

# Roadside Raven Review 9

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## Karol Nielsen

### Homecoming

I moved back to Manhattan on Labor Day after a year and a half with my parents in Connecticut. My office was supposed to reopen but it got pushed back by a month, and then indefinitely, because of the spike in Covid infections. I cleaned my apartment before I returned but I couldn't get on top of all the plaster dust that accumulated when the workmen repaired my bathroom. The plumber had cut holes in the wall and ceiling to fix a coop building pipe that was leaking. I swept up the dust again after I moved back. But it's still accumulating fast. I already have a routine: I buy iced hazelnut coffees in the morning and then work from my couch writing evaluations for specialty occupation visa applications, like I had at my Midtown office and remotely in Connecticut. I sit outside at local restaurants with pene pasta, chicken Caesar salad, and the occasional cheeseburger in the afternoon. I walk in Central Park and catch up with the vendor who sells me diet iced tea. At five, my parents call me on FaceTime to ease the adjustment to being on my own again. My first week back, I shared a photo on Facebook of geraniums I saw in my neighborhood and a writing student said I sounded elated to be back. I said yes but the truth is it's intense to be alone in the city during a pandemic. I am waiting for my office to reopen. I am waiting to teach live writing classes again. I am waiting for my open mic poetry reading to go live again. I miss the clapping and laughter

## Ram Chandran

romancing  
yellow leaves...  
the autumn moon

shadows of leave  
over leaves  
autumn moon

## Maid Corbic

love always will die  
eternity for one kiss  
makes time fragile

## **AE Reiff**

### **First Step**

One good thing the body is,  
seen in the sea ahead,  
a mind shook oil  
matured with soil  
down the seed coat stretched,  
the body passed  
when blanket draws to feet.

No one gets through birth the same  
without eternity rise,  
when that back leg  
steps to light, out from darkness,  
day, sun, rain and night,  
out of darkness steps to light  
to vent its flame.

### **Candles**

Breath wears clothes where faces shine  
in dreams as candles ache for light,  
to give heart-people illumined shrines  
Where alabaster breaks.

A mother brings her offspring  
into town, folded arm in arm,  
She has a serape dress of years  
To wear among the crowds.

I hollowed out a crawlspace in the attic floor  
to keep this resolution strong,  
to bear in mind the refuge and the breath,  
the Word of mouth to those who flee the wars.

## **Z. Guadamour**

### ***What Remains***

The pyromaniac escaped again from the asylum  
wild and stormy-eyed  
he pours kerosene on the clouds  
torches them as the sun goes down

Tomorrow I will hike out  
in the western mountains  
looking for the charred  
remains of today

### ***That Afternoon in 1903***

Time's sewing machine stitches together memories  
remnants of mottled sunlight through tall poplars  
the scent of saffron crocus in a field in Provence  
overlooking the Mediterranean dotted with sails  
Silver leaves of olives dance with the shifting wind  
carry the ripening headiness of trellised grapes  
awaiting harvest for the year's vintage  
Walking east back to the village with our  
shadows and future lengthening before us  
holding hands in fermenting light's magic

## Jackie Chou

walking in the heat  
my panting answered  
by bird calls

job termination notice  
the flutist's song  
drops an octave

autumn morning  
the soured milk  
in last night's coffee

long night  
the insomniac's lullaby  
to herself

*a dream deferred*  
*the syrupy sweet*  
of aged tangerines

late blooming mums  
first hint of rouge  
on her lips

**CL Bledsoe**  
**Michael Gushue**

**October**

A stranger you used to love phones you  
at 3 am and wants to misremember how  
great your childhood memories used to be  
before you ruined them all by too much use.  
A glass of milk chewed better. Corner store  
owners stuck free candy down your diaper.  
Bathtub toys could propel themselves through  
the soap bubbles which were more rainbow-y  
and smelled like Saturday morning cartoon  
shows. Hardly anyone complained about the gas  
mileage of death's Miata, the way it stained  
the whitest streets with the face of its tires. It's all  
nonsense, of course. The traded-in horse, snowy  
singing the color of noise. Misty-eyed and sad-music-y,  
the stranger keeps choking up, talking about the faults  
you shook loose of so long ago they've become  
only party stories. There's a long pause, "Do you  
still love me?" "Of course," you say, "That's  
why I never call." Eyes closed, turned inward  
and back, searching for the faint smell  
of cigarettes and cherries, so long dead.

## Wayne Burke

### ache

I left the game because of  
stomach ache.  
Gramp walked off the field  
with me, his  
hand on my shoulder:  
"you have to have patience,  
my boy," he said.  
I did not need advice:  
Grandma gave out more than  
enough of that--  
I did need the hand on  
my shoulder though (something  
Grandma never gave).  
My stomach ached for days:  
Gramp drove me to the hospital  
in the big city.  
A young man doctor told me  
roll over.  
I lay on the examination table  
on top the crinkly paper--  
after he pulled my pants down  
I pulled them back up.  
"I have to look," he said,  
his face red.  
"Let him," Gramp said,  
his face red also...  
On the ride home  
Gramp told me that  
I had worms.  
The windshield wipers beat in time  
so what  
so what  
"how did I get worms?"  
"from something you ate."  
I thought of what I had  
eaten.  
Rain smeared the windshield.  
The wipers picked up the tempo:  
tough luck  
tough luck.



