Afternoon Discoveries: November 16, 2026

Literary Fiction & Poetry

AMONG THE LETTERS
NOV 16, 2026



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A prairie inventory counts a rib still aching from Winnipeg and a voice practising range against land that will not send an echo back. Today's poems come from ONE ART, Split Lip, Arc Poetry Magazine, and Plenitude, with West Coast and prairie voices among them. In the paid section, regret arrives like weather, a failed comic saves a marriage, and an eight-year-old already knows which greeting belongs in which room. The back shelf brings a Toronto

conversation with Sigrid Nunez, a Canadian poet beside a lake-shaped grief, and a return to Pauline Johnson, Lampman, and Yeats.

All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 16, 2026.

Featured Discovery

Inventory for a Body Learning the Prairies - D. Lee

One rib still aches from Winnipeg, not from injury but from weathered memory. Hormones ride in a Ziploc among Saskatoon receipts, a voice practises range against land so flat it refuses echo, and pronouns are rehearsed like emergency instructions no one thought to give. Lee writes queer embodiment and prairie place with lyric precision, letting weather and geography teach the body how to become legible to itself. The unsupervised sky at the close feels wide enough to hold the change. It is a quietly remarkable Canadian poem.

Read “Inventory for a Body Learning the Prairies” at Plenitude Magazine

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The Discovery Desk

Chapman’s Bridge - Jane Edna Mohler

The old bridge once carried miners’ wagons and now hosts cyclists and birders who have come for the view. Hulks of drowned trees are trimmed with cormorants, carp swirl the amber water, and turtles bubble up hoping for a handout. A yellowed marble plaque still names the grand folk who commissioned the span, though nobody remembers them. Jane Edna Mohler, a former Bucks County Poet Laureate and poetry editor of the Schuylkill Valley Journal, watches storms recarve the current. Toddlers fit their fingers into letters they cannot yet name.

Read “Chapman’s Bridge” at ONE ART

November Woods - Sally Nacker

A blue jay cries out in a crisp, cold world that is beautifully dying, and north winds empty the trees while the speaker’s hair blows. She stands still and realizes she is falling away even as she watches the leaves swirl. The poem is short, and every line earns its place. Sally Nacker lives with her husband and two cats in a small house in the woods, where wild birds are her joy, and her newest collection is My Wild Yard. The severe grace of late autumn feels newly tender here.

Read “November Woods” at ONE ART

I Misread Stillness as Silliness - Laurie Rosen

The speaker misreads the word stillness and decides that silliness is what she longs for too. She does not yearn for more serenity or deeper meditation. She wants laughter, giggles, guffaws, and the kind of shriek that needs no emoji, especially now, when heatwaves and a country on

edge make everything feel fraught. Laurie Rosen, a lifelong New Englander who splits her time between the Massachusetts coast and a hollow in Vermont, writes the craving with bounce and bite. It is a small poem that clears a room for joy.

Read “I Misread Stillness as Silliness” at ONE ART

RSVP - Moudi Sbeity

After a poem by Naomi Shihab Nye, the speaker declines a party with perfect courtesy and no other plans, because the rice needs soaking and a creek has more than one language. The invitation is refused in favour of grass, leaves, and a walk that needs no small talk. Then the poem teaches, with real care, how to cook rice so it turns out softer. Moudi Sbeity makes refusal sound like a blessing rather than a slight. The second poem on the page stays with the sheer delight of an ordinary shared life.

Read “RSVP” at ONE ART

Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more poems, three conversations and craft notes, and three special recommendations from the back shelf.

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

More From the Discovery Desk

Weather Permitting, I’d Like It All Back - Thia Bian

Regret is in vogue over pastries, and so is loneliness, and so is the weather, which here arrives as a rain of cowboys with great shining teeth. One smile rings against the skull, and the poem crouches in the road before picking its way home through a graveyard of spurs. The dreams now have ceilings, unsmiling and arched. Thia Bian, from Milwaukee and Jiangsu, is a graduate of Princeton who is now pursuing her MD-MPH in Wisconsin. The last long-fingered morning feels both wry and tender.

Read “Weather Permitting, I’d Like It All Back” at Split Lip Magazine

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Worse than You - Patrick G. Roland

The speaker has had a bad week teaching, with students staring through him like tired fish in a tank. To cheer him up, she takes him to an open mic at a bowling alley bar, where a comic in a wolf shirt forgets half his jokes and begins to cry. By the end of the set, the marriage has been quietly saved. Patrick Roland turns a small, awkward night into a love poem without announcing it as one. They go back the following week, and this time the set lands beautifully.

Read “Worse than You” at ONE ART

Feast of All Souls - Gerry LaFemina

An old college friend once said that if you bury pain deep enough, it goes away. Years later, two days past Samhain, the night is leather-jacket dark, and the friend’s rueful laugh will not leave the speaker’s head. Leaves settle in the low patches of the lawn, and earlier the

speaker and his son worked a yard that had been left to itself. Gerry LaFemina lets autumn, memory, and a bonfire share the same breath. The poem is both elegy and invitation to stay in the season.

Read “Feast of All Souls” at ONE ART

P’s & Q’s - Faust B

An imam says that minding your P’s and Q’s comes from careful watching of prayers and recitation, not from a pub keeper tracking pints and quarts. At a bodega on Parsons Boulevard, a Yemeni owner lengthens a vowel in shukran, and an eight-year-old nephew already knows which greeting belongs at the masjid and which belongs on the playground. Faust B, a Muslim-American poet from Queens whose work appears in Arc, writes the double life of language with patience and pride. Precision here is a form of care. The poem keeps both rooms genuine.

Read “P’s & Q’s” at Arc Poetry Magazine

English Linguistics 101 - J. Blake McBride

This poem from Plenitude turns textbook phrases about sense and wording into a plea to stay together and keep the wires uncrossed. It asks for a shared legend of language, and for no disasters to happen between two people who are trying, figuratively, to stick. Blake McBride, a queer, disabled writer living on the West Coast of Canada, whose first book Strange Grief is forthcoming, writes with warmth and sly classroom humour. The lesson plan becomes a love poem. It is a delight to read aloud.

Read “English Linguistics 101” at Plenitude Magazine

come to me april with ghosts in your pocket, i won’t mind making a mess - Kristin Lueke

The poem invites April in with ghosts in its pocket and a willingness to make a mess, then sets out along a northern route of kitchens, kestrels, and roadside dogs. The speaker knows her way around a knife, tries to trust her husband when he says she is kind, and admits the home she makes is delicate, like a dove nest before the wind. Kristin Lueke is a Chicana poet living in northern New Mexico and the author of two chapbooks. The long title is a doorway rather than a flourish. Line by line, the poem keeps arriving.

Read “come to me april with ghosts in your pocket, i won’t mind making a mess” at JMWW

Beyond the First Shelf

Everything Has to Work - Michael Costaris with Sigrid Nunez

Michael Costaris, writing from Toronto, talks with Sigrid Nunez about It Will Come Back to You, her first story collection after a long career in the novel. They discuss how the book gathered stories written across more than three decades, why she waited, and what short fiction demands that a novel does not. Nunez is frank about instinct, humour, and the pull of The New Yorker. The conversation is generous to anyone still

deciding when a pile of stories has become a book. It is a craft talk with real air in it.

Read “Everything Has to Work” at The Common

Poetry in Motion: Conyer Clayton + the lake-shaped excuse - All Lit Up with Conyer Clayton

All Lit Up sits with Conyer Clayton’s third collection, the lake-shaped excuse, a book about grief that is finally also a book about love. The voices of a long-dead mother and a still-living daughter merge, twin, and fall apart again, as the poems move from a window to a lake and into the body. Clayton, a dual US-Canadian citizen living between Ottawa and Kentucky, reads from the work in the piece. The feature is short, attentive, and full of images that stay. It is a fine introduction to a Canadian poet in mid-stride.

Read “Poetry in Motion: Conyer Clayton + the lake-shaped excuse” at All Lit Up

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Writers on Not Writing: Barbara Sargent and Karen Levine Egee - Barbara Sargent and Karen Levine Egee

The Masters Review asks two writers what fills them up when they are not at the desk. Barbara Sargent describes the joy of rearranging furniture and deep-cleaning a room until the hutch looks new in its corner and the washed windows let in more light. Karen Levine Egee talks about the other kinds of care that make a return to the page possible. The series treats rest and ordinary labour as part of the work. It is a practical, friendly companion to a Monday of poems.

Read “Writers on Not Writing: Barbara Sargent and Karen Levine Egee” at The Masters Review

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Special Recommendations

The Song My Paddle Sings - E. Pauline Johnson

The west wind is idle, and the sailor waits, wooing a breeze that will not come. Then the sail is stowed, the mast unshipped, and the paddle takes over as the water changes from calm to rapid. Pauline Johnson, also known as Tekahionwake, writes the river with speed, music, and pride. The poem still feels like motion held in the mouth. It is a classic of Canadian verse to carry into a late autumn afternoon.

Read “The Song My Paddle Sings” at Representative Poetry Online

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The City of the End of Things - Archibald Lampman

Beside pounding cataracts, in leafless tracts of a dream, a vast iron city rises with no name that rings, only the name heard in sleep. Its towers have grown nobody knows how high, and far down in the murky streets a terrible flame goes on. Archibald Lampman’s late-nineteenth-century vision of industrial desolation remains startlingly modern. The music of the lines is solemn and exact. It is a Canadian poem worth revisiting when the year itself feels like a city at the end of things.

Read “The City of the End of Things” at Representative Poetry Online

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The Lake Isle of Innisfree - W. B. Yeats

The speaker will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree, to a small cabin of clay and wattles, with nine bean rows and a hive for the honey-bee. Even while standing on pavement, he hears lake water lapping in the deep heart’s core. Yeats made this short lyric into one of the most beloved poems in English, and it still works by simple means. The peace it imagines is modest and earned. It is a fine poem to read slowly at the close of the day.

Read “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” at Wikisource

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

Many of today’s poems listen hard to ordinary rooms, from a rebuilt church to a bowling alley bar to a prairie sky that will not send an echo back. Others keep company with language itself, as greetings change from one doorway to the next. New work and old favourites share the same table here. We hope a few of these pages keep you company this Monday.

Take care!