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Zoë Blaylock
Tara Campbell
Joseph Chelius
Carol Coven Grannick
Victoria Crawford
Patricia Davis-Muffett
Louis Faber
Cathy Hailey
Michael Kellichner
Sarah Laskin
Diane LeBlanc
Katie Manning
Rebecca D. Martin
Jonie McIntire
Thomas O'Connell
Kathryn Paulsen
Jennifer Schomburg Kanke
Jenna Villforth Veazey
Jacek Wilkos



LITTLE FREE
LIT MAG 



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submission guidelines

Our submissions are open the full months of October, January, April and July of each year.

- We welcome work on any subject, including and beyond works celebrating reading, libraries, and books.
- New and established writers are welcome. 18 years or older, please.
- Please find our full submission guidelines on our website.

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Kathryn Paulsen's poetry and prose have appeared in publications from Oregon to Canada to Ireland to Australia. Her chapbook "The Poetry Habit" is forthcoming from Clare Songbirds Publishing Kathryn lives in New York City but, having grown up in an Air Force family, has roots in many places.

Jennifer Schomburg Kanke's work has appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Shenandoah* and *Salamander*. Her collection about Scioto County, Ohio, *The Swellest Wife Anyone Ever Had*, is available from Kelsay Books. She can be found on YouTube as Meter&Mayhem, a channel focusing on interviews with contemporary writers.

Jenna Villforth Veazey is a poet and Virginia Master Naturalist. In 2023, she created Poetry on the Trail, an installation of QR codes accessing nature poems in conversation with their natural environment (Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail, in King George, VA, and the Elizabeth River Trail, in Norfolk, VA).

Jacek Wilkos is an engineer from Poland. He's addicted to buying books, loves black coffee, dark ambient music and riding his bike. His stories and poems were published in numerous anthologies by Black Hare Press, Alien Buddha Press, Black Ink Fiction, Insignia Stories, CultureCult Press, Wicked Shadow Press, and others.

about us

Little Free Lit Mag is a journal founded with the aim of publishing quality short form writing. Like "little" pockets of literary communities, we think small works can have a big impact. Our mission is to celebrate our wonderfully diverse world of writers and readers by reaching them wherever they are.

We hope that this free access publication will encourage readers to find a greater sense of connection to other readers and writers, along with inspiration and enjoyment in these pages.

We aspire to delight readers who already are aware of lit journals, and to inspire new readers and writers to discover and join the literary community. Each issue is published both online and as a PDF, each available for free.

We hope readers like you will help us bring our lit mag to little free libraries, community book boxes and beyond! Share it with friends! Keep a copy for yourself! Pass it into the hands of a kindred spirit who might like it! Please visit our website if you'd like to download the free pdf to this issue to keep, print, or share.



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contributors

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AJ Bartholomew is a writer, poet, and artist from Northern Virginia. After a brief exile to New Jersey, AJ returned home and joined an art club after the pandemic shutdown concluded. AJ hopes to one day publish a book of horror limetrics.

Zoe Blaylock's work has appeared in *La Picciolotta Barca*, *The Westchester Review*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Innistrée Poetry Journal*, and in other publications. She lives in San Diego.

Tara Campbell is a writer, teacher, Kimbilio Fellow, and fiction co-editor at *Barrehouse Magazine*. She teaches flash fiction and speculative fiction, and is the author of a novel, two hybrid collections of poetry and prose, and two short story collections. Her sixth book, *City of Dancing Gargoyles*, is forthcoming from Santa Fe Writers Project (SFWP) in September 2024. Find out more at www.taracampbell.com

Joseph Chelius is the author of two collections of poems with Wordtech Communications: *The Art of Acquiescence* and *Crossing State Lines*. His work has appeared in *Commonweal*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *Rattle*, and other journals.

Carol Coven Grannick is a poet for children and adults, with most recent publications in *Loch Raven Review*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Snkronicti*, and more. Her middle grade novel, *RENNIS TURN*, debuted in 2020 from Regal House Publications.

Poet **Victoria Crawford** lives and writes in Thailand where she is retired. Her poetry has been published in journals such as *Cargo Lit*, *Califragile*, and *Pacific Poetry*. She enjoys sharing daily life, calling herself a kitchen table poet.

Patricia Davis-Muffett holds an MFA from the University of Minnesota. Her chapbook, *Alchemy of Yeast and Tears*, was published in 2023. Her work has won honors and appeared in literary journals including *About Face*, *Atlanta Review*, *Calyx*, and *Best New Poets*. She lives in Rockville, Maryland.

Louis Faber is a poet and blogger. His work has appeared in *Cantos*, *The Poet* (U.K.), *Alchemy Spoon*, *New Feathers Anthology*, *Dreich* (Scotland), *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Defenestration*, *Atlanta Review*, *Glimpse*, *Rattle*, *Pearl*, *The South Carolina Review* and *Worcester Review*, among many others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Cathy Hailey teaches in Johns Hopkins University's online MA in Teaching Writing program. She serves as Northern Region Vice President of The Poetry Society of Virginia, co-hosts Virginia Voices, and organizes in the Company of Laureates. Her chapbook, *I'd Rather Be a Hyacinth*, was published by Finishing Line Press.

Michael Kellichner is a poet and writer originally from Pennsylvania, but has been calling South Korea his home for quite a while. Previous poems of his have appeared in various online journals, including Loud Coffee Press, the Tahoma Literary Review, and The Fishman Review, among others.

Louis Faber

Occasionally

I can still remember that day
in San Francisco, on Columbus
just down from City Lights Books,
a young man sitting on a milk crate
another in front of him on which
he perched an old typewriter.
“A dollar buys you a poem”
he said with a mix of hope
and resignation, his fingers poised
over the worn keys, their letters
fading as was his ribbon.
I produced a bill and he set
to typing, although I do not
recall his words, when he
was done I handed him a five.
He seemed in shock, so I said
“I am a fellow poet, but my
Royal Standard died years ago.”
He was about to reply when he
saw another potential customer
and I moved on down the block.

Barbara Crooker

Listen

**Editor's Choice*

I want to tell you something. This morning
is bright after all the steady rain, and every iris,
peony, rose, opens its mouth, rejoicing. I want to say,
wake up, open your eyes, there's a snow-covered road
ahead, a field of blankness, a sheet of paper, an empty screen.
Even the smallest insects are singing, vibrating their entire bodies,
tiny violins of longing and desire. We were made for song.
I can't tell you what prayer is, but I can take the breath
of the meadow into my mouth, and I can release it for the leaves'
green need. I want to tell you your life is a blue coal, a slice
of orange in the mouth, cut hay in the nostrils. The cardinals'
red song dances in your blood. Look, every month the moon
blossoms into a peony, then shrinks to a sliver of garlic.
And then it blooms again.

From Radiance (Word Press, 2005)

Used with permission of the poet.

Joseph Chelius

Little Free Libraries

Just turn the wooden latch
and inside a cubby you will find
beside *The God Delusion*
the *Selected Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*;
a tattered *Crime and Punishment*
bumping up against *Plumbing for Dummies*,
romance novels, a stack of children's books
lying on their sides as if for afternoon nap.
When did I first notice them among us,
sprouting up as they have
at ballfields, among sycamores
on humid Philadelphia streets?
Think of their squarish heads
crammed with knowledge or emptied out.
Think of them gazing at the traffic
through the cataracts
of filmy plastic windows.
Or the selflessness involved,
green paint flecking off
as they stand in all weather
on the post of one leg
for the giving and taking—
for the offering of books.

Diane LeBlanc

Papyrophilia

In my next life, let me be cotton rag paper.
All fiber and fade-resistant.
Tear me. Wet me. Ink me.
Choose me to announce your everything.
Find in me my grandmother's house dresses
missing belts and buckles, pockets and buttonscotch.
Then trust me with stories debossed in ten-point pica
deep enough to read in the dark.
I'll carry the words you send then wish to unsend.
The one that outlives your regret.
Find in me old rain and new rivers
washing away the silt of this life.

Zoë Blaylock

Some Poets

kneel on hard ground
to write 'em and leave 'em
folded
like losing hands of solitaire

Kathryn Paulsen

A poem says . . .

Pay attention:
This word
rhymes or not
This line
stops or not
runs over into
another or not
for a reason

The reason is yours
To hunt down
Unscramble
Reap
Keep

Patricia Davis-Muffett

Impending

The rain won't stop. Or rather,
first rain, then sleet, then snow,
then back to rain with temps careening
from eight to eighty, then back to forties.
Taking the dogs out this morning,
I sunk my foot deep in mud and thought
of Noah's wife. When did she first whisper,
Maybe he's on to something.

You tell me about elevation,
about catastrophic changes
to weather patterns in Europe—
how Italy could plunge into a
cold, dry death, how another
thousand feet of elevation
could be useful for our next home.

The booming voice in your ears,
the overwhelming weight of science—
and I am thinking about what I'll pack,
how I'll live in that new world,
no longer "if" but "when."

Cathy Hailey

A Curious Place

after Pat Brodowski's painting, "Reflections of 1904"

A house of glass, swathed in sunlight,
summons us through a portico passageway,
its two-storied windows framed in white,
a palimpsest of yesterdays, the composite
layers of at least a century plus a score,
in a picturesque shop of curiosity and comfort.
A house of mirrors, reflecting its surroundings—
neighboring homes, gardens, orchards,
rural roads winding along a sparkling river
the ambient glow of sunrises and sunsets—
our gaze from the wicker chair quaint and clear
in the shadows of the Blue Ridge skyline.
A house of lenses, customers captured
in the unfocused light of silent films
leaning into mirrors, smiling or smirking
at instant makeovers with fanciful hats,
hard history hiding behind haute couture,
our rich yet roiled Blue Ridge heritage.

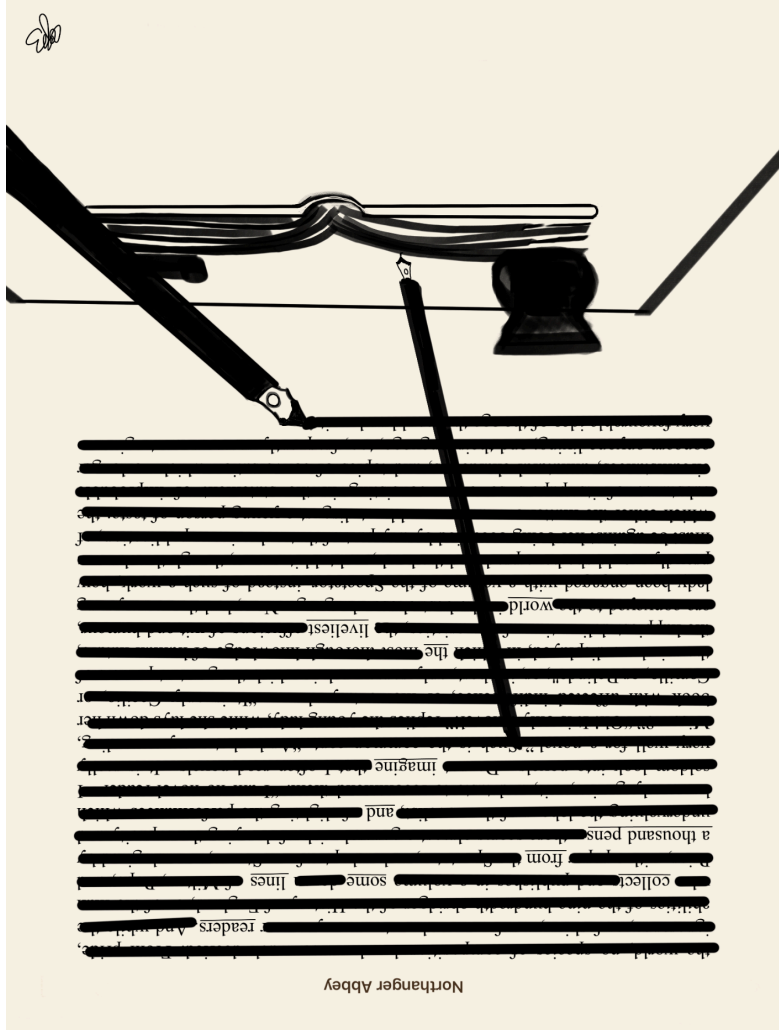
destruction across the terminal—it wouldn't have been me who'd awakened them. I wasn't the one prodding around in my hair with latex-covered fingers, dislodging butterflies and magpies, sending marigolds and shed fairy wings fluttering to the ground.

Fortunately, none of that happened. When the agent waved me on, I reached up and pulled out a thornless pink rose and placed it in the palm of her blue-gloved hand.

Jonie McIntire

On Running for President of the Non-Profit Board

The thunder
of an avalanche
starts with quiet sounds
like "sure" and
"of course I can."



Source: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Page 21

A weird thing happened to me at the airport once. I came up to security with my ticket and my bags and my stress, and they sent me through that scanner thingy, and I raised my hands like the little picture says, and then the lady on the other side said *okay* so I thought I was done, but when I stepped out of the scanner, they stopped me for another check. The agent patted my arms, my sides, my legs—then my hair. Without warning, or asking, just pressed her blue-gloved hands into my hair, and I couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if she'd found the swallows roosting in there, the goldfish, the playing cards, the little toy dinosaurs, the daffodils and golden rings I keep tucked inside. What would she have done if the lions in my hair had taken a swipe at her with their massive claws, or the elk had reared up and butted her, or the zebras had kicked their hind legs into her chest? Would I have been detained if the swarm of wasps had escaped their hive, if the swirl of stars had filtered out and shimmered in TSA's eyes? Whose insurance company would have been liable if the dragons had soared out of my hair and burned a swath of

Carol Coven Grannick

Bossy

Safe on the sill
morning birds
demand the dawn.

Thomas O'Connell

How We Keep Our Places

The public library posted a photograph to its Facebook page of a young woman sitting in a window seat wearing, what appears to be, an Easter dress. One foot slipped delicately behind her ankle, she holds a sandwich plate in her lap. The caption explained that the photograph had been found tucked inside a book, presumably acting as a book mark. The librarians didn't confide what book the photograph had been found in. They were wondering if any of their Facebook followers could identify the woman. There were a few comments added to the post, though nothing all that helpful and, eventually, the young woman's photograph was pushed lower down in the feed by announcements of new e-books added to the collection and the upcoming *Mommy & Me* story hour. Once, I found a slip of paper inside a library book. It wasn't a photograph but, instead, a grocery list:

Eggs – a 1/2 dozen
Macomber rutabaga
Box of decaf tea

Jacek Wilkos

little library
a bird nests
between the pages

Michael Kellichner

Alchemy

All my focus to read a novel aloud,
paragraphs of Korean characters,
lumped, systematic syllable blocks. Sounds
you—held together, now, with sutures—

pulled from my mouth across a fumbling tongue.
Meticulous as ancient ritual,
heavy and awkward as lead. Barely one
chapter finished near midnight's silent lull.

These are meaningless sounds to me. Even
familiar sentences sink, suffocate
in the surrounding incomprehension,
like an amateur swimmer in a strait.

But looking up from another mistake,
I see you're listening and still awake.

Katie Manning

When My Spouse Was Hot

When my spouse lost all of his hair due to chemo, my friends whispered to me: bald men are hot, or more boldly, he looks hot bald. Was it the mutation of cells that made him hot? The cancer serving as X-gene, the superpower: hotness? Does proximity to death lend some heat? My friends were not wrong though. In the photos I took after his scalp went smooth, he stares at me, bare head in his hand, smoldering, the very picture of hotness. But I felt him shiver under the covers, heard him chatter in summer heat. I covered his head with beanies and found warm blankets to spread over his body during long treatments. When the cancer was gone and most of his hair grew back, friends stopped saying my spouse is hot, his superpower once again disguised and unspeakable.

Zoë Blaylock

The ones

who loved me best healed me inside out.
They nudged my burrowed self from the bed,

room, house, and past the gate. Howling
at the sky and scenting for the sea they urged me

to untether myself from uninspired blues
and frolic instead toward a wilder range of hues.

Belly up with glee, they intimated that satisfying
rolls are best experienced in mud, not brittle hay.

And upright, when tempests reigned
they taught me to shake downpours (fiercely!) off.

The canniest among them stressed gnawing
the difference between the finest sense of muzzle

and vulgar uses of that word. Insisted
there is more to sniff than trouble, more to tale

than swag and more to wag than tail, except
a reprimanding finger and an unkind tongue.

Jennifer Schomburg Kanke

Fall Sonnet for a Drawer of Old

Journals

Thirty-one years of hard cover versions of me.
Kitten in the tulips: ten, my first one ever.
Medieval unicorn princess tapestry: eighteen,
going off to a new magical land. Cats
in cowboy hats with lassos: much older
than I'd care to admit. Inside is the same
retrain in different voices—wouldn't it
be cool if—these people suck—why am I not
already all I want to be? The details make me think
I'm not lying, unless I was lying then, preparing
for a later me to read back in sympathy
with the girl writing fears on a sheetless bed.
But no, I wasn't that crafty, besides I was convinced
I'd never make it out of there alive.

Jenna Villforth Veazey

Common milkweed

Tender silken sail
seed ridden
set forth
only to separate—
spin now, under silvered sun,
a jewel on display,
finest filament
spider-curious.
Float far from home
only to arrive
empty handed,
free.

You don't really want to be any of that TV show family,
and you weren't born this way, mouse-small, but you
were born into this house, lock, stock, and smoking
parent. Never knew when the uneasy peace would crack.
A certain kind of lost.

When they stride out to dinner, you practice emerging.
Do you even like this show? Michael Landon your father?
There are twelve years to go. You'll stay small. Reframe
the image once you're gone.

Victoria Crawford

Love at 75

Daily tipped into my palm
vitamins and minerals
for my health
husband's gifts: A, B, C, E
calcium, iron, and manganese

Candlelit dinner
forty-nine years, still romantic
he reaches for my hand
with anniversary vitamins
in sickness and in health

Sarah Laskin

Back to Basics

before challah toasted with Brie, honeyed
goat cheese, arugula, fig compote

before crusty sourdough grilled with Gruyere,
rosemary butter, caramelized shallots

before ancient-grain niche wood-fired

with smoked Gouda, sliced pear, jalapeno jam

before Croque-Monsieur, Welsh Rarebit,
Monte Cristo, Mushroom Reuben

there was my mother still in her nightgown
and robe on a Sunday afternoon buttering

pieces of white bread - Pepperidge

Farm, Arnold, Wonder - sandwiching

between them two slices of Kraft American

cheese, individually unwrapped from plastic

unadulterated, unadulterated, no tomato, no bacon,
no onions, no mushrooms, just bread, butter

an edible scaffolding used to transfer heat

from my grandfather's chipped yellow enamel

frying pan towards the solid cheese center...butter
melting, bread browning, cheese transforming

into hot, gooey, orange treasure while I waited,
impatient on a kitchen stool, legs swinging

Rebecca D. Martin

Little House

Your father in the foyer, ten feet tall. Your father in the
hallway beneath the crack in the ceiling, bellowing to the
babysitter at the door, *Your name is my daughter's
favorite character!*

You hiding now on orange carpet under a makeshift tent,
now in the doorframe behind your mother's panty-hose-
packed legs, him shouting, *Isn't that right?*

Your wide eyes don't know anything but agree,

don't see more than the tatty wool blanket draped across
two chairs painted yellow from the kitchen. You creeping
under, the size of a mouse. You looking through the
brown woven fringe to the television set screen.

You're not here. You are

*itching in prairie grass, even though little Laura
Ingalls Wilder always presses every hot nerve the
way she talks, the way she smiles, the way Carrie
trips down the grassy hill but stands up laughing
each episode each time. Every fall can't be that
funny.*