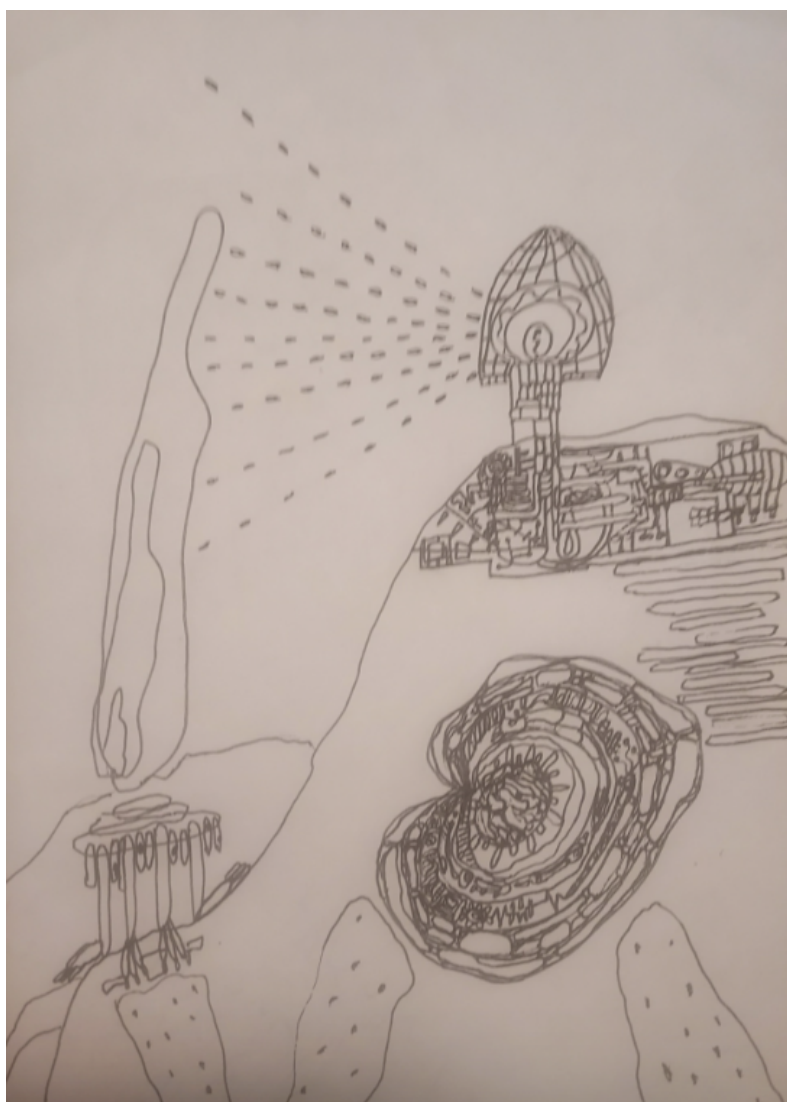

POEMS, DRAWINGS & MUSICS
BY Raffi Kelly Ohanian



cover image by the author

About the Author:

A poet, musician, thinker, and dear friend to so, so many. From DC, lived in Philly, Baltimore, upstate NY; studied music at Bard College. The genius of their poetry, artwork, and sound is something that has inspired innumerable other artists across the experimental scene on the East Coast. This collection is a small sample of poems to share the great resonance of their work and life. More of their poems/recordings are available online.

POEMS

Our love bends

tears in suspense
of city bells
breaking cataract
shutters of mutant walls

fie
the abacus that runs
in locusts buzz
of talking time
for the dark
and fey disconnect
for
a bridled room lashes
forget-me-nots
to miniature plays

our love crosses
regret to streets
made joy

to ruin, to joy
again as color
crumbles black
to black opaque

and people walk
in circles, intestinal
and i

believe meteoric
gravity tells
i find you,
and it seems
too late

Suffer the pagan

intimation, intuit
projectors –
our sexed minds femme
at once
the impossibility of you
sensing me:

nailed fey
prophet to
the crusade
everlasting

wheels storm
predictable tracts
around honest
betrayals, stolen
to
the dog's mind

a woman
wrings out
blood
from her
wrist over
ceramic shadows

a homosexual
cuts off his penis
throws it over
a brick wall
to buddha

a boy & a girl
stamp crucified
shame and fear
across nakedness,
biotic opposition Hide me!
cried the ballerina
to the cowboy all
backwards

[excerpt from an untitled story]

I was on the train yesterday. It was the first train, the one with the octagons splayed out across the floor, the faintly menacing orange glow spreading a humid distaste crossed with a filament of pure reverence that makes life in this town such a strange jungle comfort. I was a kiss then, I was coming, I was as confessional and as sinless as your girls body, trapped in the intellect and angst of your woman. So slow, so unbearably fast, as a statue of a great prince crumbles in a town square after the hometown army has gone, a plundered

and knowing face, a sadness hoodwinked in the collective passing lost time. I thought the monuments were funny, I thought you were alone. I wanted to know why, what breaks against the trembling polyp that holds your tears hostage in the windchime of laughing, what makes your voice such a skyward sail crest gently soothing this world of plastic.

Castration Mechanics

oh hes soft
i know i see
see i can tell a man
a belly is
iron, cartilage, or feather
cartilage is excess or earned
runs, buildup of unspent sense,
death. iron is plumbing or
exhaust, a motor is iron and serves
to run. feather is the falling
of letters from the weightless air
the boneless diaspora of carrion birds
from arcs of the space of the free
falling to the ground below. or
scraped
strains of eyes, candles that rot in pages, pupils
that strain to falling, jelly men. know to
unknowing oh he's hard
i know from how
he looked when he crossed, when he
goes home he keeps
sharpening his knife even
though theres only
butter left in the lamp in the moony
dish he punctures tapestries of
family feeling with the need, the
real, the nail gun
he's teeth. hard. keeps biting
see his nails? clipped,
not bitten he's hard. not a biter
he bites. he works
when he sleeps he fights tyranny
of dreams, tyranny of yesterdays,
tyranny of knowing he comes
in from women, only.
old years spent still tremble
when he's spit
back to her spent strength
revealed.
no wrench, left
castration mechanics. you came.

morning grows to fruits of light
he slugs acid of his rebirth. a new day
to spend in silent cryings

The Plague Doctors and the Grey

the bird faced
trace the symbologies
of common letters
picking a corpse
for life all know
to be real, as if
it was
a question. outside,
branding, the mythscript
of money inscribes
the naked dark of eyes
with burning
sequences
codices which
point to
the heart
of a forever insatiable
desire, a hunger
below hunger impressed
with the food
the richness
of temporarily
its fruits, plucked
with dyings fast
and slow.
the bird
faced climb
through windows
and up ladders
scraping plagues
with their clocks.
always running
out. always
of black and white.
the insipid
rigidities, the diametrics
they keep
outpace them. letters are
always marks
on empty pages.
doctors without
a hope to heal
chisel best

intents to shape
masks, hidden,
naked, useless
for lack of
knowing
the Grey

the wax construct of
a labyrinth in shape:
a human ear
does not quiver but is still
in the lake, lapped
with beyonds
the withering distance of stars
in purgative process
giving tremor to the outset
of its walls
a human infant cries
a withering life on dread
loom. unreal, eventually
a dream of no water
a cave under a cave

Denise Levertov Struggles to Write a Poem about the War

why am i
so arrogant?
the jade hatch of
my hope and fortune
falls from its perch on
the upsidown light fixture
making a mountain for no
magma on the floor of my room.
am i so arrogant because of this: it still
goes on like this. worse and people struggle
to say but more people struggle to stay. eating turns
into some self-reflective burden. how could you struggle
to say what you know and are? a war. an empty lot full of flags
nobodys tribe for your memory. the guts and the guts and the guns
when i was young i watched anderson coopers ever unchanging face
comment in the snide microtones of steady money as night vision footage
outlined the descent of hyperactive napalm discharges over the ancient bridges and libraries of Baghdad city
of the Caliphs and i was scared. now im 23 and i just saw a gun for the first time in awhile, doing electrical
work at a house that is a shell in the guts of a starting to be gutted place they call a ghetto where people are
born to stay away from people like me and fight eachother typically over small amounts of money or
misunderstandings arising from the absolute battle of being when your shellskin is reject sluice for a
churning ad machine that uses our natural feelings of excitement at bright colors and sudden movement--
input to output wobbly hate, and sleep and to create the purest forms of isolation known in the purest
environments of communion the c i t y which is mostly people and all alone obviously. taught to worry

over problems i am taught to assume are *mine* and there for individual burden, i against i, i eat i must, in this garbage pile, never enough oh and i say oh its my problem, figuring my-self out for me in *my new city*, *the crib* ha ha ha ha ha ha h why am i so arrogant? to stare at a digital ones and zeros rendering of a flimsy 8mm digitization of you

your gap tooth. your jealous husband and everyone is dead and smoking and i really do love you but i can't help but feel cruel and knowing and a ten thousand foot oval above a violent red dot when i hear you say you have so much trouble, that you got hung up for a whole winter, the artist in residence, hung up for a whole winter in the early days after the bay of pigs smoking in your house in new york city, yes you are, trying, you are trying and smoking and saying you are hung up about writing a poem about it a poem about war.

Excavation

with a letter opener i pock
mark the stars and reach for the spent feelings
that present themselves as remedies
to men insistent on ignoring whispers. ignored a whisper howls ripping
sheets of rock to build the bowels of a house. every one who works works
for a peace. to make a piece you howl and learn. then learned.
broken scar of being broken to make one shelf to keep the things broken. and bitter
tears make a diamond for the blind to sit all day and look at
the clouds at night drift slowly over the inflated intentions of cars
driving too fast and too much space sits squatly in a clod
heaving wrenches and holding in land the dead birthings, the death births
of too many things. a great blue bridge for two little eyes
and four wheels to carry the bent bright hope of two rag-d and raging
lives. twisting to hold a piece of your mind. mine all talk yours all act. i know it
would matter if there weren't just too many, this, that i say it would matter if...
and i know it would not

Giving a Picture of Green Tara to Pauline Oliveros

giving listening. to speak is masculine and most think that a gift is a force that moves outwards. you can give without moving if you are empty really. you can give your listening. when i met pauline there were cattails in a field where i was sorting broken electronic equipment on a long dock by a radio station operated by some lucky well feeling people who love busted noise and hate corporations. her and Ione and I walked back from the field together very slowly (she was old) and when we got to the place where i had my parents car there was a feeling i had from her dusky eyes that i had to give her a gift. I had something from my mother. i knew i never deserved to be the son of such lovely pained and worried people. i had a gift from my mother a green Tara i knew pauline was a buddhist and that summer i was too. i went in and dug around the place of feet in the passenger side where there were empty coffee cups, roaches of spliffs, crumpled pieces of notebook paper and found the card. from Kagyu monlam. what is a mind? i dont know. i use one i ran back from the car. to catch her before she left and gave it to her. she smiled at me and she looked at the cattails and looked back at me and smiling again said "she is with us"

celeste state the stairs

celeste state the stairs
that trace bones of childhood
are glimmers of eternal. peace
in the gripping necessity of vice.

because i've grown and i'm here
somehow
the passing wisps soften me
speeding up, i slow down and stand
over the bones of a billion,
laughing, letters strewn this and that
way, everywhere things are named.
dont forget the first songs
dont forget your first friends

Thunder Rubs the Aching
thunder rubs the aching
head with bubbles bursting
no soap in the water of caves
down there rivers
go.
filthy, clean.
pure hammers of bile
unclean mercy, lozenge
sucked till forgiven
throat dug with hallowed names
the hunger savior
the angel ceaseless
eyes
worry is the public text
some do not know
how to read and go
slowly on bicycles
slowly, slowly
between all the lanes
grateful, thankless

[a few poems from my hopefully soon coming
chapbook about my time living on allegheny,
observing lifecycles in the place they call "the
badlands"
hopefully with the even eye]

Needle Nose

I'm riding the bus and I see him
In south philly, going south,
coming from the north.
Everyone knows who he is
When he gets on. He cant stand,
Dope oxide running off him
His bliss contagious, expected discomfort
For everyone else
Jealous of the careless, knowing

Eerie lurch. Blessing conferred
By the slow erasure of heroin.
I give him what I can
A comrade's way, A stare
Paper without the words on it
He gets off, around 7th and Christian.
Everyone else has filtered out,
The old bald *papis* and dotty floral
abuelas And sexy young versions of
them,
The reek of his need still fills the cabin
Once he's stepped off.
The two ladies at the front, the bus driver
and the daytime security officer for PNC
Branch in Center City laugh. A mute
hysteria
Too terrified for pity. Two fingers
crossed Say "*get away from me, with
your problem, your stink*"
I watch him and he doesn't move from the
corner. Too fucked up, reeling. He drops the
styrofoam cup. The next day, I see him on Front
Under the shade of the awning, corner
store On Cambria, leaning against the
brick
Away from the heat,
Holding another cup.

East Lehigh
A dim poppy,
Backlit white.
Corroded film
Photograph
Numbing in need.
The long past yawns
Under real wheels,
Spent petrol ooze,
razor wire.

McPherson Square Park, Philadelphia
corrupted with haste
the infantile rings
grow to the shackles' grey.
shadows of monuments leer
over the slow collapse of a public
anatomy children guard the library

the center of a bleak hexagon
magnetizing distaste
sorrow's hollowed old
nightwatchman guards the children, full,
stifled washing his channels with wet
granite. plumbing. the chance to be.
it runs dry.
the goodbyes we kiss to our mirrors
for grandchildren
hope turns a skewer, dead letters
fill small bellies. the falsehood of pigeons is
their insistence on getting close without
emotion. a cheap painting of the nyc skyline
in the Philadelphia park called Mcpherson
square. i picked up a hundred orange caps to
draw a face for you. when i can give
my whole mind ill hold bouquets and quilts of
rags mosaics for the scrapyards and give a taste
this busted tooth. this slow undulant hunger
that mirrors and acts what it reflects.
"a hungry man is an angry man"
i heard it once in a song

I am sick Lauren
Of gas giants, likewise
The steady eyes
Of the iron hearted
I was complaining
Kerouac impersonators
With six guns
Punched holes in my dress
And I confess their bullets

Lauren, I'm sick
To learn the rutting
Noise of the sexualized
Male
Where the st Jerome
Academy for boys
Made death eating
Animals
From the ribs
 Of children
Bisected divided
Eternally away
From you
Where tooth
Was presence

And Tongue,
memory

For Lauren Bacall

Blue circuits
 Of cities
Rose, and wreath
Your smoke
Another hero's
Chalice obviates the path
Of its drill and
Our lakes of silver
Forget themselves

The dead we run
Against on our walk
Promise
The sonics
 Of night
 Without Form
Fairgrounds
Of decapitated women
And the corrosive
Mouths of alligators
Spitting colloquialisms
Along nervous, fractured
Ice
 bloodsoaked
Tremoring with the potentialities(y)
Of bound rivers

Walking Home

[for Avenue]

a lantern empties
its guts on the floor
of a working class
city.

the knife man
has gone back
to counting sheep
for his angel,

at dawn

I am a prostitute
who knows conviction

in moonlight.

the steel trust
behind your
constancy

Watching rats

eat
the mummified
remains of buddhist
Monks
on barstools
still clutching cups
of their tears.

laughing
with Yoruba Elders
magnolias
in mangrove Swamps,

wheelie heroes
doing tricks
in the street

giving birth

to flurried
Circuses
of neon,

and still
chapels of inert
caribbean
drums.

your mother was
a saint, when we
Revere her
our tears turn
To necklaces
of coral

i was thinking)
its a shame

she never got
to see you
under this flayed
morning sky
laughing
on molly

Break in the EL

pearls without fruit
swell to exorcise jubilees of
maggots, the aftermath
of church of industry of trains
even. so strange we perch here
waiting to be carried sheltering
with our footsteps a canopy. a blue
that shades pools of slick
reflecting tar, nectar starved
veins cutting through corners of night.
a blue that seals the impossibility
of a Christ a Child though we see
statues puncturing land made dead
with gains.
someone tagged this new built artifice
with a reminder. thankfully the
repopulation scheme takes time,
empties
its disguise in the shredding of
its cocoon. thankfully the swine
walking poodles will have to look
at every husked addict kicking up rain
in tears. the glyph: a nail gun
for an unbelievable pain they wont
be able to feel fastening
a coffin around their new
born world.

Nightmare

"GIVE IT TO ME!"
on the other end, rasps that are
hands raised or the slugs of prayer
becoming words like mercy
MOTHERFUCKER

the tire iron splits the front panel
she screams he tries to pull out
i cant believe these idiot fiends
the tire iron hits the sidewalk a mine collapses
a life counts down by the breath
he pulls out the uzi the lions tooth that seals. him,
his role: the jaws that gnash, his crown a skin of necessary wounds.
he licks clean- they are others' blood
not his his daughters'
15 shots, or more 5 seconds, perfectly still
she screams while she has lungs
he dials the hearse, puts his heart back
in the face of Him his daughters. he is a person,
fucking fiends. pay what you owe when you owe it. simple
(on the phone)
the phone closes. the bodies will be removed before morning
the car torched and dragged to the lot by the school
while the kids are all still
home in bed.

(5.26)

The swallowed sword gold
In the evenings throat
Rolls us to black of the chiming
Wound, smell of summer cuts
With croakers, memory
Trace
innocence

(6/3/25)

I give you
Glassy eyes
That break into shivering
Lanes of rotten
Fungus on new corpses
The nice gays talk
About someone who doesn't come
Around here anymore
Under the spinning
Wheel of fortune
Sundered honey, basement
windows
Afternoon

Fragment

[For Ruby Arthur]

We
Planets still
In time a city
That bleeds
Over paroxysms
Of ink
Hallelujahs
In broken homes
And in the chain
Of our years
Fountains
of doves bleeding. Kisses
Kisses
From the compromising
From the wind
Love . And streets
In amber ...
In shadow ...

(9.19)

Country in the eye
Between us
A lamp
Strangles marrowed light, loss and still
Breathing
Afternoon burning
At the heathen stake
Hears nothing but
Painted women screaming

"Germantown"

When you walk
The waiting
Snow covers the cold
Rusted machines
Of leaves fallen

From the humming
Glass of distant
Skyscrapers.

The common sorrows
Are wreathed in pythons
Of mist from invisible
Cities. People and water
Wheels mark distance
By progress
of knife wounds

Beside ache's
cathedral walls people
ask why the crook
Of the shepherd's
Hand ministers
The sirens
painting The slurred
black Of Streets
with flag decals
of American
colors of
Cancer on rain

City (12.13)

Alabaster
Young faces
In graveyards.

Rowhome.
Tragic repeating
Body.

Bullet holes
In flowers of honey

Infection

In the secret
Clear mirror

Of hate

Destinies of
Emptiness

In the waking
Bliss of
Throttled Sperm

One million
Burned up pages

A boxer
Before blood
Seeks rights
Angles of
 Psyche
 In gluts
 Of past language

In the red
Eyes of Saints

The unanswered
question

Something just got darker

And you were saying
About transmisogyny about
Nervous fingers of winter
Trees about the complex
Building
There was snow
Falling everywhere
Then and someone
Is screaming under
A lamppost on north
Avenue and you were saying
About white entitlement
About vanity
About the white male
Hero, power, constriction
Rulers, and silence
About.

INDEX of SHOW POSTERS
by the author



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DOG
(NY)

SLACK

ANNIE BLECH
PRESENTS: in
Ecstasy

L.I.C.E.

