

Afternoon Discoveries: October 12, 2026

Literary Fiction & Poetry



AMONG THE LETTERS

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A lab technician forgets pinworms and tape tests the moment Nayana steps out of the garbing room smelling of lemon and ginger, while elsewhere a poem asks whether ancestors keep a name on file when blood quantum and a tribal ID will not stay put in a pocket. A speaker walks through foxglove and bog pimpernel under hurricane seasons that arrive too often, a couple's fantasia invents weather that is not weather, and a deaccessioning poem takes paintings off the wall so they can be kept by being given away. Today's shelf

holds literary fiction and poetry, though many of these works refuse to keep the two far apart. Some stay with mice, ferries, and family noses; others with monuments, monsoon gods, and the oral power of a line. They take place in labs, airports, Catalina traces, and empty stations, and they keep asking what language can hold when a life is being moved or undone.

All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on October 12, 2026.

Featured Discovery

Husbandry - Lauren Acampora

Lauren Acampora's Noah is still thinking about pinworms in Room 8 when Nayana leaves the garbing room and the yellow paper gown, bonnet, and gloves cease to matter beside her smile and scent of lemon and ginger. He floats down the hall behind her to report that her mouseys are fine, while she plans sugar-water rewards for Number 452 if the animal cooperates. Acampora builds their days inside a C57 Black 6 colony, where years of careful breeding have purged deleterious mutations and left a hardy strain that still depends on human attention. Attraction arrives as shared labor, email dread in pockets of cell service, and the comedy of protective clothing worn for love as much as for hygiene. The story is exact about scientific caretaking without turning the lab into metaphor alone. It is literary fiction about husbandry in both senses: the animals, and the people learning how to tend each other.

[Read "Husbandry" at The Common](#)

The Discovery Desk

Do My Ancestors Keep My Name on File? - Estella (Sweet Rabbit) Burke

Estella (Sweet Rabbit) Burke returns to the reservation every other year to be reminded that Mvskoke does not roll off the tongue the same way for everyone, and that a grandfather's family is not buried in the tribal cemetery because he fell in love with the White Man's Poison in San Francisco and never came home. The poem holds a tribal ID threatening to fall through a hole in jeans, a kindergarten self described as Only Irish for ease, and a second-grade rage at a classmate dressed as an Indian princess. Burke moves through missions projects, a missing Native Student Union, and the decision to tattoo what Oklahoma Elders saw so pretending one identity is no longer possible. The voice is candid, funny, and unwilling to simplify bothness. It is contemporary poetry about inheritance as paperwork, performance, and insistence. The question in the title stays open because the file is never only institutional.

[Read "Do My Ancestors Keep My Name on File?" at Poetry Foundation](#)

Leaving Lviv - Olena Jennings

Olena Jennings writes a departure in spare lines: empty streets, a missing taxi, a crowded station, hair combed in the ticket window's reflection. The morning is not working; station light replaces the sun. Inside the car, faces and reflections trade places while fear of loss

keeps two people looking at each other. Jennings lets translation, beer with a poet, and the wish for familiar shapes sit inside the leaving without explaining the geopolitics away. The poem is small on the page and large in what it refuses to summarize, a lyric about exit as images that will not stay still. Read it when you need a station poem that knows looking is already a form of holding on.

[Read "Leaving Lviv" at The Common](#)

Foxglove and Bog Pimpernel - Dawn Tefft

Dawn Tefft opens on hurricane seasons that come more frequently, crabs walking backward into themselves, and bodies flaking under elements that will not keep to schedule. A Boy Scout ties a knot to tether himself to his bones; boats seize boats; presidents and pirates trade authoritarian costumes. Somewhere in collective memory a long-haired figure still walks head-down through foxglove and bog pimpernel, or else a solitary figure crosses ice, and a woman writes slant across nineteenth-century mores. Tefft's Midwest radical folio poem braids climate, romance, extraction, and mutual aid into a landscape that will not stay pastoral. Imagery becomes a survival tool rather than decoration. It is poetry that asks where mooring went and keeps walking anyway.

[Read "Foxglove and Bog Pimpernel" at Poetry Foundation](#)

Fantasia - Dylan Carpenter

Dylan Carpenter tries to win someone back by writing of a place only the two of them know, where snow when it snowed was not snow and rain when it rained was not rain. The lyric is brief, recursive, and stubborn about private weather. Carpenter treats memory as a climate

system that refuses public instruments. The poem's refusal to stabilize its figures is part of the longing. It is literary poetry about invention as repair, and about the risk that the repaired world stays uninhabitable by anyone else. A fantasia here is both musical form and last-ditch map.

[Read "Fantasia" at The Common](#)

Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon's edition. Below this point are six more works of literary fiction and poetry, three pieces about reading, writing, and the life of poems and stories, and three special recommendations from the back shelf.

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

More From the Discovery Desk

Deaccessioning - Rachel Hadas

Rachel Hadas considers what fills a frame and then empties out, arguing that some things are kept by being given away. Paintings come off the wall and head toward imagined homes; the poem makes parting a conservation practice. Hadas writes with the clarity of someone who has watched collections change owners and meanings. The lyric is short enough to memorize and large enough to rearrange a room. It is poetry about stewardship without possession. Read it beside any story in which love and objects refuse to stay put.

[Read "Deaccessioning" at The Common](#)

Sexting - Dorothy Chan

Dorothy Chan sets poetry's voice beside sex's other voice, moving from a California King in Los Angeles to a Las Vegas shower to airports where xiaolongbao broth must be blown cool before it burns the tongue. Volta, orality, film, and carousel rounds become ways to think power, tenderness, and the wish to begin again at the first line. Chan quotes lovers, television, and cha siu bao with equal seriousness, then asks why the Midwest can feel farther than it is. The poem is part of Poetry's Radical Poets of the Midwest folio and refuses to apologize for appetite. It is literary poetry about communication as touch and about romance as a form that wants another turn. Airports here are arrivals as much as departures.

[Read "Sexting" at Poetry Foundation](#)

Pal O Mine - Délana R.A. Dameron

Délana R.A. Dameron begins before birth, with Moses waiting to arrive until after the horse leaves the stables, already sensing the importance of a day. The story braids omen, family telling, and the weight of being expected. Dameron writes with the patience of someone who knows a life can be narrated into shape before it starts. The prose keeps oral cadence without becoming costume. It is literary fiction about naming, timing, and the companions people claim. The title's address feels both tender and claiming.

[Read "Pal O Mine" at The Common](#)

Legion - Boris Dralyuk

Boris Dralyuk finds on Catalina a single salt-worn, oxidized trace of C. H. Krumm, Charles Harrison, or Harry, a name so weathered it can barely be read. The poem asks how many must have seen it and what a leftover mark can still gather. Dralyuk writes remnant as inquiry rather than as easy elegy. Place, weather, and nomination become the legion the title suggests. It is literary poetry about public memory that has almost finished disappearing. The island holds the name a little longer for anyone willing to lean close.

[Read "Legion" at The Common](#)

Undoing - Hugo dos Santos

Hugo dos Santos wants to declare that a great undoing has taken place and does not know where to search for the bricks that once made up the house of who he used to be. The poem treats selfhood as architecture after demolition. Dos Santos keeps the language plain enough that the metaphor cannot hide inside ornament. Loss here is structural, not only emotional. It is lyric work about reconstruction that has not yet found its materials. The search for bricks becomes the poem's plot.

[Read "Undoing" at The Common](#)

In Place of River I'll Use [God] - Ezza Ahmed

Ezza Ahmed glosses God as monsoon season, water appearing in snake-like streams that erase traces of present tense. The poem lets sacred address and climate share a pronoun, then watches what a substitution makes possible on the page. Ahmed writes with a translator's attention to what a bracket can hold. Landscape becomes

theology without needing a sermon. It is contemporary poetry about renaming as survival. The river remains present by being replaced.

[Read "In Place of River I'll Use God" at The Common](#)

Beyond the First Shelf

Editor's Note, October 2026 - Adrian Matejka

Adrian Matejka introduces Poetry's October 2026 redesign by returning to the magazine's long history of changing covers while trying to lead with poems rather than with the brand of Poetry. The note invokes Harriet Monroe's Open Door and the wish that a great poet never find it shut or half-shut. Matejka is practical about typography, art, and what a reader should encounter first. For anyone who cares how literary magazines present work, the essay is a clear window into editorial values. It is also a useful reminder that design is an argument about attention. The October issue's Radical Poets of the Midwest folio sits just beyond this door.

[Read "Editor's Note, October 2026" at Poetry Foundation](#)

Do Smartphones Belong in Fiction? - Ankur Thakkar

Ankur Thakkar traces the novel's long obsession with technology, from cities and railroads to free indirect discourse, then asks how to put phones, texts, and notifications on the page without fake bubbles around lived experience. He looks at Slack novels, tweeted stories, and online-feeling prose before arguing for digital matter written as unadorned as ordinary speech, because characters do not see the interface so much as live inside it. A date scene interrupted by a viral repost becomes his test case for two worlds happening at one table. Thakkar keeps the craft problem primary even when describing his own novel. It is a lucid essay for literary writers who refuse to pretend the pocket portal is optional. The phone, in his account, is already part of cognition.

[Read "Do Smartphones Belong in Fiction?" at Literary Hub](#)

Got Writer's Block? Go to the Theater! - Amy Fusselman

Amy Fusselman recommends theatergoing as an unconventional writing practice, borrowing from Alfred Tomatis the idea that the voice cannot produce what the ear cannot hear. She goes to remain a student, watching audiences as well as stages, and asks whether a novel is a performance. Lateral thinking, she argues, returns from the dark room as new questions language can try to remake. Fusselman lists a year's wide range of shows without demanding expertise. The piece is generous about studying any loved medium that is not writing. Literary readers stuck inside their own range will find a practical permission slip here.

[Read "Got Writer's Block? Go to the Theater!" at Literary Hub](#)

Special Recommendations

Ozymandias - Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley meets a traveler from an antique land who describes two vast and trunkless legs of stone in the desert, a shattered visage, and a pedestal boasting of works that look on despair. Around the ruin, lone and level sands stretch far away. The sonnet remains a compact lesson in irony, power, and the weather that outlasts kings. It belongs on any literary shelf concerned with monuments and their afterlives. Read it beside today's poems of oxidized names and emptied frames. The boast still sounds clear; the kingdom does not.

[Read "Ozymandias" at the Academy of American Poets](#)

When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be - John Keats

John Keats writes a sonnet of fears that death will come before the pen has gleaned a full harvest of the brain, before high romance can be traced, before love can be looked upon fully. The poem turns from abundance imagined to the shore of the wide world where love and fame sink to nothingness. Keats keeps the panic and the clarity in the same fourteen lines. It is reading worth returning to whenever literary ambition and mortality share a desk. The fears remain freshly spoken. The sonnet's ending still clears a long view.

[Read "When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be" at the Academy of American Poets](#)

The Diamond Necklace - Guy de Maupassant

Guy de Maupassant's Mathilde Loisel borrows what she believes is a diamond necklace to shine for one night at a ministry ball, then enters years of labor after the necklace is lost. The story is famous for a final turn that still teaches how social hunger, pride, and accident can rewrite a life. Maupassant's sentences stay cool while the cost compounds. It remains a model short story for literary readers studying consequence. The ball lasts one evening; the repayment does not. Read it when you want classic fiction that understands objects as fate.

Read "The Diamond Necklace" free through [Project Gutenberg](#)

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

Many of today's pieces are about tending and naming: mice and partners in a lab, ancestors and IDs, paintings given away so they can be kept, rivers renamed as monsoon gods. Literary fiction and poetry meet here in the shared work of making a life legible without pretending the ledger is complete. Some poems walk through weather that no longer keeps seasons; some stories stay inside rooms where care is both scientific and personal. Craft essays on phones and theaters ask what else a writer must hear before a page can speak. A few of these works end in welcome, and others leave the undoing visible on purpose.

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

Take care!