

ISSUE 349, Winter 2025 NEWSLETTER

CML News

Just before this issue came out, we worked like Santa's elves—busily marking up proofing notes, checking the tables of contents twice for any errors, and then whisking the final pieces through the ethers to the production company—to get downloadable digital files, cartridges, and even 4-track cassettes to you for the winter issue. We also had a late run of outreach events that allowed us to grow our “nice list” by putting us in touch with a range of potential subscribers, partner institutions, and groups for the blind and print-disabled. Many thanks to The Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library, Accessible Pharmacy Services, the Montana Association for the Blind, and Helen Keller National Center's Tech Club for the chance to come chat. It's always a thrill to get to meet new folks and tell them about our special publication. We wish our subscribers, our friends new and old, and all those who make Choice Magazine Listening possible, a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Highlights

By the time this issue is out, Donald J. Trump will have been sworn in for his second presidential term. CML will continue to be your companion during this challenging time, reaffirming human dignity through the best, most serious, and most probing writing that we can find.

In this issue, we offer you beautiful poems by **John Burnside**, the beloved Cuban poet, **Nicolás Guillén**, as well as **A.E. Stallings** (a CML favorite!), and **Maggie Smith**. As for fiction, **Rebecca Bernard's** poignant short story, “The Flirt,” portrays a grieving mother seeking to recapture something of the presence of her teenage son, lost to a tragic fire, and imagining the man he might have become. **J.M. Coetzee**, winner of the 2003 Nobel Prize for Literature, brings us “The Museum Guard,” a disturbing tale in which a seemingly innocuous encounter with an older English writer upends the life of a young museum guard at the Prado in Madrid. “War Dogs,” by the great Korean-American writer, **Paul Yoon**, is a remarkable and haunting story of various generations' memories of war, displacement, and loss. **Joseph Jacobs's** charming fairy tale, “Dream of Owen O'Mulready,” dates from 1894 and is based on an Irish folk tale, though Jacobs

himself, Australian born, became a leading scholar of Jewish thought and the editor of the New York weekly, *The American Hebrew*.

At CML, we never close our eyes to past or present injustices. In “A Record of Liberty,” **Carolyn Eastman** examines the historical record of slave manumission in colonial and revolutionary-era New York, and how, even when slaves were freed, their freedom was often conditioned by long delays, fees, and the whims and changing needs of their wealthy owners. Even an outspoken abolitionist, the great American thinker, Henry David Thoreau, was not untainted by America’s “original sin.” **Augustine Sedgewick’s** “Thoreau’s Pencils,” shows how Thoreau’s innovative pencil-making business, which elevated his family out of poverty, depended on large supplies of red cedar sourced from slave states such as Georgia and Florida. Slaves were used in logging camps and to prepare the vast lots of red cedar for sale and transport.

One group in America that resolutely rejected slavery was the Shaker community. Coming to America from England in the late 1700s, this religious group espoused gender equality, religious tolerance, and pacifism. Shakers took an active role in the Underground Railroad, assisting fugitive slaves on their journey to freedom. But Shakers also practiced extreme celibacy, resulting in ever-dwindling membership. In “Keeping the Faith,” **Jordan Kisner** visits the last active Shaker village in the world, at Sabbathday Lake in Maine, and speaks with one of the only two remaining Shakers, the frank and down-to-earth Brother Arnold Hadd.

In the midst of war and universal uncertainty, many in the world have taken comfort in the restoration and re-opening of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, seriously damaged by fire in April 2019. In “The Miraculous Resurrection of Notre-Dame,” **Joshua Hammer** describes the extensive and complex restoration effort, involving over a thousand artisans. But the restoration itself was also an opportunity to study aspects of medieval carpentry that had been hidden from view in the cathedral’s upper framework, leading to a new understanding of the tools and techniques used by the original builders.

TOP PICKS

British neurologist and writer **Oliver Sacks** became famous for his successful treatment of victims of encephalitis lethargica, a sleeping sickness from the 1920s

that had left dozens of patients in decades-long states of speechlessness and immobility. Sacks' 1973 book, *Awakenings*, was an account of his experience with these patients at Beth Abraham Hospital in the Bronx, and became the basis for the 1990 movie of the same name, starring Robin Williams and Robert De Niro. "Coming Alive" consists of a selection of Sacks' lively correspondence, from the 1960s through the 1990s, to family, friends, as well as with literary and cultural figures, from W.H. Auden to Robin Williams himself.

While General George MacArthur is well-known for his role in defeating the Japanese in the Pacific during World War II, as well as for his controversial decisions during the Korean War, the story of his retreat from the Philippines and his regrouping in the small Australian Outback town of Terowie is less familiar. In "MacArthur Down Under," **Tony Perrottet** revisits this phase of MacArthur's life and career, how his presence tempered the bond between the U.S. and Australia in the Pacific campaign and beyond.

Russian opposition leader **Alexei Navalny** became one of the most famous political prisoners in the world after his 2021 return to Russia following an assassination attempt by Russian security forces and subsequent medical care in Germany. Refusing to live in exile, Navalny was arrested at Moscow airport and spent the remainder of his life in various prisons, including the infamous Polar Wolf, north of the Arctic Circle. "Prison Diaries" is culled from the diaries that Navalny managed to keep from 2022 until his death in 2024, detailing the hardships of the Russian penal system as well as his unshakeable faith in the future. "It will crumble and collapse. The Putinist state is not sustainable. One day, we will look at it, and it won't be there. Victory is inevitable."

The "D-B Beat"

In our work, we're always mindful of the power of literature to forge personal connections between authors and their readers. In **Jeffrey Lent's** "Field Notes," the writer shares how his own life and career were changed forever by his encounter with the works of author, poet, and memoirist **Jim Harrison**. Harrison's prolific and diverse writings include several titles held by the National Library Service, which you can ask your local reader advisor about today:

- *Legends of the Fall* (DBC05954)
- *Warlock* (DB17869)

- *The Road Home* (DB49593)
- *Dalva* (DB28211)
- *Returning to Earth* (DB66143)
- *The English Major* (DB68660)
- *The River Swimmer: novellas* (DB76433)
- *The Ancient Minstrel: novellas* (DB85337)
- *Braided Creek: a conversation in poetry* (DB59814)

And special thanks to... **Alvin S.** from San Francisco, and **Robert B.** from Massachusetts, who both called wondering, "Where was their next issue of CML?!" Here it is, and thanks for waiting!

Happy Winter reading from Mike, Raquel, Annie, Jay, and Alfredo!