person reflections.

Stankorb, Sarah. *Disobedient Women: How a Small Group of Faithful Women Exposed Abuse, Brought Down Powerful Pastors, and Ignited an Evangelical Reckoning*. New York, NY: Worthy Books, 2023.

Journalist Sarah Stankorb examines how access to the internet has allowed women to dismantle the false authority of evangelical communities that silenced their voices and demanded their submission.

Stetler, Pepper. *Craft and Camera: The Art of Nancy Ford Cones*. Cincinnati, OH: Taft Museum of Art, 2022.

For more than forty years, on a small riverside farm in Loveland, Ohio, Nancy Ford Cones created photographs that earned her a national reputation during a time

when female artists struggled for recognition. This exhibition book resurrects the gifted artist's career and contributions to the field of photography.

Thomas, Nick. *The Black Keys: The Biography*. Cleveland, OH: Gem Editions, 2023.

Emerging from the rust belt city of Akron, guitarist Dan Auerbach and drummer Pat Carney formed the Black Keys in 2001. This biography explores the band's history and unique brand of bluesy rock and roll.

Tramonte, Lynn, ed. *(Everything Is) Cells and Bodies: Ohio Migration Anthology, Volume Two*. Cleveland, OH: Anacaona/Ohio Immigrant Alliance, 2023.

The stories, artwork, poems, and interviews in this anthology break down the imagined borders between us and celebrate what we all have in common.

Weiser, M. Elizabeth, Timothy R. W. Jordan, and Richard D. Shiels, eds. *The Fertile Earth and the Ordered Cosmos: Reflections on the Newark Earthworks and World Heritage*. Columbus, OH: Trillium, 2023.

This collection of essays and photos honors the cultural and archaeological significance of the Newark Earthworks, Ohio's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

FICTION

Bachelder, Chris, and Jennifer Habel. *Dayswork*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2023. In the endless days of the pandemic, a woman spends her time sorting fact from fiction in the life and work of Herman Melville. As she delves

deeper, she becomes increasingly obsessed by what Melville's devotion to his art reveals about cost, worth, and debt.

Baldree, Angela Terasa. *Your Brother*. Columbus, OH: Trillium Publishing, 2023.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, four sons of Italian immigrants join the World War II effort overseas while two stay in West Virginia, exchanging poignant letters from the battlefield and home front. *Your Brother* is based on the author's own family and told through their actual letters.

Bartow, Karina. *Accidental Allies (Unde(a)feated Detective #3)*. New York, NY: The Wild Rose Press, 2023.

After almost six years as a stay-at-home mom, Minka Avery is both nervous and excited to sit at a detective's desk at the Orlando PD again. But her career resumes with a bang when someone bombs the county courthouse, sending the city and police department into chaos.

Bill, J. Brent. *Amity: Stories from the Heartland*. Winchester, UK: Roundfire Books, 2023.

Amity: Stories from the Heartland is a collection of short stories set in the Midwest, a region known for its honest, hardworking, plain-speaking, religious people who are as complex and thoughtful as the most urbane city dwellers.

Buckell, Tobias S. *Zen and the Art of Spaceship Maintenance and Other Stories*. Lexington, KY: Apex Book Company, 2023.

Comprised of fifteen tales, this short fiction collection from *New York Times*-bestselling author Tobias

S. Buckell ranges from galactic adventures to intimate explorations of humanity—sometimes in the same story.

Castillo, Linda. *An Evil Heart (Kate Burkholder #15)*. New York, NY: Minotaur Books, 2023. Chief of Police Kate Burkholder investigates the brutal death of a young Amish man in *An Evil Heart*, the latest installment of the bestselling series by Linda Castillo.

Chien, Vivien. *Misfortune Cookie (Noodle Shop Mystery #9)*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2023.

Lana, now officially manager of her family's restaurant, the Ho-Lee Noodle House, is headed to sunny California to attend a restaurant convention. When Lana and her sister witness a dramatic cat fight between a fortune cookie vendor and a journalist—and the journalist later turns up dead at a cocktail party—it's up to them to determine if the death was an unfortunate accident or something more sinister.

Consolino, Christina. *The Weight We Carry*. Castroville, TX: Black Rose Writing, 2023.

As a daughter and nurse practitioner, Marissa Raffaello-Moretta has spent her adult life being responsible for her parents' physical and mental health. When her stubborn and impulsive father falls and refuses to stay at rehab, Marissa upends her life going back home to care for him. But while her father's ineffective legs are worrisome, her mother's increasing memory issues might be a more urgent and life-altering dilemma.

Erickson, Alex. *Death By Iced Coffee (Bookstore Café Mystery #11)*. New York, NY: Kensington Books, 2023.

Bookstore owner Krissy Hancock steps out from behind the counter and laces up her sneakers to participate in her hometown's first-ever marathon, only to find herself racing to solve a murder instead.

Fedor, Emma. *At Sea*. New York, NY: Gallery Books, 2023.

What happens when the man you love most in the world unexpectedly disappears and takes your small child with him? Emma Fedor's debut explores the fierceness of first love and how far one woman will go to learn the truth about her family.

Flanagan, Erin. *Come with Me*. Seattle, WA: Thomas & Mercer, 2023.

Two women. An old friendship rekindled. A growing fear. Not everything is as it seems in this dark and twisty novel of suspense by the Edgar Award-winning author of *Deer Season*.

Flinn, Patti. *The Greatest Thing (The Last Favorite's Page #1)*.

Blacklick, OH: Gilded Orange Books, 2023.

Based on the life of Louis-Benoit Zamor, *The Greatest Thing* is the story of a young Black boy sold to King Louis XV. If the world thinks the debauched, degenerate king is its "greatest thing," the answer is simple: Zamor will have to change the world.

Flower, Amanda. *Dating Can Be Deadly (An Amish Matchmaker Mystery #5)*. New York, NY: Kensington Books, 2023.

Set in the fan-favorite Amish village of Harvest, Ohio, *Dating Can Be Deadly* brings back the unlikely sleuthing duo of Millie, a widowed Amish matchmaker, and Lois Henry, her four-times-divorced *Englisch* best friend, as they must solve the murder of a quilting competition judge.

Gloden, Scott. *The Great American Everything: Stories*. Spartanburg, SC: Hub City Press, 2023.

This short story collection by Scott Gloden, winner of the C. Michael Curtis Short Story Book Prize, explores the bounds of contemporary family and how we move forward in a world so often changed by loss.

Gornichec, Genevieve. *The Weaver and the Witch Queen*. New York, NY: Ace, 2023.

The lives of two women—one desperate to save her missing sister, the other a witch destined to become queen of Norway—intertwine in this novel of Viking Age history and myth from the acclaimed author of *The Witch's Heart*.

Gray, Shelley Shepard. *Her Only Wish (Season in Pinecraft #2)*. Ada, MI: Revell, 2023.

Return to Pinecraft, Florida, with Betsy Detweiler, a woman on a mission to experience new things. When she meets August Troyer, they both must learn that life—and love—requires taking risks.

Gray, Shelley Shepard. *Once Upon a Buggy (The Amish of Apple Creek #2)*. New York, NY: Kensington Books, 2023.

May is haunted by the tragic moment when she stepped too close to the fire that left her best

friend, Carl, devastatingly burned. Now, after six years and extensive surgeries, Carl and May will finally have the chance to see each other again. But when the reunion goes awry, it'll take a few helping hands to heal the hurts of the past in this Amish retelling of "Beauty and the Beast."

Henry, Emily. *Happy Place*. New York, NY: Berkley, 2023.

A couple who broke up months ago pretend to still be together for their annual weeklong vacation with their best friends in this new novel from #1 *New York Times*–bestselling author Emily Henry.

Herrera, Jennifer. *The Hunter*. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2023. After reckless behavior costs NYPD detective Leigh O'Donnell her job and her marriage, she returns to her hometown of Copper Falls, Ohio—a place she has avoided for more than a decade. When three men drown—echoing trios of tragedy from the past—Leigh takes the case. To find the truth, she must unravel a web of secrets going back generations, even if it reveals the darkness within herself.

Herriman, Nancy. *No Justice for the Deceived (A Mystery of Old San Francisco #6)*. Gillette, NJ: Beyond the Page Publishing, 2023.

When an opulent masquerade ball ends in murder, Nick and Celia will have to unmask a killer before more innocent victims are claimed.

Hyde, Allegra. *The Last Catastrophe: Stories*. New York, NY: Vintage, 2023.

The fifteen stories in *The Last Catastrophe* explore a myriad of potential futures through the

concept of "global weirding"—planetary and social disruptions due to climate change.

Kittle, Katrina. *Morning in This Broken World*. Seattle, WA: Lake Union Publishing, 2023.

When widow Vivian opens her house to Luna, a compassionate nursing assistant facing eviction, and Luna's two children, the unlikely pandemic pack will weather the COVID-19 storm together.

Knox, Jen. *The Glass City and Other Stories*. Los Angeles, CA: Press Americana, 2023.

Winner of Prize Americana for Prose, *The Glass City and Other Stories* is a collection that explores the dangers of extremes, where weather becomes a mirror for the internal struggles of Jen Knox's indelible cast of characters. Re-released in honor of Zero Emissions Day in September 2023, this revised edition has been re-edited and contains several new stories that continue and expand the discussion around ecology, climate change, and the environment.

Kussow, Barbara. *The Merlin Subsidiary: Stories and Poems*. Columbus, OH: Barbara Kussow, 2023.

Barbara Kussow's newest collection of short stories and poetry features people who are of middle or late age—demographic groups that she feels are too often ignored in fiction.

Matthews, Olivia. *Hard Dough Homicide (Spice Isle Bakery Mysteries #2)*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2023. Spice Isle Bakery owner Lyndsay Murray already regrets agreeing to host the retirement dinner for local

high school principal Emily Smith. The tyrant used to be her mother's boss and they did *not* get along. Six guests arrive for the celebration, but only five survive. Soon, the police knock on Spice Isle's door, bringing the Murray family back into the heart of another murder investigation.

McMillan, Claire. *Alchemy of a Blackbird*. New York, NY: Atria Books, 2023.

A novel based on the true story of the twentieth-century painters and tarot devotees Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington.

Ramos y Sanchez, Raul. *Mustang to Paducah*. New York, NY: Beck & Branch Publishers, 2023.

Cruiser and Peanut, two aimless Miami stoners, are returning a car for a tourist from Kentucky who's gone romping on his new lover's yacht. Arriving at their destination, the pair stumble onto a multiple murder. Now, the men are on the lam as the prime suspects with an unhinged FBI agent and a mob contract killer hot on their trail.

Sittenfeld, Curtis. *Romantic Comedy*. New York, NY: Random House, 2023.

A comedy writer thinks she's sworn off love, until a dreamy pop star flips the script on all her assumptions, from the author of *Eligible*, *Rodham*, and *Prep*.

Stowe, Robert Allen. *The Fires of Rubicon*. Castroville, TX: Black Rose Writing, 2023.

In the autumn of 1971, Cleveland Police Lieutenant Alex Wesner is given a case that may be no case at all, or it may be several cases tied together. Did a workman perish

in a vat of molten steel, or is his disappearance part of an elaborate ruse? To find the answers, the lieutenant and his team must navigate the red tape and dangerous furnaces of the Rubicon Steel Corporation.

Tassone, Don. *Musings: 75 Short Stories*. Loveland, OH: Toerner Press, 2023.

The seventy-five short stories in *Musings* invite the reader to take a closer look at the passing parade of events through our daily lives.

White, Edmund. *The Humble Lover*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023.

A rich older man falls in love with a young ballerino in this new tragicomedy from literary icon Edmund White.

Young, Amy. *The Water Tower*. Olney, MD: Level Best Books, 2023.

Josie Ashbury was a successful Hollywood actress until an on-set breakdown. Now, she's back in her small Ohio hometown, teaching at her old high school while putting her life back together. When a student dies under suspicious circumstances, the police are quick to close the case. But Josie is determined to find the truth behind the girl's death, even if the answers lie disturbingly close to home.

POETRY

Barber, Cathy. *Once: A Golden Shovel Collection*. American Fork, UT: Kelsay Books, 2023.

This collection of poems is a response to the enduring challenge of what we are to make out of what we are given and what we find. From

the life experiences she has been given, Cathy Barber hones beautiful truths incorporating found lines from poems of other poets.

Elieff, Amba. *Domesticated Demons: A Collection of Poetry*.

Illus. by Gabrielle Scarlett. South Bloomingville, OH: Queer Creek Publishing, 2023.

Domesticated Demons is a collection of poetry about moments of anxiety, insecurity, depression, and other traumas that are familiar to many.

Finkelstein, Norman. *Further Adventures*. Loveland, OH: Dos Madres Press, 2023.

Both a prequel and a sequel to the earlier *From the Files of the Immanent Foundation* (Dos Madres Press, 2018) and *In a Broken Star* (Dos Madres Press, 2021), this new volume of poems is Norman Finkelstein at his most uncanny.

Fix, Charlene. *Jewgirl*. Frankfort, KY: Broadstone Books, 2023.

Describing herself as an "Unobservant Jew" whose personal rabbi is Walt Whitman, Charlene Fix examines her heritage, identity, and perspective in this collection of wide-ranging poems.

Graham, Jonathan. *Everything Waits*. Stevens Point, WI: Cornerstone Press, 2023.

In his debut, Jonathan Graham highlights the rugged beauty and kinship in a coal-mining region in Appalachia: the yin and yang of love and death, remorse and longing.

Grubbs, Gerry. *Learning a New Way to Listen*. Loveland, OH: Dos Madres Press, 2023.

Learning a New Way to Listen deals with grief and its aftermath—

how grief grows out of love and yields a greater love, leading to the realization that nothing is ever lost.

Heath, William. *Going Places: Poems*. American Fork, UT: Kelsay Books, 2023.

Going Places is the companion volume to William Heath's *Steel Valley Elegy*. This extensive collection takes readers on an emotional journey around the world, ranging from sophisticated European pleasures to the hardships endured by people in various remote countries.

Joyce, Brendan. *Personal Problem*. Cleveland, OH: Grieveland Press, 2023.

On the heels of his 2020 debut, *Love & Solidarity*, Brendan Joyce returns with new poems that reflect his obsessions: money, class, work, and the political economy of ecological collapse.

Jusek, Jeremy. *The Details Will Be Gone Soon: Poems*. Washingtonville, NY: ELJ Editions, 2023.

In clear and moving poems, Jeremy Jusek's *The Details Will Be Gone Soon* chronicles the loss of his grandmother to Alzheimer's. The poems record the beloved acts, objects, and memories connecting the narrator and grandmother—a quilt with roses, a lesson in making soup, and a love of books.

Kell, Charles. *Ishmael Mask*. Pittsburgh, PA: Autumn House Press, 2023.

In *Ishmael Mask*, Charles Kell reminds readers that identity is precarious. Kell's collection is a collage of the journeys and interior lives of various wanderers—from Ishmael, the son of Hagar, to

Melville's Ishmael, and from Pierre of *The Ambiguities* to Pierre Guyotat.

Naffziger, Deni. *Strange Bodies: Poems*. Lexington, KY: Shadelandhouse Modern Press, 2023.

Using story, science, metaphor, and myth, *Strange Bodies* takes us on a journey that brings us full circle to the essence of who we are, and how closely we are connected to each other and the natural world.

Ransdell, Emily. *One Finch Singing*. Newport, OR: Concrete Wolf Press, 2023.

"To grieve for anyone is to grieve for everyone," writes Emily Ransdell in her debut collection, an exploration of personal loss against a backdrop of the larger losses of our time.

Reeves, Phoebe. *Helen of Bikini*. Whitman, MA: Lily Poetry Review Books, 2023.

Helen of Bikini examines the way humans inhabit the world, both in beauty and in conflict. How do the twinned human forces of domestication and domination, rage and mediation, witness and culpability, destruction and nurturing, find their balances, not in an either/or, but in a melding? Reeves explores these ideas in an unapologetically feminist approach.

MIDDLE GRADE & YOUNG ADULT

Berne, Emma Carlson. *What Do We Know About Atlantis?* Illus. by Manuel Gutierrez. New York, NY: Penguin Workshop, 2023.

The What Do We Know About? series explores the mysterious, the

unknown, and the unexplained. Does the underwater kingdom of Atlantis really exist, or is it just a centuries-old myth? Find out all there is to know about Atlantis in this compelling and up-to-date addition to an exciting new series.

Bishop, Jenn. *Free Throws, Friendship, and Other Things We Fouled Up*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2023.

Competitive basketball takes center court in this fast-paced novel about two girls finding the truth about themselves—and their families—against the backdrop of middle school and college hoops.

Carson, Mary Kay. *Outdoor School: Tree, Wildflower, and Mushroom Spotting*. Illus. by John D. Dawson. New York, NY: Odd Dot, 2023.

This interactive field guide to plant and mushroom spotting includes immersive activities to get kids exploring, write-in sections to journal about experiences, and next-level adventures to challenge even seasoned nature lovers.

Farquhar, Polly. *Lolo Weaver Swims Upstream*. New York, NY: Holiday House, 2023.

When Lolo's grandfather dies and his dog, Hank, is given away, she goes on a quest to steal him back. But as Lolo gets to know Hank's new owner, Noah—a kid in her summer class—she becomes conflicted over who can offer Hank the best future.

Haddix, Margaret Peterson. *Falling Out of Time (Running Out of Time #2)*. New York, NY: Katherine Tegen Books, 2023.

Return to the world of the bestselling *Running Out of Time* with this middle grade thriller from Margaret

Peterson Haddix, where Zola discovers she's related to Jessie Keyser and her seemingly perfect life in the year 2193 is covering up a dark reality.

Leahy, Elisa Stone. *Tethered to Other Stars*. New York, NY: Quill Tree Books, 2023.

Perfect for fans of *Efrén Divided* and *A Good Kind of Trouble*, this middle grade debut follows a tween girl navigating the devastating impact of ICE's looming presence on her family and community.

Lord, Emery. *All That's Left to Say*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury YA, 2023.

One year ago, Hannah's cousin Sophie—her best friend and the person she loved most in the world—died of an overdose. Drowning in grief, Hannah has become obsessed with one question: Who gave Sophie those pills? Taking matters into her own hands, she enrolls at her cousin's fancy private school with a new look and a mouthful of lies to uncover the truth.

Lott, Teri. *Lots of Animal Tales*. Columbus, OH: Fishtail Publishing, 2023.

Lots of Animal Tales is packed with delightful stories about animals from many different habitats—outside your home, at a farm, in the jungle, and more. Some of the stories are original tales, while others are traditional tales with Teri's unique twist.

Mufleh, Luma. *From Here: A Memoir*. New York, NY: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2023.

In this coming-of-age memoir, refugee advocate Luma Mufleh writes of her tumultuous journey

to reconcile her identity as a gay Muslim woman and a proud Arab-turned-American refugee.

Nolte, Katherin. *Back to the Bright Before*. Illus. by Jen Bricking. New York, NY: Random House Books for Young Readers, 2023.

When eleven-year-old Pet Martin's dad falls from a ladder on their farm, her family's hope for the future also crashes to the ground. Blaming herself, Pet sets off with her brother, a chicken, and a stolen pony in search of a magic coin that will make things right again.

Pilkey, Dav. *Dog Man: Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea (Dog Man #11)*. New York, NY: Graphix, 2023.

Dog Man is back! Bad guy Piggy has returned, and his newest plot is his most diabolical yet. Who will save the city when scoundrels sabotage the Supa Buddies?

Richards, Natalie D. *Four Found Dead*. New York, NY: Sourcebooks Fire, 2023.

Tonight is the end of Riverview Theaters, the last remaining business in a defunct shopping mall. As Jo and the other employees close up the theater for the final time, she discovers a co-worker's dead body. To survive this night, Jo and her friends must trust one another and outwit a killer in the sprawling mall ruins—before he murders them all.

Stamper, Phil. *Afterglow (Golden Boys #2)*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury YA, 2023.

After a life-changing summer, Gabriel, Heath, Reese, and Sal are finally ready for senior year. As graduation nears and the boys prepare to enter the real world, it

feels like everything is changing so fast—including their friendships. Can they find a way to make the most of their senior year even as they eagerly look ahead to the future?

Stine, R. L. *Friiight Night (Goosebumps Slappyworld #19)*.

New York, NY: Scholastic, 2023. Kelly Crosby is the new kid in school. So far, it's not going well. He's already gotten lost, had trouble making friends, and annoyed the monster that lives in the school basement. Every year, at a party called Friiight Night, one (un)lucky kid is chosen to be the monster's special guest of honor. Guess whose luck is about to run out?

Stine, R. L. *Night of the Squawker (Goosebumps Slappyworld #18)*.

New York, NY: Scholastic, 2023. Beak-a-boo, it sees you! Cooper Klavan and his sister Anna are fishing with their parents when they come across an injured bird. When Anna, an animal lover, tries to take the bird home for rehabilitation, it bites her. Soon, Anna is behaving very strangely—perching in trees, hiding sticks in her room, and refusing to eat her favorite food, eggs. Can Cooper stop his sister from going to the birds?

Watkins, L. C. *VerGann (The Delpine Diaries #1)*. Columbus, OH: Kahley House Publishing, 2023.

VerGann's orders are simple: guard the magical Stone of GraVinn, befriend the human girl who unknowingly possesses it, and allow nothing to distract him. For a delpine, one of the most powerful beings in the EliSann Forest, this should be easy. But life in the human world is anything but easy.

JUVENILE

Berne, Emma Carlson. *Rose Spoke Out: The Story of Rose Schneiderman*. Illus. by Giovanni Abeille. Millburn, NJ: Apples & Honey Press, 2023.

The true story of a young Jewish immigrant from Poland named Rose Schneiderman, who went to work in a cap factory in New York City when she was just thirteen years old and ended up changing the course of history.

Charlton-Trujillo, e. E., and Pat Zietlow Miller. *A Girl Can Build Anything*. Illus. by Keisha Morris. New York, NY: Viking Books for Young Readers, 2023.

A Girl Can Build Anything is a playful celebration of all the different ways girls can make things—from tinkering to tool wielding, from ideas on paper to big, lived-out dreams that require brick and mortar.

Charlton-Trujillo, e. E., and Pat Zietlow Miller. *Lupe Lopez: Reading Rock Star!* Illus. by Joe Cepeda. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2023.

After starting a band in kindergarten with her classmates, Lupe Lopez is ready to rock and roll into first grade as Reading Rock Star. But the words she thought she knew—now grouped in sentences—only glare back at her. Stuck in Group A with the kids who are struggling with reading, she becomes the object of a rival's mockery. Will her beloved band, and her confidence, survive the sting of defeat?

Fries-Gaither, Jessica. *Nature's Rule Breakers: Creatures That Don't Fit In*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Books, 2023.

Author and science educator Jessica Fries-Gaither introduces readers to the eight common categories scientists use for animals and the unique creatures that break those rules.

Hoefler, Kate. *In the Dark*. Illus. by Corinna Luyken. New York, NY: Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2023.

This lyrical picture book encourages readers to set aside their quick judgments and quiet their fears of the unknown by shining light on what has been kept in the dark.

Kunkel, Angela Burke. *Make Way: The Story of Robert McCloskey, Nancy Schön, and Some Very Famous Ducklings*. Illus. by Claire Keane. New York, NY: Random House Studio, 2023.

This picture book biography follows the lives of Robert McCloskey, creator of *Make Way for Ducklings*, and sculptor Nancy Schön, whose famous bronze ducks grace Boston Public Garden.

López, Silvia. *Sonia Sotomayor: A Little Golden Book Biography*. Illus. by Nomar Perez. New York, NY: Golden Books, 2022.

This Little Golden Book about Sonia Sotomayor—the first Latina Supreme Court Justice of the United States—is an inspiring read-aloud for young girls and boys.

Lubner, Susan. *Drag and Rex: Forever Friends*. Illus. by Blythe Russo. New York, NY: Pixel + Ink, 2023.

Drag is a dreamy, literal, impulsive, (and sometimes a little bit scatter-brained) dragon. Rex is a dapper, practical, methodical,

(and sometimes a little bit stuffy) *Tyrannosaurus rex*. The two may have their differences, but these buddies always figure out how to push through their challenges with patience, cooperation, and a good dose of silliness.

Many, Paul. *My Breathing Earth*. Illus. by Tisha Lee. San Diego, CA: Yeehoo Press, 2023.

In this poignant and lyrical tale, author Paul Many and artist Tisha Lee evoke the joy that a little girl experiences as she thrills to the beauty of what she calls “Earth’s breath”—the air surrounding her.

Rex, Adam. *Oh No, the Aunts Are Here*. Illus. by Lian Cho. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2023.

Every family has its special aunt: the cool aunt, the wacky aunt, the scary aunt. But this family has ALL THE AUNTS. One girl’s all-too-recognizable experience—a visit from a troupe of overwhelming and overly-enthusiastic relations—escalates to new heights of chaos, absurdity, and delight in a laugh-out-loud take on family reunions.

Rylant, Cynthia. *Rain*. Illus. by Lisa Congdon. San Diego, CA: Beach Lane Books, 2023.

From Newbery Medalist Cynthia Rylant comes a poetic picture book tribute to the beauty and magic of a rainy day.

Subisak, Tracy. *Sorry, Snail*. New York, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2023.

Ari is feeling angry. When she takes her mood out on an innocent snail, the snail demands an apology! Which Ari gives, half-heartedly. Then Ms.

Snail and her friends appear in every corner of Ari’s life, determined to elicit the most genuine apology from an increasingly regretful girl.

Swemba, Kelly. *Missing Violet*. Illus. by Fabiana Faiallo. Minneapolis, MN: Beaming Books, 2023.

Violet and Mia are inseparable friends until one day, Violet leaves school sick and doesn’t get better. Mia moves through the stages of grief like the colors of a rainbow, wondering if she will ever feel like herself again. When Mia reaches out to her classmates, she remembers what she loved most about Violet.

Tosi, Christina. *Just the Right Cake*. Illus. by Emily Balsley. New York, NY: Rocky Pond Books, 2023.

Christina Tosi, creator of the popular bakery Milk Bar and long-time judge on Fox’s *Master Chef*, tells the story of a boy finding his comfort and creativity again after his parents’ divorce. The book includes an original recipe from Tosi.

Ward, Lindsay. *Trusty Town Hall: A Community Helper’s Book*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2023.

Fans of Richard Scarry’s *Busy, Busy World* will enjoy this fun, interactive picture book that introduces children to everyone who works together within the local government.

Thank You!

The Ohioana Library wouldn't be the unique organization it is without our many generous supporters. Listed below are those who have given from September 1, 2023, through November 30, 2023. Special thanks to Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly for the state's ongoing support.

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Why I Support Ohioana

In December and January we are flooded with lists—all the bests and worsts of the past year, such as movie box office winners, worst dressed, and most popular memes. A new-ish phenomenon in social media is to generate predictions for what will be “in” and “out” for the year ahead. Here’s a sample of what some pundits have declared “in” for 2024: the word “rizz,” the Roman Empire, dive bars, and ravioli roll-ups. But I was struck, as I skimmed through these lists, that for me there is one “in” that never ever changes, no matter what happens to be “in” for the year. And that is libraries. Specifically, the Ohioana Library.

The mission of Ohioana is threefold: to collect, preserve, and celebrate Ohio authors and literature. It does so with care and excellence. But the way Ohioana goes about achieving those goals has the brilliant outcome of promoting connection and community in Ohio.

One example of this is the Ohioana Book Festival, which I consider a jewel in the crown of our state. Once a year, Ohioana puts on a celebration of and for Ohio readers and authors including panels, readings, and activities for all ages. It was held virtually for three years due to COVID, but what a joy it was this past April to walk into the wide-open space of the Columbus Metropolitan Library and see that multitude of authors and readers leaning over tables, smiling, and sharing the wonder of books.

So never mind yaupon tea, knee socks, astrotourism, and deviled eggs. What truly is “in” in 2024, and all the years that follow, is: connection, community, and books. In other words, the Ohioana Library. And that is why I support it, year in and year out.



Photo by Michelle Daniel

Edith Pattou Emery

Edith Pattou is the author of the award-winning fantasy novel *East*, a retelling of the Norwegian folk tale “East of the Sun and West of the Moon,” and its sequel, *West*. She has also written the *New York Times*–bestselling picture book *Mrs. Spitzer’s Garden*, as well as *Ghosting*, a contemporary novel for young adults told in free verse. Additionally, she is the author of two Celtic mythology-inspired fantasy novels, *Hero’s Song* and *Fire Arrow*. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her husband, Charles.

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