

The Cantabernacle

The official newsletter/zine of the Boston Poetry Slam at The Cantab Lounge, featuring content by our community members. Our weekly show happens every Wednesday night, starting at 8 pm.

• Upcoming Shows •

01/04 - John Paul Davis
Newly-local poet, musician, and programmer extraordinaire!

01/11 - Dr. Joshua Bennett
Renowned Penguin & Harvard Press author, Dartmouth English professor, and all-around big deal.

01/18 - TBD!
Check our social media for updates!

01/25 - Open Poetry Slam
\$50 prize! Bring at least 3 poems.

All shows are downstairs at The Cantab Lounge, 738 Mass Ave in Cambridge, MA (Central Square). Open mic sign up begins at 7:15 PM. Show is 21+ / \$3 / Vax Required.

• PENNCILS •

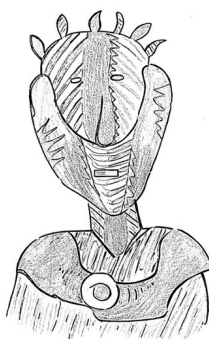
DRAWINGS BY MARCH PENN
CAPTIONS BY MICHAEL F. GILL



"Love is the glow
of wearing a beautiful lobster bib
all day long"



"Certain German philosophy
says that if you're unlucky
enough to experience love, it
will likely drive you up the
wall! Plus there's no antidote!
Our nature is to be hopelessly
drawn to chasing those
transcendental soap-bubbles
of subjective romance! We're
doomed! <3 <3 <3 <3"



"I'm a rooster who wears
a baseball glove on their
face while donning a
cape. This is how I stay
true to myself. Love
follows like a pair of
parenthesis
around my life's
sentence."

• eyepoem •

by Michael F. Gill



• Triptych Of Poems From Open Mic Regulars •

Golden Shovel From A Dylan Line

"Swallow your pride, you will not die, it's not
poison"

A lot of things I find hard to swallow.
I don't want to lay this at your
feet, but I do have a modicum of pride
and as long as I've known you
it's been a real test of will
to acknowledge what you are and are not.
Sometimes it's made me want to die.
Not trying to guilt you, just saying it's
a terrible struggle and I hope you're not
going to overreact when I drink your poison.

- Sue Savoy

To The Dairy Free Queen Who Doesn't Eat Gluten

Are you celiac, or just lesbian?

- Raechel Segal (ig: @poetryforfreebyrme)

To the Man Who, When Our Elevator Reached the Top Floor, Stayed Put and Pushed the Button for the Top Floor

I didn't say anything,
but it's true:
no one can prove
that God will hide forever

- D. Donna (poetry.daviddonna.com)

• Neologisms •

Newly-coined words to write about/use in your poem

- **Anxiety:** 1) Poetry about anxiety. 2) An anxiety measurement or evaluation system.
- **Claustrogomic:** Uncomfortably/overly surrounded by gnomes
- **Massachusification:** The process of becoming an asshole/masshole
- **Frumblecrumpet:** One who over-toasts crumpets, then complains about it
- **Octogonopus:** A group of eight octopuses
- **Flantastrophe:** Natural disaster involving flan
- **Firetology:** When you fire someone, but then want to apologize for doing it
- **Rotissitalatarian:** Rotating-chicken-based fascism
- **Burglarwarming:** Housewarming party for a house you just broke into
- **Foldplay:** 1) When you can't "fold" someone, but you're good at foreplay. 2) Playing the music of Coldplay for foreplay. 3) Using laundry for foreplay. 4) When you're really into origami.

- Kleiner, Sam Bucci, Michael F. Gill, Valerie Loveland, Ben Tolkin

• Writing Prompts •

- Write two truths and a lie, but in the form of a haiku. If desired, make it ambiguous which of the three lines is the lie. - Michael F. Gill
- Write a poem where every other line is something affectionate you would say to a pet, and all the other lines discuss a major misconception that people have had about you. - March Penn

• Haiku Exchange •

Grey Area

brain surgeon
cutting through thought itself
can't tell the tumors from the dreams

Pilgrimage

it feels like i've spent
the entire day traveling
to this warm blanket

Blinding

o unrelenting light of wanting
spare me
a moment in the dark

-Michael F. Gill

3 Fall Haiku

winded leaves
drift up in circles--
I drift too

held in the
crow's eyes: falling leaves
and regret

red leaf joins
her transformed siblings--
sidewalk home.

- Kleiner

• Anagrams • by Michael F. Gill

Using the context clues, unscramble the capitalized letters at the end of each sentence to answer each whimsical question. Each answer is two words long, and enumerations for the answer is given in parentheses.

Example: What poetic form
invented by Terrance Hayes
HELD OVEN LOGS? (6,6)
Answer: Golden Shovel

1. What common poetic term could make your BRAIN LEEK? (4,5)
2. What stressful rhythm has an IMPATIENT EMBRACE? (6,10)
3. What poetry venue features a BAGEL-TACO NUN? (6,6)
4. Which Massachusetts poet would trap you with a NEON SAX NET? (4,6)
5. What Italian form of poetry has a TRENCHANT PERSONA? (10,6)

• Poetography •

Cannon EOS rebel, 35MM.
Copper Hill, TN 2022

I've never liked a photo more than
its story.

This was taken after we trekked
through overgrown weeds and
climbed the rusty old boat. If I
didn't have good friends I wouldn't
have good photos, as in, I wouldn't
have been as willing to trespass for
the sake of a hobby. Sometimes
that leaves you in the middle of a
wasp nest telling your friends to
run and you'll catch up after you
get the picture you were after. But
we were all left unscathed, so
maybe it's for the better.

- Kat Anderson



If you Google any landmark in Boston next to the word “haunted” you will probably find evidence from a terrified tourist of the ghosts of Colonial soldiers or old townfolk walking the streets or whatever.

They are always tourists because to live in Boston is to see your dead every day without batting an eye.

To want to live in Boston is necromancy, or at least a romanticization of history-- to want to see beginnings with your own eyes, not a book or a screen.

At the Cantab, we like to say that the stairs in the back *are haunted* because standing on them is a fire hazard! And when you live in Boston calling on your ancestors is a lot easier than making a group of drunk strangers use reason.

The whole place is haunted, which is to say you can look in any direction and see evidence of a legacy that started before you were born, or ended before you could speak.

When I say you, I mean me & the other kids who didn't come here to flatten history into a new nitro cafe or microbrewery. We come here to make friends with someone else's dead. Sometimes to forget our own. Sometimes we don't know why.

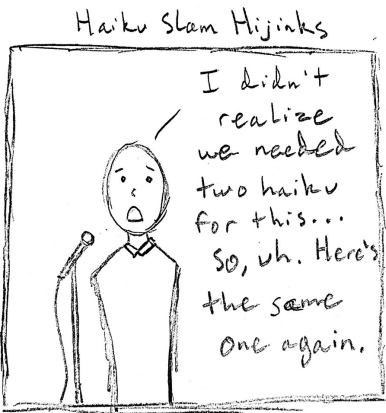
I am drawn to history because I want to see what other people have lived through. I want proof that not every life burns out forgotten-- I like a place with a good memory.

I want a place that might remember me. I do poems so somebody might remember me. I do poems looking for pasts that could've been mine, but I stay here for its present. To see all the remnants of our dead but to share it with the living.

This is really what kept me here: I thought I would be dead before I made it out of my hometown. I thought I would die before 20. Then 30. I'm going to be constantly surprised by outliving my own brain. But I get to come to a place and watch folks twice, three times my age talk about their survival. All of their trauma and grief. Folks that have been doing this since they were my age. What I'm saying is, I know now that I will be sharing my own survival when I am twice my age. What I'm saying is, if this city is still standing, I am going to survive.

• One Panel Poetry • by JIMMY

a scene from a recent cantab show



He won.

You and D and J all knew each other because you went to the same weekly open mic/slam poetry venue in the basement of a divebar. This was a dimly-lit, urinous, rundown place full of shouting and pheromones and terrible decisions (aesthetic, sexual, substance-related) that generated an intense camaraderie. It was a ritual space, roughly congruent to, and combining aspects of, Mithraic hierospeleic abattoirs and Tännhauser-style orgiastic Venusburgs and Irish Sidhe relativistic otherworlds of song and time-dilation. First you placated the guardian of the gate, by presenting them with a tablet inscribed with the time and place of your birth. If judged worthy, you were allowed access to the katabatic passage, the path of descent, the slope of the underworld. Down you went, to arrive at another door. Sometimes the door would already be open, in which case you had only to present the second guardian (whose face changed, sometimes thrice in a night) with your viaticum—their ritual portion, their three obols—in order to cross the boundary between worlds. Sometimes, however, the door would be closed, and through it you could hear a disembodied voice chanting. At such times it was best to wait in the passage, in the in-between, until you heard the ritual response to the end of the chant. Otherwise you risked interrupting the voice, thereby marking yourself unclean to the denizens, and opening your self to occult attack.

D and J got together in 2007, after Halloween night at the divebar, which you did not attend. You don't quite remember what you were doing instead. What you do remember is that you lent J your bedsheet, so that they could use it as a toga. They were going to the divebar as a Dead Poet. Sappho, possibly. This is a time in your friendship with J when they'd sometimes show up without warning on the landing of the fire escape outside your window, like a best friend from a late-nineties teen show. Sometimes they came by with a bottle of whiskey. Sometimes they came to borrow a sheet.

2009. D and J broke up, following an especially vicious and especially public fight for which you were not present. The way you first heard the story: J'd been onstage at a small music venue, rehearsing, for an event where J would be performing, in their hip-hop persona named after a David Foster Wallace character, a series of songs that included one about sushi that involved rhyming, in a Beastie Boys-esque sing-shout, *inari with unagi with wasabi*. Meanwhile, D was hanging around off-stage, bored and pissed-off. They'd been arguing before they got to the venue. So he ordered a drink and then another drink and then another, getting progressively drunker and drunker and ornerier and ornerier, J told you later, until suddenly he reached critical mass or stepped over some sort of phase-change boundary and jumped up on stage and slapped the mic stand to the floor and started shrieking *you cunt you fucking cunt* in J's face, spittle flying, which was the end, and *why do we have love*, J started weeping as they told you the story, *why do we even have fucking bodies at all*, J said in the dark, where they sat slouched on a beat-up green plastic lawn chair on the porch, *what the fuck*.

You didn't see D much for a while after that. You didn't really think of him much. He was mostly a friend-in-law. It wasn't like you'd ever made a real habit of going out of your way to hang out. A beer here, a beer there, hurried walks to the subway in the morning, to get to your day-jobs downtown. A shared line of coke, once.

Although that's not strictly true. When your children were born, D and J were still together, and they came to the hospital. There's a picture of D and J standing side by side, slim and tattooed and achingly cool, each with one of your newborn twins cradled in their arms; the first people not related to the twins by blood (and not a doctor or a nurse or a midwife) to hold them. Like, you remember thinking, hipster fairies, come to bless the children with gifts. Later they take you outside and light you the traditional cigar. *How does it feel*, D asks.

It's 2021. It's the night of the baby shower for J's wife, S. You and J down celebratory drinks of Scotch. You tell J that you are writing about D, about how slow you were to recognize that he was harming the people around him, and how sorry you are that it took you so long, that you stayed friends with him. J is your best friend. You were their man of honor in their wedding. J and D broke up twelve years ago. This is the first time that you've apologized to J—you, personally bringing it up, as opposed to nodding along and joining in with somebody else's apology. *Well, you know*, J says, slowly, *it took me a while, too*. Like—here they pause for a moment—*like, as somebody with my experiences and my background*—they pause again, and here you know that J is thinking about their father, who refuses to interact with any version of J who does not use female pronouns; who refused to attend J and S's wedding; who hasn't bothered to acknowledge that J is about to become a parent—*when he was yelling at me, and, like, throwing things at the wall behind me, I just sort of took that as evidence that there was something wrong with me, you know?* J hesitates, then says: *he used to talk shit about you guys. Like what*, you say. *Like*, J says, *this one time—he was ranting about how disgusting it was that you guys were having kids*.

• Rejected Cantab Theme Nights • by Jimmy & Michael F. Gill

- **Least Effective Insult Night** - Who on the open mic can roast a person the poorest? Bonus points for awkward silence!
- **The Anti-Poetry Slam** - Every poem has to have props, costumes, and musical accompaniment. Time penalty if your poem is under 3 minutes.
- **Help Send Dawn's Kids To A Taylor Swift Concert** - We all read poems about our exes in graphic detail. Entry is free if you put your name in a hat, but we draw one name mid-show and they must pay \$700 to cover the cost of the concert.
- **Mime Slam / Charades Show** - Everyone on the open mic is not allowed to say a word the entire night, but they can use gestures and charades. The audience tries to decipher what the poem is about by shouting out guesses.
- **Ship of Theseus Night** - We workshop one open mic poem throughout the night AKA the night where your poem is totally rewritten by all of us and no longer contains any of its original lines.

By March Penn (@pennapril on IG)

What's Your Queer Superpower?

Aries: They welcome swift and decisive deconstruction. In fact, Aries never sees the ruin of old ideas but rather the perpetual birth of new ones.

Taurus: They are strong role models for other LGBTQIA+ people, and they help pave the way for stable families and communities.

Gemini: They transform queer struggle into an affectionate hope while shape-shifting and blending identities in a powerful way.

Cancer: They are keepers and archivists of queer stories, and they pass on the wisdom from generation to generation.

Leo: They lead the art of self-expression in their queer community, and their presence is felt long after they leave the room.

Virgo: They are leaders who organize events for their queer community to help people meet each other. They may even serve as match-maker.

Libra: They welcome new styles and interpretations of what it means to be queer. They're great to consult with for a lesson in self-growth and brainstorming.

Scorpio: They are experts on how to seek your queer truth and won't sugar coat it or water it down.

Sagittarius: They know how to do first dates and are excellent at queer speed dating.

Capricorn: They are preparing to make the robots of the future as queer as possible.

Aquarius: Queer Theory— they wrote that. Ask them to translate it for you into more relatable terms.

Pisces: Their queer dreams become your desires as their energy swims through you like so many observations of nature..

• Gold Fronts outline windowsills •

By Briana Crockett (bybriana.com)

I brag as wide as a open palm daps
Slapped skin into leather pants
Or slang my smile as wide as hallie Berry in Baps
all wit her gold fronts
I ain't no front
I'm the flyest thang beating it's wangs
I'm the shiniest girl showing her fangs
Everybody gasps
How could the hood make a surviving thang
That bites like a rose
That swears in a cadence
That spits back a smile
Even the gaps in them show the roads and the dark alleyways she knows
But it show that gleam tho
It show that unbroken piano
Blackness ain't only good for producing, you know
Hoods ain't only for hiding the faces of the creativity factory
We be the sweet gold tooth cavity
The non factors that shouldn't know eye contact
We dare not enter from the kitchen
Or take the long way round
You will look
At the Sun
Until your eyes bubble and burst
Like
the gelly bobbles that rattle on the ends
Of little black children

At play

Some Cantabbers run the free Saturday morning 5K in JP. Join us!
<https://www.parkrun.us/jamaicapond/>