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CML News

With most of us working from home—and in different home states—we rarely get to be in each other's company. We email, or sometimes text; we have an occasional Zoom meeting; we talk on the phone when we're creating the table of contents—often an all-day affair with a short break for lunch. But the collegial chat in the hall about an amazing poem; the heads up to the latest article about LIDAR, Bitcoin, elephant emotions, or travel; the latest story a literary great has written; the sharing of a joke, personal anecdote, logistical challenge, or question. The gripe! The snore! The burp! The laugh heard from afar! It's all missing. A gaping hole in our days. A loss.

And we *feel* it.

So, aside from picking up and moving, we let the feelings come and remember what we have created together. A living, breathing, immediate, stimulating, maddening, thoughtful, and human collaboration—just for you.

Highlights

Despite wildfires, floods, the Delta variant, and the traumatic end to a twenty-year war, we keep going! We can only hope that the remainder of 2021 proves relatively uneventful and that the pandemic finally begins to show a marked decline. We also hope that CML continues to be a trusted, comforting, and, yes, *entertaining* companion through these uncertain times.

In this issue we balance out our weightier pieces with some that are more bittersweet or that contain an element of humor, such as **Colson Whitehead's** short story, "The Theresa Job," a vivid heist story, and **Tony Earley's** tale, "Place of Safety," which offers us a town full of unique characters, from "The Worm" to the formidable Mrs. Chandaluri, pulling together in a moment of crisis. And then there is **Caio Fernando Abreu's** story, "Those Two," in which a pair of lonely Brazilian

men find love and joy in each other in spite of all the prejudices of the society that surrounds them. And if all else fails, there's still the joy of music: **Richard Grant** gives us "A Peek Inside the World's Greatest Record Store," introducing us to R&B Records, a legendary shop in Philadelphia run by a loveable eccentric, Val Shively, who is also the world's foremost collector of group harmony (popularly known as "Doo-Wop") discs.

Travel is also a wonderful tonic for challenging times. Without having to board a plane, let alone wear a mask, you can travel to Greece with CML in **Patrick Leigh Fermor's** beautifully written "Swish! Swish! Swish!" or to the atmospheric port city of Trieste in **Robert Draper's** "The Lure of Trieste." For that matter, learn how to be a happy and harmless trespasser in **Henry Walter's** "Forgive Us Our Trespasses"—and how to be kicked off of private property with grace and humor!

For all of the havoc that nature can wreak, it is an endless source of wonder. **Mark Leviton's** interview with mycologist **Merlin Sheldrake** is aptly titled "Hidden Worlds," exploring the astonishing lives of fungi, which Sheldrake calls "the living seam by which much of life is stitched into relation." In **Zach St. George's** "The Accidental Climatologist," we meet Jeff Lowenfels, who, in 1976, began writing for *The Anchorage Daily News* what would become the nation's longest-running gardening column, and a testament to the slow but relentless march of climate change.

Poetry and fiction are always an integral part of CML's offerings. In this issue, we bring you such notable American poets as **Jorie Graham**, **Ocean Vuong**, **Kaveh Akbar**, **D.A. Powell**, and **Alexandra Teague**, as well as a particularly moving poem by Mexican poet **A.E. Quintero**. Fiction is powerfully represented by **Etgar Keret**, **Mi Jin Kim**, and **Anuk Arudpragasam**, among others.

TOP PICKS

In **Barrett Swanson's** alarming piece, "The Anxiety of Influencers," we see how companies in the age of social media entice young men and women to become potential "influencers," producing the endless stream of internet ephemera known as "content." Swanson gives a close-up view of the human costs of this grasping for wealth, fame, and status, which have never been more attainable for anyone in the history of the world as now.

Why are roles for blind characters on stage and screen almost always given to the sighted? In “Feeling Seen,” **Andrew Leland** goes to the set of the controversial television show, *In the Dark*, which features Murphy Mason, a young blind detective, played by the sighted actress, Perry Mattfeld, to explore how the representation of blindness is constructed. Leland, himself on the verge of blindness, asks: “How should a blind person act? What does *real* blindness look like?”

Acclaimed writer **Margaret Atwood**, perhaps best known for her novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*, moves us poignantly in this issue with her short story, “Old Babes in the Wood,” in which two aging sisters, Lizzie and Nell, go about their day at their family’s crumbling vacation house. An exploration of late life, memory, and inevitable loss, the story also celebrates the strength and endurance of these sisters. “My heart is broken, Nell thinks. But in our family we don’t say ‘My heart is broken.’ We say: ‘Are there any cookies?’”

The D-B Beat

At CML, we always delight in making connections and getting to the root of things. You can imagine our delight in encountering a bounty of pieces dealing with every kind of fungus—nature’s ultimate connectors and root-embracers. Merlin Sheldrake, the subject of Mark Leviton’s interview “Hidden Worlds,” holds a special kinship with his field of study, which he pursues as both a humanistic and a scientific enterprise. His 2020 book, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures* is available as **DB 99961**.

And Special Thanks to... Katharine J. L., from Sante Fe, NM who said “Choice Magazine is my favorite thing about having a disability! Thank you all for your excellent work!”

Happy fall from Annie, Jay, Alfredo, Mike & Raquel!