

CML News

The whole CML staff (of five!) are preparing for and looking forward to attending the annual New York Public Library's Accessible Community, Culture, and Technology Fair on Friday, October 17, 2025. Stop by our table if you're in the area of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library at 455 Fifth Avenue. We'll be out in our bright yellow polo shirts with the CML logo. We always love to say hi, so don't be shy! Even more exciting, we're happy to share that CML is a sponsor of the WPBS-TV series *Blind Adventures with Ron Walsh*, coming later this year to a station near you! If you or someone you know is interested in accessibility and the great outdoors, be sure to spread the word and tune in.

Highlights

Fall is here, one of our favorite seasons, full of vibrant colors, crisp mornings, softer light, and an anticipation of the holiday season. We hold each other close in this season of change, bearing witness to the human suffering currently rampant around the world: from horrific starvation in Gaza and nightly drone attacks in Ukraine to the criminalization of poverty in America; the clearing of homeless camps and RVs; and a growing culture of political violence and assassination. In the face of these calamities, we may well be tempted by the comforts of solipsism, or worse, of nihilism and despair. At CML, we share the view of *Harper's Magazine* editor **Christopher Carroll**, whose essay "Near-Death Experiences" about the long and checkered history of their publication, is part of this issue's lineup. Though writing about *Harper's*, he could well be writing about CML: "...the more pronounced these problems become," writes Carroll, "...the more urgently we need what *Harper's* hopes to provide: perspective and coherence; the capacity to see things whole amid the noise of a thousand screaming headlines; a theater of ideas where diverse viewpoints can engage in sustained conversation; thoughtful curation and synthesis that help readers navigate information overload; the pleasures of art, literary fiction, and criticism." Well, we couldn't have said it better ourselves!

CML is particularly proud of its poetry selection in this issue, which includes work by **Jean Valentine**, **Sharon Olds**, and **Jorie Graham**, three of the most influential female poets of contemporary American literature. We also feature poems by **Leonore Hildebrandt** and **Tom Sleigh**. Sleigh's poem, "Telegraph" is a meditation on the contradictions of Abraham Lincoln and current American socio-political turbulence, continuing a Lincoln theme from last issue, in which we

brought you **Ocean Vuong's** phantasmagoric vision of the sixteenth president in the poem "16." Our poetry offerings are supplemented by **David Marchese's** interview with Vuong, "Ocean Vuong Knows Who Saved His Life," and a moving memoir of Jean Valentine, "Pilgrimage," by her daughter **Rebecca Chace**.

As for fiction, this issue contains five stellar short stories, including "Jersey Sand" by **Kevin Clark**, a tale of family dynamics in post-War War II New Jersey told in a spicy, fast-paced, Jersey accent, and **Samantha Hunt's** "Fallen Women," about a young female artist and her liberating friendship with Judy, an elderly retired botanist. Romanian writer **Mircea Cărtărescu's** "The Dance" is a dream-like fantasy narrated in rich, exquisite, language while posing profound questions of individual will, fate, time and space.

Fate is also at the heart of our nonfiction piece, "The Strike," in which **Adam O. Davis** remembers his adolescent experience of being struck by lightning during a game of tennis. Davis meditates on the strange cases of individuals who were veritable lightning rods, struck repeatedly throughout their lives. Davis also ponders the nature of related traumas, including that of William Kemmler, the first victim of the electric chair, as well as that of love itself, which can feel identical to being struck by a divine bolt.

We are sad to report that *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* has ceased publication. Through the years, CML has chosen several pieces from this scholarly and literary journal. From its final issue, we have selected **Charlie Riggs's** "Horse-Play at the Emerson House," which unearths the eventful history of a wooden rocking horse passed down through generations of the Emerson family. Riggs also probes the darker sides of Emerson: his long, frequent absences and their effect on his family; his strict rules on children's recreation on Sundays; and even a latent jealousy of his close friend and mentee, Henry David Thoreau.

But who doesn't have a vulnerable side? In "The Total Joy and Mayhem of Being Albert Lin," by **Peter Frick-Wright**, we witness the titular fearless adventurer, explorer, and TV personality—an amputee since a 2016 accident that crushed his lower right leg—lose his much-vaunted composure and resilience during a pivotal expedition in Ecuador, triggered by memories of his amputation as well as the struggles of his fellow amputees. "...emotional pain has a way of waiting for you," Frick-Wright says. "And now his protective shell was cracking open."

TOP PICKS

One of our favorite fiction pieces in this issue is “Love of My Days” by the renowned American writer **Louise Erdrich**. Inspired by the haunting landscape of White Rock, South Dakota, Erdrich takes us back to the very early 20th century, before telephones were common. Full of action and tension worthy of an old-fashioned Western, yet suffused with poetic desire and breathtaking changes of perspective, this is a vivid, unforgettable work of historical fiction.

Another major piece in this issue is “The Bandit” by **Jóhanna Gísladóttir Bissat**. Winner of *The Sewanee Review*’s nonfiction prize for 2024, the essay is an attempt to recapture or, in the truest sense, recollect, memories of Pabbi, the author’s Icelandic father who died in an Alaskan boating accident only weeks before her birth. Brought up by her Thai mother and aunt, the author identifies her never-known father with her sole paternal inheritance, a 1970s Trans-Am muscle car that had been Pabbi’s pride and joy in his new life and that brings her an exalted sense of freedom in her adolescent and college years.

The “D-B Beat”

Longtime subscribers of Choice Magazine Listening will have had several opportunities over the years to hear the unique voice of Minneapolis-based writer Louise Erdrich, whose work ranges throughout hundreds of years of Indigenous and American history, and from the everyday to the fantastical. Her latest offering joins others like “The Flower” (CML Issue #313), “The Stone” (Issue #329), and “The Hollow Children” (Issue #342). If you’d like even more Erdrich, ask your local reader advisor about the following titles:

- *The Mighty Red* (DB 124843)
- *The Night Watchman* (DB 98896), read by the author
- *Future Home of the Living God* (DB 87990)
- *The Plague of Doves* (DB 66886)
- *Tales of Burning Love* (DB 42836), read by Martha Harmon Pardee

And special thanks to... **Jóhanna Gísladóttir Bissat**, a featured author in this issue, who not only responded to our request for the correct way to pronounce her name, but worked closely with our editors to create an Icelandic pronunciation guide for Mare Trevathan to follow while narrating it. In addition, and at her suggestion, she went the extra mile and recruited her cousins in Reykjavik to

record the Icelandic sections of “The Bandit,” so our readers could hear this language in all its complexity and aliveness. Thank you, Jóhanna (and family)!