

Ryan Scott Nance

The Rapp Saloon is Excited to Present

Brendan Constantine

Ryan Nance

Friday, March 22, 8:30 pm

at 1436 2nd St. Santa Monica,
inside the International Youth Hostel of Santa Monica.

↑ Shuttle To Terminal E-8023

For more information/RSVP: <http://5thin.gs/RappSaloon>
Plus Open Mic after Featured Poets. Sign-ups start at 8 pm

Garden-throat's Tale

He dreamt first he was met
on a snow-blown block at night
by a slasher who scalpelled a trough
from his chin to the tip of his sternum
and pulled his esophagus out.
He lay, breathing more openly in
the wintry air until a nurse
in burgundy found him and
fit him with a length of green
garden hose, and stapled him shut.
Next he dreamt the slasher had
been the one to fit him
with the garden pipe, whispering
his benedictions of growth & growing,
and rechristening him Garden-throat.
He received the blade, its handle riveted
in steel. It was called Throater, and he
carried it on with him on his travels.
That is Garden-throat's story.

Saying It

Leaves flap through the dark windows
like stiff-veined flags. Wind stirs
much of the street. An uncut lime

is small and fits in the palm's hollow,
near the wrist. It turns like a key:
the apartment door and the neighbors'

door, the front door to the sidewalk
beneath the tree of urgent flags,
and the windows which seem so much

like passages—— should be looked through,
but not stepped through. Inside the refrigerator,
the light blinks out again,

again the calm of cold puts off expiration
a little longer. The smell of the wind
before its charge through the window,

the odor of gas announces the maniacal blue flame,
rising smoke wraith and the sweet forgiving smell,
the long dedication of the tea whistle, the tea's

wheaty steam. On the teacup's lip, very nearly
saying it. There is no detail. No turn to make.
Only the heat before, the heat after.

Wicked Samurai in Cartoon Disguises

Out of the corner will
Surely spring the sword-wielding
Kind hearted ender of each
Of us. The kitten faced
The laughably ineffectual

The well fortified city, Senlis
In France for example, or Toledo's
Rocky approaches, can withstand
With measured grit and Roman
Pipes a great siege, the Hoarde,
The army Intent on blood and
Fatherhood of your children's children. But what walls,

Tall and stony, can't keep
Out, or won't keep out, is
The clowns, the ridiculous,
The harmlessly looney. A parade
Of them, grinning and grimey
Prostrating themselves before
The proud queen combing her
Hair in the moonlight on Saturday
Evenings high in her iron-braced
Tower.

Today, just today, a wicked
Samurai, masterfully trained
To let human life drain onto
A kitchen's meticulous floor,
Arrived at your door in a
Cartoon disguise. An afternoon
Bright with imagined future
Remembrance darkened quickly

With a silent honed knife.

And that was it. You bled
Out on your private battlefield.
You failed to defend your life.

The mugger you frightened off years
Ago, the teetering semi truck you
Swerved around, the unceremoniously poisoned kebabs
You didnt buy from the jibbering
Street vendor, all were not
Your doom.

In the last few brain cycles your
Blood's quickly fleeing oxygen affords
You should really wonder who
Sent your well loved killer.
And why. You won't know either,
Ever. You really ever only know
Your own heart, and that only
If you are brave and open.

[backup]

The Transience of New Leaves is Not As Noticeable as Plum Blossoms

The Skins

of the plums she
brought home were the color
of an intimated dawn. The meat,
a bright dusk,

and sour,

pinched her eyebrows
together and
curved her lower lip.

Coming Upon a Street Dog in the Alley Between the Lanes

a full well of animal
fear, giving off the odor of
blind striking back.
His eyes were muddy
sockets of grey jade—

Playing Chess with My Father After His Stroke

Before he moves
the piece to mate me,
his hand— the hand is

the instrument of
the hollow which opens
at our backs— rests

on the crowned figure
almost immaterially
and his eyes move to

meet mine, and I
nearly smack the soapstone
to pieces on the floor.

Air in the Shape of a Man

I don't think it will ever
slide its way in, but I'll
extract the doorknobs out of

their sockets, unhang the doors
from their hinges. It's the monks
I love, the monks who torch their

own calm postures,
for desire, for aspen, for protest at
the erratic public squares

they envy, because that sort
of emolument, the burning up
of hand-dyed cotton, making ash of it—

we both want to be fired to a fine silt
and just pass into—There are
a great many ways to vanish—

a knife kick through the surface,
a stuttering shift sideways,
a four-quartered tear, an inwardly

diminishing spiral—but this,
my leaking into, seems an apter glory-hole.
I hope to achieve a letting out

of the many-jointed sofa bed and the fuel
injection manifold. I may not be
able to manage, I may undo every

thing. And the lovers I am relying on
to cremate what remains may, even knowing
how I loathe the squelch of clay &

gravel earth, not think me
gone, and harbor me on into
an afterwards I shudder at tonight.

[backup]

Yellow

If I may compare great things with small,
A lemon is a funny canary.
Like a Eucharist wafer, a shallow
Gold dish called patina carries the sun,

A Dutch gilder, a soft pile of arsenic.
In the cool humid lands to the North,
The soil is leached of its bases in
Increase of acid, bile, gall, yellow-green,

Melancholy. From the Danube in the
West, the Melanchlaei, the Black Cloaks,
Melanoma, the black growth, cut with
A knife as thin as a postage stamp and

Tapped into a clean glass dish colored
Like a spark, the Androphagi lived further
North beyond where lay uninhabited
Desert. The winter sun, an ash covered

Gleed in the gloaming a few notches off
The horizon. The falling excrement
Of wild honeybees contaminated
By a fungal toxin, yellowdog,

Yellowsheet felon, felonious Old
World daisy. In yellow rain, the ember
Glowing with breath shall glint. Tawny Krishna!
Tawny Krishna, my gleg exception

At your gleefully jaundiced gloat, young
As you are, avatar, will blaze
On the hide of the First Cow in the sky-
Less world of ice, probably yellow

Metals, bright materials, made piled-up.
On the blown bough of the tree man was made
From, a yellowhammer, yellow-shafted
Flicker, glistens less bird and more flame,

Coal made yellow through age & use.
The gold dish grace is brought forward on,
Gilt favor, as genuine as the
yellow-jacket irises of a

half-Manx grey-striped house tiger. Her glib
smile half-slid off the sill. As honest
as gold, as purchasable as what may
be bought with gold. Mercenary. Turntail.

Cad. An antibiotic administered
Against ringworm of the heart, the courage
Blue-grey, mottled, dappled in the dusk's
Yellow glass, gloss, image made on light-

Sensitive silver-coated metallic plates.
Impervious reportage, yellowing.
Tinctorially heroic & hallowed.

Infinitive

1. Be or not be the question is.

2. Whether nobler in the mind it is suffer
the sling of torture

or take arms against and torturer be

Our to go begins at our wanting go

animism he says

3. image of animus she says often
and again

the embedded stone, be not as
it may,

may to be rubbed over the knob in the stone's odd seventh quadrant
they jinx one another stop the other from talk

something rhetorical need be done to these houses. Drink
full well against possible resentment.

4. There's no vanilla, only grammar, excellent as
Mayan obsidian sacrifices.

And the deceased must have been about my size he says

5. It is a luminous evidence he may say it is a luminous rubbish
a luminous busking, it is a luminous panhandling, it is a luminous
pander

of a good morning on the cheek of every well meant
surprisingly seems a real answer to the clatter
of tinny appraisals

Notes Toward Identifying a Father

People call them elephants. People often dream about them when the dreamers want clarity. They live out of doors. They live in big places like Africa and India. They do not live in big places like Canada or Antarctica. They live in big places because they are big. People cannot hold them. They are big like elephants. Other animals' sizes are compared to elephants. They are too big to lift, but most people would like to carry an elephant for protection or help. They are very strong and very helpful. They can lift many large things. They have long noses called "trunks" in the middles of their round faces. They use their trunks to lift and touch the things they want to lift or touch. They have large soft ears and rounded bodies. People think their heads are large for their bodies. They have four legs of equal length the size and shape of human torsos. Their feet seem not to be separated from their legs. Elephants are grey. If they are not grey, they are not elephants. If a similar animal is white, it is called a "white elephant" and is a god. If a similar animal is pink, it is called a "pink elephant" and is a figure of speech. Many elephants have two long teeth curving up out of their mouths. Not all elephants have these teeth people call "tusks". An elephant is an elephant with or without tusks. At the opposite ends of their bodies, they have short, thin tails. The elephants piano wildly. Ivory is a common substance. When divorced, they subsist on boxed dinners. Sofas are

debilitating, really. His front window is blurry.
A little stained glass all at the top.
Watch. He has stopped moving.
The light through the dining-nook
Window tracks across his face.
He will deteriorate wildly, soften and

Elephant off politely.

[backup]

Jet Propulsion Laboratory

1.

What can I say for the hills
except they were nearly
green, scrub brush brown.
The sun in that clear,
pre-adamic sky was high,
glinted off the tallest
lab building's aluminum frame.

Sunday afternoon: open house
roiling early March heat,
superconductors, extra-system
geology, like the quiet
conversations between reticent
men, for now, no story:
A bald sky, sun, science.

2.

An expanse must be run.
The grooved freeway deck
need be drifted across.
Unroll the coiled matter
sprung up inside.

3.

The model communication
satellite wasn't built
for our atmosphere. While
solar winds blow, my moist
mouth. After a few minutes
of holding my breath, as close
to outer space as either of us
will likely get, dizzy, disoriented.

The floating pitch of magnets,
and visual acuity of big mirrors.

4.

But it's strange to mark against
my father what I may fear.

The danger is to aestheticize
that strangeness.

His one less-clouded eye
was only an eye. The satellites
overhead hummed noiselessly
noiselessly. Man and man, we
drove down to his lower valley.

Ritual Bronze

Under a horse
thirst, a hand
clasped,
mouth wine,

In the twenty-seventh year, in the third month, the king was at Zhou. He approached the hall, took his stance. The Southern Po entered the right.

doors: a mouth,
an articulate
hand, man
can measure thus—

hand clasped, flapping
tongue, not to
get your wish,
southern mountain,

Qiu Wei entered the court through the central gate, stood mid-chamber, faced north.

man's horizon:
ten clouds, big sun
and grass, steps
of summer, ask

clouds, nothing,
burnt sun's temple.
Heart's blue, heart's
draft, handling flesh,

The king called out for the Scribe to award Wei purple kneepads, a scarlet demi-circlet, and a harness bell. Wei bowed his head to the ground, hazarded a response,

your own wings beating,
jade steps bear our
white roads of rain.

The sky, the roof above
persists, soaks
bolts of gauze.

extolling the Son of Heaven's uprightness, accepted so as to make for his cultured grandfather and father this treasured vessel. May Wei's sons and grandsons always use it.

my long spear of
wood and eye, my
heart stands the fields
of my mind

Dumb Incantation

In December the valley was covered
with clouds the color of ink-soaked
cotton. Early in January, the lid

was off and a fierce silver sun
rocked across the sky. The detention center
halls were not unearthly green. The pale

blue-grey walls, cream-colored
metal grates, the men shifting around
a hive of orange suits, yellow suits,

a few chalk-blue ones. Something
I would ask about when it was my turn.
But when my brother handed the grey phone

to me and I took it, and set my eyes
on my father's face, and he set his two eyes,
the good one going bad and the black one,

and he sent them to the wall behind me,
I said nothing. He began talking
about the TV on Sundays, the food,

his cellmates, the hour for exercise.
The slate of his face, the pepper-black
stubble, the black of his eye that

would bleach out to vein-blue
before he was released, I said okay.
Good. Great. School's fine. And

I felt then, later though I thought
I was wrong, that not even the glass, or
the suit, the eye, the age, the crime,

or this dread would ever separate us,
I would follow him there in my time through
the routine of risk & failure. The phone

was cut. Time was up. He had not reached what he was working up to. He made the I Love You sign with his hand, straining to hold

his ring finger down, and slapped it against the layers of glass and plastics, pounding out some dumb incantation, saying something I couldn't hear.

Cotton's Point

Next week, we'll need to wear
full suits. In the flat hours
of the afternoon, the only other
guy in the water, a local probably, has
paddled down the coast, slowly finding

the break. We could talk but
we don't. In the silence between
sets, cold water, and salt, my friend
studies the patterns of wax on the deck
of his board, the local's face is turned to

the haze gathering on the distant edge
of the sea. The still water is—
what's the opposite of
molten? Not opposite—the
water is halfway from stone

to sky. One of the older
surfers used to say "the sea wants
to be mist, part of it anyway,
the waves anyway". My friend
says "the sea doesn't want

anything, we want the sea
to want". The local, whose
face is turned away from me,
tilts his head in a reversal
of attention, as if he were

awakened by the *chock* of a
roof tile falling against the
stalk of a homemade broom, as if
it were a breath he was listening to.
He's heard the sucking in.

The first wave of a set swells
and darkens as it approaches.
We all let it pass. The foam
as it breaks— ten thousand
noisy feathers—

[backup]

Samarkand

Jules the maddening ruler began by stating that now is the time
when the fishermen no longer fish
when the osprey circles without diving
when the cold mountain no longer pikes
up in the sky because diamond air no longer wraps it around
when the businessman is still at his desk
when kings serve other kings
when I serve the king of england
when the cat no longer mouses
when the sleepers no longer rest
when houses on the street are bathed in electric fire
when good people are no longer good
when good people are no longer people
when kilns fire nothing
when a graveyard dog digs up his dead master
when potshard emulates briefly
when we are kith and kin
when gods become intimate and private
when ivory figurines no longer suffice
when our savior hangs himself on an elm
when our fathers recount their trips to the supermarket
when gold is gold no more
when all that we have done will be undone
when opossums bear live young upon the hay pallet
when the farmer polishes his scyth and sickle
when the hammer hammers a nailhead
when stopping for coffee no longer means anything
when the radio talks
when the scholars give up
when goldfish grow up to be koi
when the old apartment lined and
labyrnithed with scrolls
books and apothecary cabinets is
torn down and rebuilt up, shinier only

when words point only to other words
when there is no thing in this world
when buttons are no longer tendered
when we stop being mercantile with our souls
when contractors market their work without warning
when seaside villages rule the seas
when grasshoppers no longer rule the grass
when the mortgage broker listens quietly
when old day laborers apply for visas
when languages are not themselves
when the knife shapener is coming
when people here are like people there
when the fern will grow in direct sunlight
when the rabbit shank is defurred and hung for sale
when the small numbers we carry around with us are inverse
when flak is flak
when the crested night warbler is filagreed and fine
when pans are deglazed with filtered water
when the airwaves are silent and the cold dark
burst of the night is transmitted down the
powerlines into every home and the ruled will take note