

APL Volumes

Season 1, Episode 3: *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER AND WHAT MOVES THE DEAD*

This episode was transcribed by APL volunteer Martha Ladyman.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

MADDY: Hello and welcome to APL Volumes, a new podcast from the Austin Public Library. In this first season, we're exploring the horror genre and its six main subgenres: Cosmic, Gothic, Humor, Paranormal, Psychological, and Visceral.

This episode is all about the Gothic subgenre. We read two stories this time: the short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe, and its reimagining, the novella *What Moves the Dead* by T. Kingfisher.

I'm Maddy, your ghostess with the mostess for the season, and an Adult Services librarian at APL's Central library. Later this episode I'll be joined by my APL co-workers Kathleen Houlihan, one of our Teen Librarians, and Kelly Cline, a Library Assistant in our Circulation Department, to really worm our way through these books.

MUSIC

So, in 1764, *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole was published, and became the first Gothic novel. It is also widely considered to mark the beginning of the horror genre, because the elements it had inside it, such as "an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters, and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense," as David Punter writes in *The Literature of Terror*, all become standard aspects. Horror formed itself into a genre around these elements of *The Castle of Otranto* and they became patterns.

Another prominent title, and the one that is said to be the archetypal Gothic novel, is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe, which was published in 1794, and which was so influential in the Gothic genre that Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, published twenty years later, uses it as a prominent prop within its story and was written as a satire skewering the Gothic subgenre, in which Udolpho rip-offs had multiplied like rabbits.

Now, the Gothic period is said to have ended with the publication of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley in 1818, but the Gothic tradition continued to influence classics like *Wuthering Heights* in 1847, and also the works of Edgar Allan Poe in the 1830s, Nathaniel Hawthorne in the mid-century, and Henry James and Charlotte Perkins Gilman all the way out through the first decade or so of the 20th century, as well as many others. The Enlightenment was simultaneously influencing fiction writers in the 19th century with the application of science and reasoning for evil purposes, and we see that again in *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and we'll talk about this a little later, but that application of science is much more the path T. Kingfisher uses to approach *What Moves the Dead* rather than the more archetypal, capital-R Romantic, traditional Gothic avenue seen in "The Fall of the House of Usher."

So what makes Gothic Gothic? Let's break it down. Gothic is my personal favorite horror subgenre, so I'll try to keep my bias out of it, but I might not be able to help it.

Now, if we were talking just about books from the Gothic period, we'd say there are, quote, "stories of ancient castles, dark passageways, and ghosts. Typical plots involved an evil villain pursuing a young woman, and although she is confused and scared, she ultimately triumphs, and the villain is exposed." Which sounds like a Scooby-Doo episode, but you gotta start somewhere.

As it transformed, the Gothic subgenre made the why at the heart of the horror matter in a way not often prioritized in the other subgenres and tied both the terror and the answer to the mystery to the atmosphere aspect. After all, you cannot escape an atmosphere because it is not tangible; characters have their own will to

enact upon you; and at some point you are aware of the mystery, which demands to be solved – the story cannot end until it is, you cannot escape the mental and emotional toil until a rationale is produced (even if it isn't rational).

The plot itself is usually a tale surrounded by mystery. Because of those standard elements established in the early days of horror lit, pursuit, escape, and mystery became the driving necessary factors of the horror genre, and the subgenre of Gothic. The plot does not drive the book, at least not for the first act or so, until the mystery starts to pick up speed. The narrator or protagonist is usually summoned, occasionally against their will and almost always without much detail, at the behest of a friend or family member. They don't know why, and they aren't given any details after they arrive either. They start to notice strange things but are rebuffed when they ask. Eventually they begin to sleuth around on their own, or with an accomplice, and put together strange clues from both the characters and the setting.

The plot can only end when the mystery is both solved and escaped. The plot is self-contained and deeply tied to the setting and the pacing – escaping the setting usually ends the plot, and the pacing dictates when the plot is important.

The pacing: The best way to describe the pacing is as a slow burn. Gothic horror novels usually start out slow and then begin to pick up the pace almost without the reader knowing. Gothic horror relies on the setting and the atmosphere-slash-mood, and the pacing will pick up to coincide with the mood turning darker and the mystery becoming more of an immediate threat. Often Gothic stories will have a chapter or some sort of epilogue after the pacing hits critical velocity and will return to the more languorous pace of the early chapters, which is brilliant, because while it seems like everything is returning to its rightful place (and pace), everyone in the story – and the reader – cannot, and we know what can lurk beneath that placid pace.

The setting: dark, dreary, decaying. What else is there to say? Old mansions, isolated from neighbors, built on a remote landscape, surrounded by nature that could possibly and usually does turn hostile. Usually belonging to someone or someone's family that was formerly wealthy, but too proud. Storms are always a fun touch, because, like any good mystery, they force everyone to be in the same place for just a little bit too long. Ray Bradbury said, that in each and every Gothic story, "Every castle is a castle perilous, and despair is its chief inhabitant."

The writing style: The writing style will be very descriptive, even a bit flowery. But it should not be impenetrable – any confusion during the read should come from the plot and characters obscuring the mystery, not from dense writing. Once again, in order for horror to be horror, it has to be personal – and that means it has to be accessible at this base level.

The mood/atmosphere: The driving force in the Gothic subgenre is its atmosphere romantic terror. In terms of lowercase-r romance, there is usually a love story plotline, or at least characters experiencing a type of love, whether it is the past or is just the potential for it; and that love is tortuous and painful, psychologically and emotionally – and often physically, in terms of death or near-death scenes, often at the end of the second act and propelling the book into the third and final act. It doesn't have to be purely lowercase-r romantic either, in terms of relationships – Usher, as well as Mexican Gothic, revolve around familial love, which places the main characters in the path of danger.

But mainly, the Gothic subgenre is invoking capital-r romance as its atmosphere and mood. This romance is from the idea of Romanticism, invoking the idea of the sublime and the giving over of oneself to experience emotions fully, as well as the concept of enjoying the beauty of nature without imposing science over it. What happens when you indulge too much, when the sublime invokes awe and the awful? That's where romantic terror comes from.

The characters: Usually when the pacing of a genre or subgenre is slow, the characters are usually detailed in great depth – that's why it is slower. But Gothic tiptoes the line here – characters are often not given detailed arcs, or

explored in depth as individuals. Instead it is their relationships that matter more, because the relationships are where the secrets, the motives, the answers to the mystery are usually hidden. We can compare a lot of elements in Gothic horror to those in ghost stories, but in Gothic, it is usually humans who are haunting the humans.

Now, despite writing and editing in all of these genres across the 1830s and 40s, Edgar Allan Poe didn't invent Gothic fiction, he did not invent supernatural fiction, he did not invent horror fiction, literary criticism, or satire, though he DID invent the detective story... but he is a significant follower of the Gothic tradition and a significant reason why it was prolonged for so long. He took it and used it to his own purposes. His horror is not horror for mere horror's sake, the way that the mustachioed villains and creepy settings of the early Gothic novels were. *Horror Literature Throughout History* says, "Critics taxed him for creating too much "German" (which is just another way of saying "Gothic" and therefore, of the time, "horror") substance... [Poe] stated: 'I maintain that terror is not of Germany but of the soul,' adding that he composed those tales with that principle uppermost in mind."

Poe's works were also often condemned, by the critics of his time, for their Romanticism leanings – which just goes to show how entrenched in the Gothic tradition he was and is. His horror works prioritize the emotional – we have emotionally unsettled narrators who are prey to every anxiety on the planet and claustrophobic settings that amp up the psychological unease; and Poe often uses pathetic fallacies (which is, quote, the attribution of human emotion and conduct to things found in nature that are not human) to inspire both awe and terror of nature.

This prioritizing of emotional states and troubled human psychology also allowed Poe to make use of the clichéd elements of early Gothic horror (vague angst, passive victims, super flowery language, and over-the-top villains and horrors) and subvert them into meaningful and artistic representations. For many years, particularly after his impoverished death at age 40, in 1849, people have projected Poe as a person onto his stories, saying they came out of his own demons. And on one hand, that really expresses just how personal and human horror is. We mention this every time, practically, but horror is an emotion, it's not just a genre. These works are supposed to terrify you based on what you're terrified of. And so it's ultimately so personal, so to read Poe's works and say, he must've had a connection to it, is to prove that horror works. That we cannot conceive of or consume horror without tying it to something human.

But on the other hand, it shows how much his legacy was taken away from his artistic abilities. Especially given that, the main common thread between his stories, across all the genres he worked in, is Poe's own adherence to logic and close observation of minute details – not an emotional, irrational response to being plagued by personal demons that he is transferring onto the page.

Encyclopedia Britannica's section on the Legacy of Edgar Allan Poe says that, "Poe is conspicuous for a close observation of minute details, as in the long narratives and in many of the descriptions that introduce the tales or constitute their settings. Closely connected with this is his power of ratiocination. "Now, that was the first time I'd heard the word "ratiocination," which I hope I'm pronouncing right. The definition of ratiocination is "the process of exact thinking and a reasoned train of thought." Poe incorporates this into all his stories, not only as the creator of the modern detective story with "Murders in the Rue Morgue"; it is underpinning all of his horror and supernatural stories as well. That serves as a good segue into Usher as Usher is said to be one of the finest examples of Poe's "totality", which means that every detail has a purpose, every detail is related and relevant, every element is a Chekhov's gun.

But rather than coming in at the end and going off, as it were, much like in original Gothic novels, these details in Usher are used to creep and build suspense so that when they come back, it's even more terrifying because you can be like, this has been happening since this page? Or this page? Or even the first page? Everything is so meticulously woven, and nothing is extraneous.

I just have to say at the top how deeply bizarre it was to read two horror stories featuring an antagonist with my name. I'm going to refer to Madeline Usher as Madeline throughout, but just a heads-up that she is sometimes

referred to as Maddy, particularly in the Kingfisher retelling. We'll try to make it clear when we are talking about the character versus talking to me, and hopefully context clues, like, you know, the spores growing out of Madeline Usher and also the fact that she dies, make it clear as well.

"The Fall of the House of Usher" was published in 1839, in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, which Poe himself was editor of from 1839-1840, and then it was published again in 1840 in Poe's story collection, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*.

The short story clocks in around 20 pages, and opens with the arrival of an unnamed narrator to the Usher manor, after receiving a letter from his childhood friend, Roderick Usher, which urged him to visit as Roderick felt emotionally and physically ill. Afraid of his own house and of fear itself, with his sister succumbing to an irreversible sleeping disease, Roderick sinks further into melancholy as the days go by, despite the narrator's best efforts to cheer him up. Madeline dies and Roderick keeps her body in the house's crypt, to keep her away from doctors who might want to study her mysterious sickness. A few more days pass and Roderick becomes still more melancholy and also paranoid. One night, during a storm which makes the house's lake nearly glow, the narrator reads a fictional medieval poem to lift Roderick's spirits, but sounds from within the house begin to occur at the times they are mentioned in the text – a shield falls in the story, a metallic echoing is heard in the house; the dragon's death cry is read, and a shriek comes from the deep interior of the house. Roderick confesses that he has been hearing these sounds for days – because they buried Madeline alive. Madeline bursts through the door, bloody and emaciated, and attacks Roderick, who dies of fright. Madeline then herself finally dies, and the narrator runs from the house, turning back just once in time to watch the manor house crack straight down the middle and fall in pieces into the lake.

"The Fall of the House of Usher" packs a lot into a short span of pages, but let's tease apart some of the strongest elements.

Following in Gothic tradition, "The Fall of the House of Usher" uses setting, writing style, and vivid imagery to create an inescapable atmosphere of gloom and decay. The company of other humans, despite their own ability to inspire fear, is sought out over the possibility of a supernatural horror, and Usher shows the narrator as rapidly losing a valiant battle of trying to rationalize away the terror throughout the story. The story prioritizes above all else the, quote, "terror of the soul."

Plot: The plot of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is a bit of a slow-burn, as you can tell from the summary. You could argue there isn't even really a plot at all until Madeline dies, or even until she begins to escape from the crypt. Those are the two major plot points, and they propel the story through its energetic, hair-raising last few pages.

Pacing: The pacing in Usher ties together the slow-burn plot and the energetic writing for a nice balance... for most of the story. I'll be honest, to a modern reader, it may seem that Poe kind of undermines himself during the pacing. I know my biggest flaw as a reader is seeing a song or poem in the middle of a story and going, nope I'm not reading all that, and that's definitely what happened in Usher. So to come across not one, but TWO of those in the same story, pulling the plot to a stop, having the reader pay attention to something that wasn't the atmosphere within the house, made the pacing feel a bit uneven. That being said, the second poem coincides with the events of the story, so that evens out the pace again.

Writing Style: To a modern reader, Usher is full of purple-y prose; to its original audience, it would've been normal or even surprisingly straightforward – Poe doesn't bury descriptions in layers of description. Instead he provides enough a description to show how each piece of the story is tied deeply to the gloomy atmosphere. And even though that atmosphere is claustrophobic and gloomy, Poe's writing style is full of energy, and there's almost a delight to the way he tells the story. Even though the narrator is definitely not having a good time, you can tell Poe is. Honestly, it mirrors that excitement you feel when it's your turn to tell a scary story around the campfire.

Setting: Crumbling manor house on a misty secluded estate. If there's one thing *Castle of Otranto* made sure to embed deep within the subgenre, it's this, and for all Poe's twisting of the subgenre, there's no way around keeping the setting. The house is cracking on the outside, has a full crypt inside, and is set on a lake that glows in electrical storms. It wasn't haunted when the narrator arrives, but it probably is by the time he leaves. Well, what's left of it, anyway.

Mood/Atmosphere: As Ruthanna Emrys on Tor.com notes, Usher is, quote, "purely a mood piece." The atmosphere is the most important aspect of the Gothic subgenre, and it is pretty obvious that Poe paid the most attention to having Usher's atmosphere both be unified and have the maximum effect on a reader. The atmosphere of Usher is claustrophobic, full of a sense of entrapment and pure terror, which the characters also feel. In Usher, feelings, emotions, sensations – they all have agency, strength, power, and this adds to the sense of something looming just over your shoulder. Roderick isn't afraid of any particular event or horror, just the volume of terror it could inspire and that it could be deadly – and ultimately, as he dies from fright, it is. Poe also incorporates standard Gothic elements like omens, heavy storms, secret passageways, and even simple shadows to set the reader on edge.

Characters: You can only have so many people holed up in a crumbling mansion, and in Usher we have three residents, only two of which speak. Like other classic Gothic stories, these characters don't have arc or growth, and it is their relationships to one another that matter most – for example, the narrator realizing that Roderick and Madeline are twins and had a near-preternatural bond serves to heighten the tense atmosphere and introduce possible macabre motives.

Usher is told in first-person, but it is pretty unique that the reader knows only the gender of the narrator and nothing else – this truly allows for the narrator to be a reader surrogate, as well as a physical representation of, quoting from *Horror Literature through History* here, "the destructive emotional forces that wreak horrors on the minds and perhaps the bodies of such characters." Both the Gothic tradition and Romanticism loved allegories and physical manifestations of emotions, and Usher's characters all play many parts in that light, and in this way the house becomes a character as well. And they also show off Poe's uncanny ability to convincingly and creatively portray disintegrating minds.

Let's jump almost 200 years into the future. T. Kingfisher is the pen name for Ursula Vernon, in order to distinguish which books she writes for adults and which are for younger readers. *What Moves the Dead* comes at a very fun time, because not only are we experiencing a resurgence of Gothic novels, but also the rise of the speculative fiction novella – and speculative fiction umbrellas not only over sci-fi and fantasy, but horror as well. So while *What Moves the Dead* is longer than Usher, it still clocks in under 200 pages. Now, Kingfisher doesn't usually write Gothic horror. She does almost exclusively write speculative fiction, but her books usually err on the side of the fantasy genre with horror elements. So it ranges from high fantasy to urban fantasy, and she does have a fair number of short story collections, so she's no stranger to this format. And she's also retold fairy tales, so reimaginings, readaptings, retellings are already in her repertoire as a skill set. We'll get into a comparison between the two reads in a couple minutes with Kathleen and Kelly, but first let's get into the overview and aspects.

What Moves the Dead is a reimagining of "The Fall of the House of Usher," published in 2022, and is the first English-language retelling of Usher. Usher has not been adapted very many times in other mediums either (its most famous adaptation is probably the 1960 movie starring Vincent Price), and that's perhaps because it's so short and the title kind of gives the plot away – you know, the house falls. The familial house falls, and so does the literal physical house, so there isn't much you don't know going in. The best I can describe *What Moves the Dead* is as if Kingfisher took bellows and pumped air into the places in Usher where the plot skips a couple hours or days; *What Moves the Dead* follows the linear time more minutely, using that expanded space to explore its characters and its setting in more depth. I'm not going to do a super in-depth summary of *What Moves the Dead*'s plot since it is pretty similar to Usher, at least for the first half, but here we go. Much as in the original, our narrator arrives at

the house of Usher after being summoned by a letter from Madeline. Our narrator, Alex Easton, receives a name in this retelling, hails from a fictional European country, and is non-binary, using the honorific pronouns “ka-slash-kan” (k-a, k-a-n) reserved for members of Galacia’s military.

Alex is accompanied to the crumbling Usher manor by a valet, Angus, and a trusty horse named Hob, and is shocked to discover the house in disrepair and both siblings in an advanced state of illness. Between exploring the mushroom-covered estate grounds with a local mycologist and attempting to cheer up Roderick, Alex also butts heads with the Usher siblings’ American doctor as they both try to get to the root of the illness.

Meanwhile, Alex begins to notice strange bioluminescence on the lake in front of the house (like in Usher), as well as rabbits around the grounds that crawl rather than hop, stare without blinking, and have other uncanny and unrabbitlike mannerisms (definitely not in Usher). Alex also runs into Madeline multiple times while she is sleepwalking and appears to not recognize Alex nor be able to speak full sentences. Soon Alex discovers that the rabbits do not stay dead, but waves it away even as Dr. Denton is willing to believe.

The next morning, Roderick reveals that Madeline has died. Now, this is where the plot takes a left turn from the Usher story we know. Alex returns to the vault to check on Madeline’s body and discovers that her neck had been broken. Unwilling to be in the house with a murderer, Alex then comes across the mycologist Eugenia Potter, whose knowledge reveals a connection between Madeline’s pre-death appearance and the sounds Roderick has been claiming to hear. Alex and Eugenia P go down to the vault to confirm Alex’s theory, but Madeline is, surprise surprise, not there. Quickly, Alex and Angus find a dead hare and bring it to the house, but when Denton performs an autopsy of the fungus-filled hare, it comes back to life.

Soon after, the lake begins to glow, and Alex sends Angus and Eugenia away from the estate. Denton and Alex realize that Madeline had let herself out of the crypt, and they worry that she will kill Roderick, as he had killed her. In Roderick’s room, Madeline explains that the fungi in the lake has taken over her body – she taught it how to talk and control other corpses, and it kept her alive after her first death nearly a month prior. She tries to convince the others to let the tarn infect them as well, but they manage to escape the room and lock her inside.

Roderick, devastatingly, doesn’t die of fright (which honestly was the best part of the original), and the house isn’t left to slowly sink into the muck. Instead Roderick is given more agency and so sets fire to the house with both him and Madeline inside. A couple days later, Angus and Eugenia return with a cartful of sulfur, which they dump in the lake and watch as the bioluminescence is finally put out. Then they leave the ruins of the house of Usher.

Like Usher, *What Moves the Dead* is pulling from the Gothic tradition, but it’s pulling from the part I mentioned earlier, where the Enlightenment has joined with it. According to Kingfisher’s author’s note, this story takes place somewhere around the 1890s in order to align correctly with the scientific, medical, and botanical discoveries mentioned and used as plot linchpins throughout. It links up nicely with the Enlightenment tradition of twisting science for evil purposes, that Dr. Moreau effect, the Jekyll & Hyde effect.

This story has a really creative and interesting approach to Gothic. This work does not fit the mold (haha!) of traditional Gothic fiction, but we’ll go aspect by aspect through all these elements.

Plot: The plot has a bit more of a role in this story than in Usher. Alex is actively trying to solve a mystery, and so the plot has beats to hit. The mystery also shifts partway through, from Madeline’s illness to Madeline’s disappearance from the vault, and the second mystery and solution gets its own beats and reveal, complete with villainous monologue.

Pacing: The pacing in this novella is quite leisurely – the only time the pace really kicks off is when the rabbits appear, which foreshadows their importance. Despite there being a mystery, the urgency isn’t reflected in the pacing, as Alex explores the grounds and has casual chats with the other characters scattered around. The pacing is

also naturally slowed by the focus on world-building and characters; even the final confrontation with mushroom Madeline is a drawn-out conversation full of explanation.

Writing Style: The writing style differs quite a bit from Usher. It is straightforward and contemporary, even self-aware, and so it's more accessible off the bat for modern reader. And while this may throw off a reader who, say, read Usher and then *What Moves the Dead* back-to-back in a short span of time, Kingfisher does something really clever with the writing style and the atmosphere. The narration is blunt and relative bare of descriptions, and Alex tells us that is on purpose, as ka is not prone to fanciful language. Sometimes the narration will start a description, and Alex will make a comment that that is what ka would've said if kan had imagination; my favorite instance of this is perhaps this line: "Given that lack of imagination, perhaps you will forgive me when I say that the whole place felt like a hangover."

But as the story goes on, as Alex and the other characters start to see uncanny, inhuman things and as the neverendingly macabre atmosphere of the Usher estate presses in on them, the narration does start to become more fanciful and imaginative, and Alex no longer makes the offhand remarks – the characters have fallen fully victim to the atmosphere and the subgenre.

Setting: *What Moves the Dead* follows the Gothic tradition by prioritizing its mood and setting. The literal house of Usher is still a crumbling, decaying mansion overlooking an eerie lake and isolated on a large tract of land, and by allowing Alex to actually leave the house, Kingfisher adds in detail on the mushroom-filled fields surrounding the house and the creepy rabbits that populate them. Kingfisher is a character-driven and world-building-driven author, and that is clear in this story – not only do we see outside of the walls of the Usher house, but we also learn about a fictional country, its wars and military, and its language system. For readers who are interested in dipping a toe in Gothic horror, but may want a more information about where a story takes place, this is a good choice to start with.

Mood/Atmosphere: The atmosphere is a bit of a slow build, which is unusual for Gothic. Alex's forthrightness, tendency for nostalgia, rapport with Hob the horse, and light roasting of Angus keep the mood deceptively jovial, even after both Roderick's and Madeline's advanced states of illness are revealed.

Coinciding with the writing style and tone change I mentioned before, the atmosphere slowly begins to turn gloomy and claustrophobic, as the lack of results from either Dr. Denton or Alex, the isolated manor, and the siblings' melancholy begin to close in on the characters. The atmosphere then stays full of dread and despair through the rest of the book.

It's also worth noting that just as many horror stories incorporates elements of multiple subgenres, *What Moves the Dead* brings in some elements from the visceral, cosmic and paranormal. While Poe's story is purely in the realm of Gothic, the fleshy red fungi, the alienness of the sentient tarn, the body horror of reanimation, and the rabbit hive mind of *What Moves the Dead* has a bit of subgenre bleed in its mood and content.

Characters: Like the setting aspect, Kingfisher fleshes out the character aspect quite a bit. There's a main cast of seven characters, and contrary to traditional Gothic style, their relationships to one another actually matter less than their own contexts and backgrounds. Kingfisher creates an entire fictional country with complex linguistics and military honors for Alex; the mycologist is the fictional aunt of Beatrix Potter; the doctor served as a combat surgeon in the Civil War; even the way Hob the horse reacts to things on the Usher estate is compared against how he's reacted to similar things in the past. Perhaps most notable is that Madeline Usher, you know, speaks in this retelling, and goes even further to become the antagonist of the story through the characteristics of hers that Alex and Roderick remember fondly. Mushrooms can take over your body and mind, but they can't take over your heart. Who knew?

MUSIC

MADDY: So now we're going to talk to my colleagues Kelly and Kathleen. Say hi, guys!

KELLY: Hello.

Kathleen: Hi!

MADDY: Thank you both for coming, and reading two stories, being extra-special. We're going to kick off right away. Tell me what your favorite piece of horror is.

KELLY: I like anything gothic pretty much. I've enjoyed *Dracula* and *Du Maurier*. So anything gothic I really like.

KATHLEEN: I actually don't read that much horror. I'm generally game for any kind of reading so I read really widely. So I don't tie myself to a particular genre. So I don't have a particular genre that I would say was my favorite. But I do enjoy gothic. I especially enjoy historical things so I have a background in nineteenth-century English literature. So I do love stuff that is set in that time period.

So the book that we are going to discuss was really fun.

MADDY: Yes, good. You both approached me separately about how you enjoyed this time period and Gothic literature. Whether you read widely or watch widely does Gothic appeal to you because of the horror element or do you prefer more of the setting or the romantic terror or the creeping slow burn? What appeals to you about Gothic?

KELLY: I think the setting, the eeriness always is what appeals to me. I don't like gory horror or jump-out scare-you kind of horror. I like the slow build of the atmosphere, the creepiness, the fog and the darkness of Gothic settings.

MADDY: The moors. Yes!

KATHLEEN: I would have to agree. I am also a really big fan of the atmospheric elements, sort of that slow building and the crescendo of the horror up to sort of this one moment. I love sort of all of the drama and the intrigue of things, especially set in the nineteenth century, about all of the things that are left unsaid. And how that sort of plays into the horror genre.

MADDY: Definitely, yeah. And I think Gothic of all the subgenres we've talked about this season and will talk about, it is one of the few that does not involve gore or those deep moments of terror. It is about the atmosphere that you both like and that I really love. Gothic has always been my favorite for that kind of reason. The creepiness over the sheer bloodiness.

So let's move into *The Fall of the House of Usher* and its retelling, *What Moves the Dead*, which we read for this episode.

What did you guys think? Did you prefer the original? Did you like the retelling? Why? Why not?

KELLY: I liked both of them. They actually both had things to recommend them. I know Gothic doesn't necessarily depend on strength of the storyline. But with Poe's version I was definitely thinking, "OK, he thinks that his sister may not be dead but yet puts her in a coffin." It's one thing to put in a mausoleum or in a crypt, but why restrict the movement so much that she's actually in the coffin?

Though it makes you think he wanted to kill her. But there's not really a reason to kill her.

MADDY: Yeah, I bet Freud had a really fun time with this story, right?

KELLY: That was very interesting to me. And then in the retelling there definitely was a reason for him to go to that length and kill his sister who I guess was technically already dead.

MADDY: Certainly. And it was like a more gruesome killing.

KELLY: It was much more gruesome.

MADDY: Did you prefer one or the other?

KELLY: I liked that there was more detail in *What Moves the Dead* because it answered more background questions than the original story which is so short, in reality only like twenty some odd pages.

MADDY: Yeah, the world building is certainly more in the forefront.

KELLY: Yes, it gives you more of a sense of time in the retelling. Well, it actually names that it was taking place in the 1890's. Whereas the original doesn't really say when it is. You are just depending on his description to kind of figure out what time period it is taking place in.

MADDY: Absolutely.

KATHLEEN: I'm going to be controversial and say that, as much as I love Poe, and I remember reading this gilt-edged collection of Poe as probably an eight- or nine-year-old, I was a really precocious child....

MADDY: Way too young.

KATHLEEN: And my dad had a lot of classic horror in the house and I read a lot of it as a kid. I actually named my first car Poe, as an aside. Don't recommend. Got in many accidents with that car.

MADDY: He would be proud of that, I think.

KATHLEEN: He would be totally proud. I'm going to say that I actually hated this Edgar Allen Poe story, and I love a lot of his work. But I found this one too short to be satisfying. I found it annoying in the lack of detail and the vagueness, and those pieces. I was just like, "You just tossed this one off." I really feel like it was a throwaway story. And it didn't have enough development.

By contrast, I really loved the modern retelling of it. I love where the author took it. I'm a huge fan of fungi, so I loved that mycelium horror element. I never thought that mushrooms could play a role in my horror love story, but they totally did.

As Kelly said, I really loved the depth of the storytelling and the time you got to spend with the characters, even though it was still a short story. I really loved all of those elements of it.

MADDY: I have to say, now knowing the fungi part of your life and backstory, it makes a lot more sense. But I am really surprised. I could not get behind the retelling. I am not a purist in any means, despite also having a father who loves Poe and reading "Berenice" at way too young of an age.

But I really loved the idea of Roderick dying of fright, always a classic. I really wanted him to die of fright again, I guess. That was my main, that he had so much agency in this one that he walks back into the house to blow it up. No! Spontaneously. Your fear should be so strong.

But I thought Kingfisher has such a way of creating background and worlds, that is across her work, that it is hard just to not fall totally in love with the world building and want to know more about these fictional places that she's created.

KATHLEEN: Absolutely. And I think that it is the richness of the detail that I fell in love with, as you were saying. It reminds me of the care that was taken over describing the rabbits or the mushrooms that they happen to see. I had to go look it up. They actually are a real kind of mushroom.

MADDY: Yes, I looked that up too. They're terrifying.

KATHLEEN: They are semi-terrifying.

I feel like I need to go back and tell the backstory about why I like fungi, but I don't know if it is too much of a tangent. I will go ahead and do it and you can always cut it out later.

MADDY: Do it.

KATHLEEN: So one of the reasons why I loved the retelling is because it has this really strong undercurrent, mycelium network, shall we say, of fungi being sort of the starring villain, the antihero of the story.

And in my family, for the first two weeks in December, we celebrate something called the fungi fortnight, which is sort of a larger celebration of T. Rexness, which celebrates the evolutionary milestones of the calendar year as aligned to the cosmic calendar.

And you know the fans out there will totally get that reference.

And so the first two weeks of December is basically, on Earth, milestones. Nothing happens, nothing happens until December and you start getting microbes and mushrooms. Those are our first lifeforms. And that is basically all there was for the first two weeks of December.

And so I loved seeing them because mushrooms are the longest living organism on planet Earth. They've been here the longest. They are going to be here after all of us. They might save the world one day. I really think they are undervalued and underappreciated.

And I think it is really fascinating how the author has taken them and given them such a huge role in this story. I just thought it was so well done. I really enjoyed it.

MADDY: Kelly, do you have any special connection to mushrooms?

KELLY: Besides liking to eat them? Not really. They are one of my favorite foods. And I like a wide variety of them.

MADDY: Me too.

KELLY: It was interesting to me, because I read *Mexican Gothic*, which also has the same kind of idea of fungi taking over people's bodies and directing them. It's interesting to me that these two authors kind of simultaneously had this idea.

MADDY: Yeah. And *Mexican Gothic* is certainly a read alike for this. Have you read it, Kathleen?

KATHLEEN: I have not, but if I had my phone on me it would be going on my Goodreads list right now.

MADDY: And the author's note does say that Moreno-Garcia beat Kingfisher to the punch.

Which is really interesting because fungi does appear in Usher, the original story, as one of the few unexplained elements. But as Kingfisher notes, it seems like that must have been what was causing the decay of the house, the decay of Madeline.

KATHLEEN: The decay of the minds of the people who were living in the house.

MADDY: Exactly. I love thinking about the first people who ate some mushrooms because there are some that will kill you and there are some that will make you think your sister is dead, I guess. And bury her alive.

But yeah, *Mexican Gothic*. We'll add it to our readalikes at the end as well. There is something where the tradition of Gothic marries, especially what we are talking about in the late 1800s, marries romanticism of this awe of nature, but then also the ideas of Darwin which have just arrived. And that's why Kingfisher has set it in the 1890s, so you have to have all of these scientific discoveries in order to make the mushroom revelation even possible, to put all those pieces together.

But you have this confluence of this awe of nature, but also suddenly people understanding that mushrooms aren't vegetables, that they are all connected underneath the earth. All these different things. Maybe they can make you do things or become sentient or hive mind-y, I guess.

What did you think of Madeline's relationship to the fungi at the end? It was kind of like a mother-child kind of a relationship. How did that feel as an ending, as a device? Was it satisfying?

KELLY: Well I thought it was interesting because it definitely, she very clearly states that it brought her satisfaction and it gave her a usefulness. Because her only place was to be coddled and be dressed up by her mother. Or, then later as a woman, to be admired by men. But then going back to, when they moved back to the house of Usher, she's kind of closed up and she's not being admired by men.

And so she really has no other purpose until the fungi finds her and gets her to adopt them and teach them. I think it was very interesting that Madeline tries to get Easton to take on that role. That seems to be the purpose for Madeline calling Easton to come, or writing and asking Easton to come see her, was to ultimately try to get Easton to take on that role. Because she knew that the fungi was killing her. Not on purpose. But she knew she was going to die and needed someone else to take on that role as the parent.

And Easton very clearly says no way. I'm not doing that. But it is interesting to me, why didn't she try to get her brother, Roderick, as a parental figure as well? Why did Madeline choose to bring in this other person?

MADDY: Yeah, I don't know.

KATHLEEN: That's a good question. I had not thought about that. I did sort of like the agency she was given. Your nineteenth-century heroines are so rarely heroines. So I love that she got to have a little more agency and a little bit more story. Again in the original, she felt like such a cast-off character.

MADDY: For sure. She didn't have any speaking lines.

KATHLEEN: She has nothing. She just dies immediately. She didn't even get her, what's it called, your SAG card? She wouldn't even get her SAG card. She has zero lines. She doesn't even say one word in the original story. She was such an afterthought.

But in the second one she gets to be more richly detailed. And I perhaps although might not agree with her or volunteer to be a coparent of the mushroom colony, I could see where she was coming from. I can see how it made her feel powerful. All of a sudden, she was so isolated and cut off and now she's connected to everything. An in charge and able to make things happen. And bring the resources that she needs close to her. And so yeah, I really liked her character in the retelling.

MADDY: Yeah. And in living after death, she gets to kind of avenge all those other Gothic heroines, many of whom Poe himself uses, who die and are the catalyst, their death is the catalyst for the rest of the story. Despite them not saying or doing anything.

And I think giving someone a narcoleptic illness just to make sure they aren't seen or that they don't have to have character development is pretty wild.

KATHLEEN: Very convenient.

MADDY: I'm glad you guys like the retelling. If you retold it, do you think there are any elements of what Kingfisher did that you would also like to keep? Or was there something while you were reading Usher that you hoped would really make it into a retelling?

I found it really interesting that Usher's narrator, the only thing we really know about him is his gender. And going into *What Moves the Dead*, we know that Alex Easton is nonbinary, uses honorific military pronouns, and I was

actually hoping that it was just going to be a total reversal, where you have a gender-neutral name like Alex and the only thing we don't learn is Alex Easton's gender. That's what I was hoping for when I first read about it.

But again, dying of fright. Got to keep it. That's like a dealbreaker for me.

And very Gothic. Up there with Charles Dickens making someone spontaneously implode in *Bleak House*.

KATHLEEN: After hearing you talk about it, I did appreciate the dying of fright element in the first story. It was probably the only thing that appealed to me at all in the first story.

So I think you are probably right, that if there had been some way to sort of retain that element, it would have been sort of a perfect mirror to the older story and would have been interesting to see how you weave it into the modern retelling rather than just it being brute force death.

MADDY: I will also say that I was reading a piece on Tor.com that someone was saying that they would've really liked to see a Madeline POV, the point of view from Madeline. They used the words, "About being stuck as the romantically ill fridge woman in a Gothic story. How interesting would that be if you were stuck in the crypt with Madeline and you watch?" Because in Usher we only hear her starting to emerge. What would happen if we followed her trying to get out?

I think that is a really interesting idea as well. Turns it into more of a chase, less of a traditional Gothic, but...

KELLY: I do think, now that you mention it, that it would have been interesting to have it more from Madeline's point of view, what was happening, even though there is the introduction, and the narrator is nonbinary, it still is placing that character in a male role because they are a soldier, in a traditionally masculine... But I did really like that introduction of that type of character. I would have liked to have known a little bit more about that character.

I kept thinking that it hints that Alex chose that lifestyle, like signed up to be a soldier, but also at the same time says that they did it because they needed to support younger siblings. So it's not really clear, did this person choose it because that is how they self-identified, or was it something of necessity?

It would have been interesting to me to have some exploration of Madeline and Alex's relationship. When they were younger, how they first met. Were they both female presenting as children? Or did Alex always kind of self-identify as nonbinary? That was something I was interested in more. Was Roderick really part of the friendship group or not? Obviously Alex had a relationship with Roderick as a commander in the military.

That whole thing was very interesting to me. I would have liked to know a little bit more about their friendship when they were younger. The three of them.

KATHLEEN: I'm trying to remember. I don't think it was very well explored but it was hinted at or implied in both stories is that there was a little bit of a romantic chemistry between Alex and Madeline and a little bit less with Roderick. In neither story did it really get explored and I think, thinking about it from a Gothic perspective, and how sort of the tension of romance but not romance, but yes but no.

MADDY: Yes, and how does death and terror factor in all that?

KATHLEEN: Yes, exactly. I think I would have liked a little bit more exploration of that.

MADDY: Yeah, and I think Kelly's point earlier of the idea of Alex taking on a parenting role, could Alex coparent with Madeline? Rather than Madeline kind of leaving Alex. Was that her hope?

KATHLEEN: No single parenting of the mushroom colony.

MADDY: Your hands are just too full.

KATHLEEN: Literally full.

MADDY: So now we are going to move to giving some readalikes, some movie watchalikes, things that you might enjoy if you also enjoyed the Poe or the Kingfisher or even just Gothic horror and Gothic terror in general.

Kelly brought up *Mexican Gothic* earlier. I think it is the perfect readalike for all of these things. What did you like about it, Kelly?

KELLY: I like that it brought the Gothic into the twentieth century. I can't remember exactly when it is set. It's the fifties or the sixties. When I think about that time I don't think of it as that long ago, but it was seventy, almost a hundred years ago.

So it still has that element of age. And then the house, of course, that's in *Mexican Gothic* that is a character in and of itself, kind of like the house of Usher, though more so. It's more of a character in *Mexican Gothic*. It's obviously an older house. I can't remember how old the house is. I think it was probably built around the turn of the century.

MADDY: But decaying almost too fast.

KELLY: Yeah, it's decaying almost too quickly because of the infestation of the fungi in the walls.

MADDY: Yeah, it kind of marries the creepy house of Usher and then the mushrooms from Kingfisher, where it makes the house a character because it is also the villain in addition to the setting. One of many villains in *Mexican Gothic*.

Yeah, I loved *Mexican Gothic*. It was one of those books where I really needed to relax after I read it. And I thought, "Oh, I know what I'll do. I'll take a really lovely bath." Can't do that because baths are terrifying in *Mexican Gothic*.

KELLY: Yes, they were!

MADDY: I will say it's a great fungi Gothic. I will also say that Silvia Moreno-Garcia is the author, and she also was the author of an anthology called *Fungi*, which is a short story anthology dedicated to stories around fungi, some of which are Gothic based.

Kathleen is making a "let's do this" face.

And then also in the realm of fungi, anything by Jeff VanderMeer, who is the author of *Annihilation*, in the *Southern Reach* series, and that is fungi and really starts to skew Gothic into both body horror and a little known theme but more prevalent in the last twenty years called nature/field horror, where you are really starting to see nature as its own character. Not just something that inspires awe and terror.

Kathleen, did you have any for us?

KATHLEEN: So I have two recommendations for readalikes. And both of them are historical, sort of period pieces. And maybe skirt the edge of horror/mystery. So maybe a little bit of both.

One of them is a YA novel. I did tell you I was a teen librarian.

The first one is called *Beguiled* by Cyla Panin. It is sort of a Celtic retelling of the Bean-Nighe. When I first picked up the book I thought it was going to be a retelling of Sleeping Beauty, because there is a spindle. And I was like, "Is this a horror retelling of Sleeping Beauty? I'm here for it!"

It turned out it's the story of a girl who comes from a really poor background, just above abject poverty. But her and her father are weavers. So they have a trade. They are very skilled weavers. But they don't even have enough money to buy good materials to make better things, to make more money. Every month it is a little bit less, a little bit less.

And then her father dies and she's on her own. And she's not sure what to do. And she has heard that if you go out into the river at night you will see the Bean-Nighe and she will grant your wish. It's a scary woman who is washing clothes, like a ghost figure who is washing clothes, sobbing for her lost children, a la La Llorona.

And she goes, and she sees the woman, and she's washing this bloody shirt. And she wishes for something, and the woman grants her wish, which is to have the materials that she needs, and to be able to be a skilled weaver, and to do all of these things.

So every time she weaves she has to prick her finger and give a little bit of her blood to the weaving apparatus, the loom. And these materials just start showing up on her door, these beautiful silks and everything. And when she weaves a dress, the material for a dress and it's turned into a dress, it smells a little bit like mossy water. Because it has the magic of the Bean-Nighe in it.

And it also has a magic in it that beguiles people. So if you wear her dresses you are able to beguile people and get them to do whatever you want. And this power, she gets sort of wrapped in with this group that's manipulating her for the power that she is able to wield. She is not able to wield it herself very effectively.

But I thought it had a lot of similar atmospheric elements. Slow burn. You don't really know what's happening. The resolution at the end is very satisfying. There are multiple levels of resolution.

And then, yeah, your female character who is being slowly drained of her essence, basically.

MADDY: Sounds familiar!

KATHLEEN: Yes, very similar!

And the other one I want to recommend, I actually just finished it last night, is called *Pandora*, by Susan Stokes-Chapman. It is a retelling of the Pandora myth, and it's about a girl whose parents were, I think this one is set in 1799, 1800s London. She's half Greek, and her parents were archeologists during this sort of scientific exploration, all of the cultural elements are being taken out. There's a huge understory about, all of the British people are really indignant about Napoleon trying to steal all of the cultural artifacts that have such great meaning.

And I'm like, "Hello, British people! Funny you should mention that."

MADDY: They are just mad they didn't beat them to Egypt.

KATHLEEN: Basically.

And so the element in this story is, it's not actually a box. It's a Greek urn. But similarly very atmospheric. You get very gritty, very elaborate details. She has this magpie who is like her bestie. And then she also makes jewelry, but she doesn't have the materials that she needs to do this very well. She wants to be independent. She sees herself as sort of a jewelry designer. But she doesn't have the materials to do it. So she does it out of bits of wire and pieces of broken glass that the magpie collects for her.

Part of the side story is she's taking these things to a jewelry manufacturer trying to convince him to buy her designs. So that's a whole another substory about whether or not she needs to be rescued by the love interest. Very similar feelings, similar slow burn.

Similar, you know, you've got that character of the Pandora's urn that has its own sort of power and magnetism. It's getting people to do all kinds of things. This urn has much power over many people. Sort of watching that develop and watching her develop and seeing whether or not she's able to come out the other end.

Really delightful.

MADDY: That sounds great!

KELLY: It occurs to me just now, and it's been probably more than a year since I've read this book, *The House of Dust*, by Noah Broyles, which definitely has the house as a kind of character. The dust which seems to collect in the house similarly has this taking over of people's bodies. It's always a woman. It eventually reveals generation to generation of women who have been the recipient of the dust and have come to wield this power in this small and very isolated rural town.

So it begins with a man who is a writer, he's a crime writer, and he's gone to various places around the country and written for a magazine in-depth stories. He's down on his luck. He finds this place on a, he's out doing something and he just finds this little small town and happens upon, the latest queen has died, and somehow gets pulled into the ritual of her burial and stuff like that. And decides to move there with his girlfriend, who then becomes the next.

MADDY: Didn't see that one coming at all.

KELLY: Yeah, didn't see that coming at all.

But it strikes me as kind of being a similar type of idea of this element of nature taking over.

MADDY: Yeah, that sounds really good too. My TBR is growing. Guys, it can't get any bigger!

KATHLEEN: I want to mention also specifically like *What Moves the Dead*, a book I just found out about because a patron was looking for it. *Leech*, by Hiron Ennes.

KATHLEEN: That's on my list!

MADDY: It seems Gothic on the surface but when you get a little further on, even just into the description of the book, you see that, much like *What Moves the Dead*, it plays with the boundaries of traditional Gothic elements and patterns that we see.

So if you are interested in that sort of subversion of the Gothic tradition, that might be a really good read as well.

And we are also experiencing a little bit of a Gothic boom right now, as you can tell by all these cool books that we've been talking about. But the last boom was in the mid to late 1900s. And so if you are looking for what came right before this boom, I know we mentioned Daphne Du Maurier earlier. So *Rebecca*, obviously.

And then also *The Little Stranger*, by Sarah Waters. Sarah Waters writes almost exclusively historical fiction in the Gothic tradition. But *The Little Stranger* is her most horror-leaning one. They all have elements of mystery and suspense, but that one, if you are looking for a bit of a scare, is definitely a go to.

And also, I have to say this because a deeply beloved movie to me is *Crimson Peak*, which was directed by Guillermo del Toro. It's just great. It didn't do very well at the box office, but I love it. And I find it a perfect understanding of Gothic in setting, with literally plot points of people falling through the rotting house. There are ghosts. There's a weird Roderick-Madeline vibe. It's isolated. The colors are beautiful.

So hopefully we get more Gothic movies coming out as well.

KELLY: In the last few years there was a newer version of *My Cousin Rachel* that came out. I really liked it a lot. And I hadn't read the book. So I found an interesting interplay between the movie and the book, one being more definitive about, was Rachel murdered or was she left to accidentally die?

MADDY: Very Gothic.

KELLY: Another movie brought to mind, I guess it wouldn't necessarily be a traditional Gothic, was a movie that came out in the late eighties called *Lady in White*. I think it is set in 1962.

This little boy, who witnesses the murder of a girl around his same age. Lucas Haas is the actor who plays the little boy. There is this character of this lady in white who he sees on the cliffs. Is it his mother? Then who murdered her? Was it his father? There's this whole tension about, was it his dad who killed her or not?

It's not like a classic Gothic setting, but it still had a lot of the same feel to me as a Gothic story.

MADDY: Yeah, that suspense and ratcheting tension for sure.

KATHLEEN: Has anyone watched *1899*?

MADDY: No.

KATHLEEN: That's OK. Well, I will definitely recommend it to you. I'm not totally convinced that it qualifies as Gothic. It is a serialized show. It's about a ship that is carrying people in 1899, I must presume, a ship called the Prometheus, which is taking people from England to America.

MADDY: Very Mary Shelley.

KATHLEEN: And there are many different levels of class of passengers. And you get to see all of those different levels playing out. But weird thing is, there is a boat that belonged to the same shipping line that went missing three months before. And as they are traveling they encounter this missing ship. They go aboard the missing ship. There is no one aboard the missing ship. Except for one young boy who has been locked in a cabinet.

They bring the young boy back onto their ship. And then strange things start happening. There is a little bit of sci fi thrown in, some elements, some foreshadowing. So I would definitely recommend *1899* if you like that slow burn, if you like to be disoriented and you don't know what's going on. You get a lot of those social tensions because it's a modern story. There's some R-rated stuff because they think you need that to keep people's interest. But you can just skip past those parts if you don't want those parts.

And then that slow burn, and you get some really interesting mixing of the different classes of passengers. It is a modern retelling so there is all different kinds of identities represented, which is lovely to see. And some weird stuff. Weird Gothic sci-fi stuff. Which is not a crossover I was expecting.

MADDY: Sounds great!

Now I'm like, is *Lost* Gothic?

KELLY: Good question. Another show that I think there were only three seasons of was the show *Penny Dreadful*.

MADDY: We all gasped. I love *Penny Dreadful*.

KELLY: Which combines all of those characters from the classic monster stories. Frankenstein. Dracula. Dorian Gray, which I didn't know anything about Dorian Gray, but wow, what a hedonist!

MADDY: They certainly take some liberties.

KELLY: So I found that interesting, although it definitely has some more terror in it than just classic Gothic. But the feeling is very much Gothic.

MADDY: That is such a good recommendation. I can't believe I forgot about it. It is such a good show.

KATHLEEN: If you haven't watched it yet, you should definitely watch *Fantastic Fungi*. Just to see all the fascinating ways that we are connected to fungi already.

MADDY: Yes, what's more Gothic than being connected to nature in ways you may not want?

Thank you guys so much for joining us. And I hope you enjoy the books.

MUSIC

Thank you for listening to this very Gothic episode of APL Volumes, Season One.

You can find a list of all the media we discussed in the show notes, and copies of them are available to borrow through the Austin Public Library. If you want even more recommendations check out our personal pick service and get a personalized list from our expert librarians.

Thanks to my guests Kelly Cline and Kathleen Houlihan. If you see them out on the floor here at the Central Library, go talk to them about mushrooms.

APL Volumes is recorded and produced in the Library's Innovation Lab, a part of the APL Innovate Digital Maker Space. The Austin Public Library is currently putting together a very cool digital makerspace, which will offer not only recording equipment and hardware, but all kinds of audiovisual software for 3D modeling, graphic design, animation and much more. We are really excited to bring it to the public, so keep an eye out for it in the future.

Many thanks to the APL Innovate team for their guidance and input on this podcast.

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This podcast is all library, all the time. Our next episode will be on the humor subgenre. We're reading *John Dies At The End* by Jason Pargin.

Thanks for listening and for supporting your local public library.

MUSIC