Afternoon Discoveries: November 9, 2026

Literary Fiction & Poetry

AMONG THE LETTERS
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Literary Fiction & Poetry

A wildlife rehabilitator digs through a cutblock for the relics of her own life, and a cuckoo nests in a mother's memory. Today's poems and stories come from Plenitude, ONE ART, The Common, Arc Poetry Magazine, and CRAFT, with Canadian voices throughout. In the paid section, a marriage is mapped chore by chore, a myth of Troy is retold with a wink, and a road trip blurs through the night. The back shelf brings a museum-minded essayist, a Nisga'a poet on fatherhood, and Lampman in November.

All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 9, 2026.

Featured Discovery

Forensic Report of a Tuesday - Carlee Bouillon

The speaker spends a hot day boot-walking through burns and cutblocks, picking up the strange debris of her own past. Owl pellets hold sea glass instead of bones, and beetles nest in the pages of books she only pretended to read. Old boyfriends drape over logs like melting clocks, and she sorts it all with patient care. Carlee Bouillon, a wildlife rehabilitator on Vancouver Island, writes with wit, ache, and astonishing images. The final promise to plant more ferns feels earned.

Read "Forensic Report of a Tuesday" at Plenitude Magazine

The Discovery Desk

Cuckoo - Sarah B. Wiseman

A cuckoo has laid its eggs in the speaker's mother's brain and flown off, leaving the babies in her care. The speaker consults a field guide and learns the bird is a strange cousin of the roadrunner. At midnight the mother warns that the babies will not stop crying, then reads aloud from a toaster manual. Sarah B. Wiseman, a poet, carpenter, and stilt-walker, turns dementia into a startling extended image. The clock dream at the close is unforgettable.

Read "Cuckoo" at Plenitude Magazine

Debt - Emily Ransdell

The poem opens as someone throws a father's ashes off a headland, the walnut box shattering on the rocks below. The speaker addresses a grieving friend who has crossed to the other side of childhood. There is no wish for advice here, only for a wrecking ball. Emily Ransdell, author of the Louis Prize winner One Finch Singing, compresses a whole inheritance into a few short stanzas. Its last two lines about love arrive with real force.

Read "Debt" at ONE ART

My Dead Husband's Identical Twin Sends a Selfie - Ellen Romano

A brother-in-law sends a photo of himself beside the mural he painted of the speaker's late husband. In the selfie he has wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, a glimpse of how her husband might have aged. In the mural, nobody has aged at all. Ellen Romano, a beekeeper and widow in Hayward, California, keeps the poem short and devastating. Its final image of a younger self reaching out stays with you.

Read “My Dead Husband’s Identical Twin Sends a Selfie” at ONE ART

Don’t Think for One Instant - Alexandra van de Kamp

Written after Dean Young, this poem argues with the idea that the speaker has never had a broken heart. It tallies missed cafés con leche in Madrid, a flight booked to Barbados, and a cat that serves as ambassador to the unknown. The long sentences tumble with appetite and humour. Alexandra van de Kamp, a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, makes regret sound like a kind of celebration. It is a joyful, sprawling read.

Read “Don’t Think for One Instant” at ONE ART

Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more poems, stories, and essays, three pieces of interviews and criticism, and three special recommendations from the back shelf.

Special Recommendations can be found near the bottom of the article.

More From the Discovery Desk

No One Is Going Anywhere - Judith Baumel

This poem from The Common borrows the cadence of a psalm to sort the ones who talk too much from the ones who never speak. It then turns toward blessing, praising the sky like a tent cloth of morning pink and gold. Cottonwoods, eagles, and white stars crowd into the lines. Judith Baumel lets ecological grief and praise share the same breath. The result is generous, musical, and quietly urgent.

Read “No One Is Going Anywhere” at The Common

Two - Glen Retief

Written after Natalia Ginzburg’s essay He and I, this piece maps a marriage through its small divisions of labour. One partner grills and runs errands while the other keeps the house plants alive and fills the bird feeders. Glen Retief, a Lambda Literary Award winner who grew up in South Africa, lets each difference reveal tenderness. The humour is gentle and the details exact. It closes on the longing to be selected and truly seen.

Read “Two” at Plenitude Magazine

Trojan Horse - M. B. McLatchey

This poem from The Common retells the gift horse at Troy as a gold-seal ruse so sublime the gods themselves ordained it. The immortals settle into stadium seats to wager on their favourites while Helen circles the wooden horse. Then the poem turns, and the speaker conjures a horse on wheels in answer to someone’s beautiful, self-assured essay. M. B. McLatchey moves between myth and the modern seminar room with sly control. It is witty, learned, and a pleasure to read aloud.

Read “Trojan Horse” at The Common

Crumpled Map - Meg Pokrass

CRAFT presents Meg Pokrass's micro memoir of a frightening childhood road trip with her mother and sister. A Marlboro burns, the radio drowns out the trucks, and other families wake to ordinary school days behind lace curtains. The editors' introduction shows how its packed sensory images build intensity in very little space. Pokrass edits the Best Microfiction series and has published nine flash collections. Reading the piece and the commentary together is a fine lesson in brevity.

Read "Crumpled Map" at CRAFT

Two Poems - Meg Freer

Meg Freer, who works in the arts in Ontario, offers a pair of quiet poems about memory and faith. In Messages, a visit to a rebuilt church brings a white dove perched above the organ pipes. In Traces, a mind losing its way is held beside lilac thickets and ancient star sand. Each image is precise and kind, never sentimental. Together they make a gentle meditation on what remains when memory begins to splinter.

Read "Two Poems" at ONE ART

At night my soul leaves - Karen Chase

Karen Chase's short poem imagines the soul slipping out of the body each night and rising into the stars for sustenance. Each morning it returns, and the speaker opens her eyes in prayer. The poem folds in the Hebrew morning blessing Modah ani, a thanksgiving for a soul restored with compassion. Then she gets out of bed to join the revolution. Chase,

who writes and paints in Western Massachusetts, makes a small, radiant poem about beginning again.

Read “At night my soul leaves” at The Common

Beyond the First Shelf

Interview: A. Kendra Greene - Emily Webber with A. Kendra Greene

A. Kendra Greene wrote The Museum of Whales You Will Never See, a tour of Iceland’s most unusual museums. In this CRAFT interview with Emily Webber, she discusses her new essay collection and her habit of noticing the moments that make you say wait, what. Many of her essays began as handmade objects such as chapbooks and broadsides. She encourages writers to trust their stylistic instincts and stay open to experiment. It is a lively, generous conversation.

Read “Interview: A. Kendra Greene” at CRAFT

Victoria Festival of Authors Interview: Jordan Abel - Shawn Syms with Jordan Abel

Jordan Abel is a queer Nisga’a writer from Vancouver whose earlier books include Injun, NISHGA, and Empty Spaces. In this Plenitude interview with Shawn Syms, he discusses Dad Era, a book of poems

about the joys of new fatherhood. The work speaks directly to a very specific Indigenous reader, his young daughter. Abel reflects on honesty, form, and humour in a new register. It is warm and thoughtful Canadian literary conversation.

Read “Victoria Festival of Authors Interview: Jordan Abel” at Plenitude Magazine

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Unfurling Love and Innocence: A Review of The Unravelling of Ou by Hollay Ghadery - Li Charmaine Anne

Li Charmaine Anne reviews the first novel by Hollay Ghadery, an Iranian-Canadian writer and poet laureate of her Ontario region. In The Unravelling of Ou, a new grandmother speaks through a handmade sock puppet across countries and generations. The review praises the book’s wit, wisdom, and confidence. Charmaine Anne reads closely and situates the novel within Ghadery’s wide body of work. It is a helpful guide to a notable Canadian debut novel.

Read “Unfurling Love and Innocence” at Plenitude Magazine

Special Recommendations

In November - Archibald Lampman

Archibald Lampman's sonnet watches the hills and leafless forests yield to thick-driving snow. Woodmen's carts go homeward, and the last ploughman turns black furrows through the whitening field. Far off, the village lamps begin to gleam as night darkens down. The speaker alone is neither sad nor shelterless, content to watch and dream. It is a perfect poem for this week of early snow, found in his 1888 collection Among the Millet.

Read "In November" at Project Gutenberg

Morning on the Lièvres - Archibald Lampman

A canoe drifts down a river in Quebec at dawn while a jay screams his matins overhead. Mist lifts from the gorge like vapour from a hidden forge. The paddles barely break the water's mirror of purple and grey. Lampman, one of the Confederation Poets of Ottawa, captures the stillness of morning with remarkable music and an easy rhythm. It makes a quiet, glowing companion to his November sonnet in the same collection.

Read "Morning on the Lièvres" at Project Gutenberg

The Darkling Thrush - Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy leans upon a coppice gate as winter's dregs make the evening desolate. The land seems the corpse of the passing century, and every spirit feels as fervourless as his own. Suddenly an aged thrush, frail and gaunt, flings its song upon the growing gloom. Hardy wonders what hope the bird knows that he does not. It remains one of the great poems of turning seasons, and a fine one to revisit as the days shorten.

Read “The Darkling Thrush” at Wikisource

Thank you for spending part of your day among the letters with us.

Many of today’s pieces sort through what we carry. A poet excavates her own past from a cutblock, a daughter tends a mother’s memory, and a widow studies a face that kept on ageing. Others hold faith, myth, and morning prayer in the same small space. Good poems keep those weights in balance. We hope a few of these pages keep you company as the week begins.

I hope one of today’s pieces gives you somewhere worth staying for a while.

Take care!