

It's Time to [DOWNLOAD](#) Our Spring Issue!

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## CML News

What would our world be without volunteers? At CML, our volunteers are sent copies of articles and stories to record at home, returning the finished sound files to us for evaluation. It is an essential part of our process of choosing what to send to the studio in Denver for the final issue. At the state level, Talking Book Libraries (TBLs) often staff their own studios, producing professional-grade recordings of local magazines or author books that their own volunteers read. One of our editors, **Jay Popham**, has recently joined the Texas State Library and Archives Commission Talking Book Program as a volunteer reviewer. His early impressions are strongly positive: "...the folks there are very nice and have been great with providing feedback on their 'house style' when it comes to [recordings], as well as insights into some of their operations. They really have to wrangle a ton of logistics..." We know the work it takes to serve patrons and subscribers alike. Hats off to all the volunteers who make listening possible, and, a joy!

## Highlights

"April is the cruellest month," T.S. Eliot famously wrote, by which he meant, among other things, the difficulty of rebirth, and the uncertain mix of rainy with sunny weather that heralds the coming of spring. The world itself continues to be a mixed bag: a continuing war in Ukraine, fears of a direct confrontation with China, whale strandings on East Coast beaches; but good things too, like the James Webb Space Telescope discovering six new galaxies, and a positive upsurge in the turtle population in Florida, which had been declining alarmingly for years. And don't forget, if April is the cruellest month, it is also National Poetry Month! Of course, at CML, we celebrate poetry year-round, and in this issue we have our usual stellar offerings, including poems by **Yusef Komunyakaa**, **Jane Hirshfield**, **A.E. Stallings**, **Joanna Klink**, and **Sasha Mariel Prevost**, a young visually disabled poet.

Our fiction is notable as well. **Yohanca Delgado's** story, "The Withering," is written from the perspective of two preternaturally aware infants observing the world with untainted wonder. **Louis Erdrich's** "The Hollow Children" takes us on the phantasmagoric journey of a school bus driver through the heart of a snap blizzard. Irish-Canadian writer **Colin Barret's** "Rain" makes a low-income Irish family's cramped kitchen the setting for tensions and revelations. Other fiction includes work by returning CML author **Dennis McFarland** and a powerful young Native American author, **Kashona Notah**.

Our non-fiction includes "The 15,000-Mile Lifeline," by **Sarah A. Topol**, which introduces us to *Ukrzaliznytsia*, Ukraine's national rail system, an entity so vast that it is called "a country within a country." The product of successive waves of Polish, Russian, Soviet, and independent Ukrainian development efforts, the trains have been crucial to the nation's survival. Every day, the employees of the system work to keep refugees, weapons, and supplies moving, repairing track, literally living on the rails—all while dodging Russian drones, artillery, and missile attacks.

Thank goodness for music! English-Iranian writer **Kasra Lang** provides a beautiful essay on Johann Sebastian Bach, a composer he calls "the town crier of Heaven." In "Once Upon a High Lonesome," naturalist and author **Holly Haworth** recounts her journey through the North Carolina woods in search of the elusive whippoorwill and its enchanting call; Haworth is equally fascinated by the human imitation of the whippoorwill's call, which she encounters in equally rare, almost lost, shellac recordings of American country music from the 1920's. But silence, too, is a kind of music. **Caity Weaver**, in "The Silent Treatment," ventures to Minneapolis to spend time in an anechoic chamber, "the quietest place on the planet," a room so silent that it is rumored to drive some visitors mad.

As always, we like to visit the world in writing. In this issue, **Pico Iyer** takes us to the paradisiacal gardens of contemporary Iran, while **Vivian Nereim** explores Neom, a vast, grandiose city of the future being built in the Saudi Arabian desert. The ambitious project, the brainchild of absolutist leader Mohammed bin Salman is hitting inevitable snags.

## TOP PICKS

The world lost two important poets recently—**Linda Pastan** (1932–2023) and **Bernadette Mayer** (1945–2022). Pastan, a central figure in the literary life of the Washington, DC, metro area and Poet Laureate of Maryland, once beat Sylvia Plath for a poetry prize sponsored by *Mademoiselle*. CML honors her with the poem “Confessional.” Poet and visual artist Mayer was a beloved teacher in the renowned Poetry Project at St. Mark’s Church in New York City and was also influential in the Experimental Language poetry movement. CML honors her with the timely poem “Early Spring?”

Science fiction has developed from pulp entertainment to a respected literary genre, not least because reality is catching up with its most dire predictions. **E. Alex Jung** recounts the life and career of a pioneering African American science fiction writer in “The Spectacular Life of Octavia Butler.” Butler was determined to succeed against all odds, overcoming racism, loneliness, ill health, financial hardship, and the then low critical standing of science fiction, eventually winning a MacArthur Fellowship, the first ever bestowed on an author of science fiction. Considered today a precursor of Afrofuturism, Butler had the most important requirement of all for a writer: persistence!

Persistence in the face of great human suffering is a quality as well of Dr. Jim O’Connell, who has been providing health care to the homeless on the streets of Boston since 1985. **Tracy Kidder’s** “You Have to Learn to Listen to These Patients” takes us on an engrossing journey with Dr. O’Connell as he administers direct care to people who otherwise receive no medical attention at all. Kidder rides with Dr. O’Connell at night on a specially equipped van, dispensing everything from hot soup and blankets to health checkups and, most of all, empathy: “This is what we do,” Kidder quotes O’Connell as saying, “while we’re waiting for the world to change.”

Some of the world’s changes, of course, have been disastrous. Take, for example, Lake Mead, a reservoir in Nevada, about 25 miles from Las Vegas, which was formed in 1936 by the Hoover Dam. Since 2000, water levels in Lake Mead have been declining significantly, owing to climate change-induced drought. The declining levels have exposed lost and hidden phenomena, including the bodies of victims of drowning—and murder. “Man in a Can” by **Mark Sundeen** is a captivating New Journalistic account of the 2022 discovery in Lake Mead of a metal barrel containing the remains of a man murdered in the city’s heyday.

Sundeen explores multiple themes, including climate change, Las Vegas's history of mob violence, and the losses in his own life, while seeking to identify the body in the barrel.

Among the most complex, multi-layered, and intriguing short stories we have encountered at CML in recent years is "The Big Quit" by **David Means**. At one level a noirish tale of two hobos in Depression-era Chicago, the story is also about its own creation and the difficulty of writing it. One of the hobos is a boxer who quit a match for fear of humiliation, just as the writer of the story, Means himself, voices his own temptation to abandon his narrative and his characters. "No, before you quit you have to at least let them start walking..."

### **The "D-B Beat"**

This issue, we shared E. Alex Jung's portrait of the seminal **science fiction author Octavia Butler**, whose work was underappreciated by the broader community for most of her life. While discussing which pieces to use for this issue, we were happy to discover that BARD has in its collection no fewer than 11 of her titles, including several in Spanish translation. If you want to try some of Butler's work for yourself, you can start by talking to your reader advisor or talking book librarian about any of these titles:

- *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (DB 42749)
- *Parable of the Sower* (DB 39777), available in Spanish translation as *La Parábola del Sembrador* (DB105355)
- *Kindred* (DB16072), available in Spanish translation as *Parentesco* (DB104735)
- *The Xenogenesis Trilogy* (DB100034), available in Spanish translation as *La Estirpe de Lilith* (DB105354)

**And Special thanks to... Scott H.**, from Albuquerque, NM who was ecstatic and raved about our newly available CML Archives. "Keep those great magazines coming out CML! You guys are great! Looking forward to listening to more back issues! Any idea who did the narration in 1966? This stuff is amazing!"

Happy Spring Reading from Raquel, Mike, Alfredo, Jay, & Annie!