

THE PEN

sixth issue



CLEM
5/28/23

Summer 2023

THE PEN LITERARY MAGAZINE

Cover credit: Clementine Kovacs

STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kamtoya Okeke

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Camille Galvani

EDITORIAL TEAM

Camille Galvani

Jessie Moss

Izzy Oh

Marie-Celeste Pessey

Elynor Westrom

FACULTY ADVISOR

Shakir Ghazi

CONTENTS

January 17th Zoe Becker	6
Me Doing Intaglio Maeve Kelly-Mavretic	8
Time is a Relative Concept Tara Roberts	9
No Power Ethan Crawford	10
Winter in Little Italy Miles Felix	11
Oliver in SoHo Miles Felix	11
Sestina Katrina Tracy	12
Encased Crystel Mangaoil	13
Obscure Crystel Mangaoil	13
Onomatopoeia Violetta Rohr	14
Box Labeled Feminine Anonymous	15
Untitled 1 Dylan Donahue	16

ISSUE VI

Untitled 2 Dylan Donahue	16
Untitled 3 Dylan Donahue	17
Untitled 4 Dylan Donahue	17
Eye Contact Anonymous	18
Goofy Clown Planet Anton Tracy	19
Cry Anonymous	20
Prologue of Flesh Crystel Mangaoil	20
Untitled Isabela Cysne	21
Petey Anonymous	22
Problems of a Pedant Astrid Determan	23
Powerlines Clementine Kovacs	24
The Third Half Kamtoya Okeke	25

JANUARY 17TH

ZOE BECKER

The library lights hum above me to a syncopated beat. Book pages turn as students scribble notes in tandem from every table around me. All the sounds blend in with the sound of the rain that threatens to lull me into sleep.

I stare down at my phone. The fluorescent light radiating off the screen competes with the cold white spilling from the library ceiling.

My homepage is a screenshot of my Google calendar. I decided to put it there after watching a YouTube video called “How To Boost Your Productivity! 5 Life Hacks.”

It’s my calendar from last week though.

Under the date, January 17, 2023 is the little moon phase icon. It’s a full moon.

I suppose I won’t be able to see it. The storm outside is unrelenting and to be honest, that level of perseverance makes me roll my eyes.

I feel stares on my back. From the people who should be here.

The brunette annotating a calculus textbook, the blue eyed boy in a letterman jacket who just got back from a three hour sports practice and is already working on his essay.

I think they know.

They know I’m a waste of space and could be at home but stay here because it is safer. Not because I’m ever actually in danger, but because I need to be saved from myself. Because I cannot be the girl who drowns and home is just one long board walk.

I open Google on my phone. To seem busy. Maybe they’ll think I’m checking my email. Maybe they’ll think I’m looking at my grade on the paper that was due last week. They don’t know I haven’t turned it in yet. The volume of the task

of downloading and uploading my work is too much.

The haptics of my phone reverberating in my headphones, the feeling consumes me like the vibration you feel plucking at the strings of a harp. I haven’t touched my harp for almost a year. They don’t know that though.

I have nothing to Google, so I type the first thing I think of. January 17th;

I find a couple of things. A Wikipedia blurb that says, “January 17 is the 17th day of the year in the Gregorian calendar; 348 days remain until the end of the year.” 348 more days. 348 more days. I learn that January 17th is Muhammed Ali, Jim Carrey, Michelle Obama, and Zoey Deschanel’s birthday.

I smile a bit when I find out that Michelle Obama and Zoey Deschanel have the same birthday. There’s nothing like when worlds collide – because I can’t quite fathom that coincidence is fate. It’s like stars exploding but we never see stars in the city. Here, the night sky is black.

I scroll down as a ping interrupts me. It’s an automatic text from my school reminding us about an upcoming event. I swipe away.

I read that January 17th is hardware freedom day. I don’t know what that means. I don’t open a new tab to Google it.

I scroll further down because I don’t want to think of something productive to be doing. I find an article from USA News. It says that January 17th is the day most people abandon their New Year’s resolutions.

I get another text. Still not from anyone I know. “Hi Jordie! This is Krissa with the Dem-

ISSUE VI

ocratic party, as you know” I stop reading and swipe away. As I know, everything is terrible right now and they want my help and money but I won’t give them either.

Because.

I scroll through the USA News Article. It’s all sorts of jargon and statistics and something to do with data from fitness companies.

I think they’re wrong though. Because nobody else in the library has given up yet. It’s just me.

WINNER OF
THE PEN’S
SPRING WRITING
CONTEST

MAE VE
DOES
INTAGLIO

TIME IS A RELATIVE CONCEPT

TARA ROBERTS

I'm not who I used to be anymore.
I'm not the same person I was two years ago,
I'm not the same person I was two months ago,
I'm not the same person I was two weeks ago,
and frankly I'm not the same person I was two days ago,
two hours ago,
two minutes ago,
and maybe not even two seconds ago
I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing
but here's what I do know
I don't have the same style I had two years ago
and I don't have the same mentality I had two months ago
I don't have the same imminent worries I had two weeks ago
and I don't have the same priorities I had two days ago.
Two hours ago I was texting friends
Two minutes ago I was planning on writing this
And two seconds ago I was thinking about writing this very sentence.
It's funny how you can change so much in such a short amount of time.
They say time makes you stronger but I don't think that's true,
I think that it just makes you think more because you have more to think about
We grow and we change with the change of time to escape who we were
whether it makes us stronger or weaker
Some people change because they want to and some because they have to
But no matter how different you were in the past
you can never forget.
The shadows will still haunt you only giving you one choice,
Give in to the challenges of the past,
or rise to the challenges of the future.

ME DOING INTAGLIO (LEFT)

MAEVE KELLY –MAVRETIC

NO POWER

ETHAN CRAWFORD

“Hey, did y’all see that blackout last night?”

“No, I couldn’t see anything.”

WINTER IN LITTLE ITALY (TOP RIGHT)

OLIVER IN SOHO (BOTTOM RIGHT)

MILES FELIX



HIGHLAND GAME: SESTINA

KATRINA TRACY

Time slips away as we drive to pipe,
nervousness slicks the road.
All around us flared the heat
Grass rustling in the field
At those I know- I smile
To my future (ours) I walk

To the sign in tent we walk
surrounded by a far off pipe
Say my name with a nervous smile
To the competition area it is a long road
as I tune up in a field
my pipe grows sharper in the heat

My face flushing, flooding red with heat
In front of judges to and fro I walk
Tears slip out, I am alone in the field.
Marching, I shoulder the pipe.
I did not spend enough time on the road.
Though as I finish I smile.

Resolutely, through the tears I smile,
trudge to join the others escaping the heat
Sit down for a while, and ponder the further road
Soon we spring up, just to walk
Abandoning for now the pipe
Frolicking and snacking through the sunny field

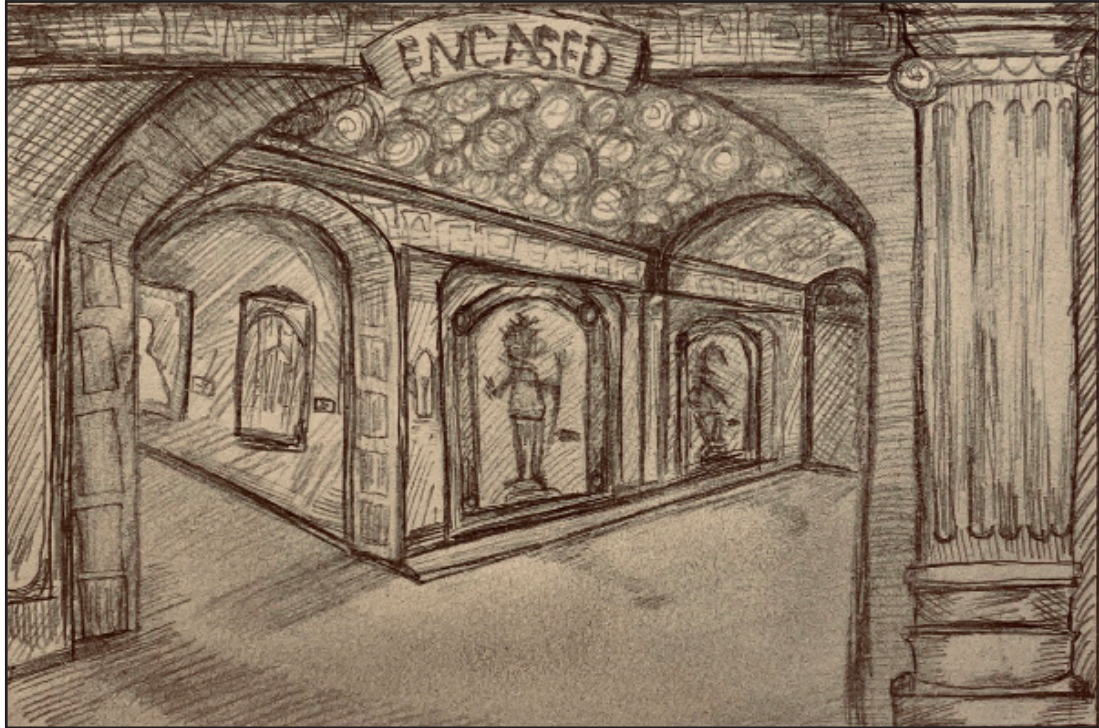
Yet with time cut short, we approach a field,
Face the circle and a smile
Drummers follow behind those of us with the pipe
We stand, impervious to the heat
Triumphant with heads held high we walk
We played well, it was worth the road

Through the dreary, sunny road
En masse the clans trumpet through the field
Lemonade and scotch eggs take a walk
Every kilt can spare a smile
Wee scottie dogs feel the heat
But for me it all comes down to the pipe

Down the road, I play the pipe
We ended up in a field, alone I smile
Together we walk, solid in the heat

OBSCURE & ENCASED

CRYSTEL MANGAOIL



ONOMATOPOEIA

VIOLETTA ROHR



BOX LABELED FEMININE

ANONYMOUS

When did I start comparing myself to others?

Was it dance class when I was four
in the floor to ceiling mirrors

As I started at myself in my little black leopard,
skin tight with 15 other little girls who I

thought were so much better than me

Or was it in fifth grade when someone told
me I had a double chin?

When did I decide I had to look a certain
way?

When was I made to feel like the body I was
born into was wrong?

Who told me to act a certain way
to like these things
and think these thoughts?

And why am I not the only one?

I watch as a girl examines herself in the bath-
room mirror.

Stands to the side and stands to the front

Zips the sweatshirt

Unzips the sweatshirt.

Notices I'm watching.

and rezip the sweatshirt.

Who controls the beauty standards?

Who tells them the standards for femininity?

Forces them to be smaller, quieter
sharp lines but soft curves?

Forces us to either conform or reject our fem-
inine sides

Wear this

Do that

Look this way
and you're a girl

But move outside of the box
and you are not a woman

you are a reject of society

Are they scared of us?

Scared enough that they don't
come near enough to bully us

They let us do it to ourselves

Let us be jealous of one another
as we pick ourselves apart

Examine every little piece of ourselves
even in passing reflections

Pause a second too long

to examine the new flaw we found that day

Who trapped us in a box

A box labeled feminine?

UNTITLED 1



DYLAN DONAHUE

UNTITLED 2



DYLAN DONAHUE

DYLAN DONAHUE



UNTITLED 3

DYLAN DONAHUE



UNTITLED 4

EYE CONTACT

ANONYMOUS

I avoid looking people in the eyes because I was taught to. It's a way of stepping down, of giving in, of avoiding, hiding, dying. Looking someone in the eyes is a challenge: it's asking for a fight, it's goading and encouraging, asking for attention. You know what I mean. You know the sort of person I'm talking about.

I am not that girl.

I will not look you in the eye, because it is polite, because it terrifies me. I am not playing hard to get. I am not playing anything; my life is not a game. I was taught to be the way I am by example: see how a wife lowers her eyes, how a woman walks down the street at night. Learn by example. Never lead.

It's not that I'm disinterested in the conversation, it's just that I'd rather not look at you while we spoke, or rather, I'd rather you didn't look at me. Eye contact feels like a violation. It's a trade-off: If you don't look at me, I won't look at you. Imagine a world where it was customary to show you were listening by turning your head to the side, putting your ears closer to their mouths, paying attention. I would work better in a world like that.

I don't quite work.

I force myself to, sometimes, even if it makes me wither on the inside, and struggle for those few seconds of staring. If you know me, you know I won't look at you when you're looking at me, that I listen best with my head tilted, eyes just over your shoulder. We laugh about it sometimes. It's not funny. But I laugh anyway.

Pretending works better than not pretending, anyway. Societal custom dictates that the response to how are you is I'm fine, and someone talking to you is reflected by looking at them, and all is well with the world. But in which world has anything been fine?

I come off as shy. Sometimes as un-opinionated. I'm neither. It just takes a lot of work to explain.

And you would stare the whole time I did.

GOOFY CLOWN PLANET

ANTON TRACY

WINNER OF THE PEN'S
SPRING ART CONTEST



CRY

ANONYMOUS

They always say that when angels cry the earth shakes
And if that is so then I must not be an angel
because when I cry nothing happens
I think I cry too much to be an angel
because if the earth shook whenever I cried
there would be never ending tremors.
But what does it mean for an angel to cry?
such a beautiful being in a world where beauty is pain
Wouldn't they always be crying?
Or do angels cry when the pain becomes too much?
What if angels are destined to a life of pain
and when they cry the earth shakes
because angels are finally off loading their tears?
The earth shakes with thunder
and rain pours down, fertilizing our soil
Causing flowers to bloom and trees to sprout.
It is the angels releasing the pain that is their beauty
and that is why the earth shakes
The earth shakes in joyful release

PROLOGUE OF FLESH

CRYSTEL MANGAOIL

After my mother died, his stories died with her. I doubt he ever realized that he was a father. Doubt that he ever realized that he had a son and a wife at home. Doubt he even found a home in us. Yet, my mother speaks of him as if his touch never left hers. Never left ours. Not that I care all too much for a man I've never met, nor conversed with. My earliest memory of him was nothing but a blur in the past that I'd rather not sharpen. Even without his presence, he pushed her into insanity. Which then led to her death. It was a decent funeral. The usual black suits and dresses circled her grave, weeping that they'd lost their 'light.' Bullshit.

My mother never left me with much fortune. She had spent most of her earnings from her late-night shifts drinking and indulging in all sorts of pleasures. She never looked at me directly, probably because she'd finally come to the senses that Father had left her, and all that was left of him is in her good-for-nothing son. A son that never bothered to answer to his own name. Feeling that if he ever answered to the name his Father had given him, he'd fully be his. He'd be the son of a killer.

UNTITLED

ISABELA CYSNE



PROBLEMS OF A PEDANT

ASTRID DETERMAN

I once had a quarrel with Hamish
That led us down separate paths
I told him his spelling was lame-ish
He called me a pain in the ass

I once had a fight with Ramsés
That ended in bittersweet tears
I told him it's "fewer" not "less"
Now I haven't seen him in years

It's hardly my fault I'm a smartass
He brought it upon himself
It would seem he never progressed past
The skill of an elf-on-the-shelf

I may not be Shakespeare or Hemingway
I may not be King or Voltaire
But when I endeavor to turn a phrase
At least I do turn it with care

PETEY

ANONYMOUS





POWER LINES

CLEMENTINE KOVACS

THE THIRD HALF

KAMTOYA OKEKE

I am incomprehensible. I am the third half, the 3d object in a 2d world, I am god. My face is the sun, and I drape the world in polka dots and stripes.

Imagine: nothing. And then—
Everything.
Me.

And a background of blue, in flat boxes, shadowless and pure. Seated in front of it, smaller, and sad, I looked upon it as it spoke. It said to me that it had waited a long time for my appearance, and though I did not yet know what it was, this brought me joy. I tried to turn, but could not, and instead folded over, 3d in a 4d world.

All the while, it watched—my father, my mother. I called it Space.

It said nothing for a long time, and for a longer time still, I lay in half, not broken, but wrong. Finally, I was brought upright, not by Space, but my twin, Time. Bigger than Space, and grander too, wrought in darkness and shadow, a thousand dimensions and all encompassing.

It was then I learned jealousy. For Space folded and stretched and aged for my twin, and spoke. You will be my end, it said, and then it was.

Left with a twin that ignored and taunted me in its silence, I taught myself to pull my pieces together to fold until I had height, until I could look Time in the eye. And I said to my twin, I

am tired of your silence, and your darkness. You must go.

I was stared at, and Time stretched, grew larger, more menacing, and I drew back, hesitating. My twin was no blood of mine, only an entity weaved in the same fabric of Space. We shared no common interests, no likeliness, no liking for the other. And I was afraid.

It was then, after ennui, I learned fear. The god to your God, afraid. Imagine.

But fear gave me anger, and anger gave me strength, and my strength became perspective. I learned to respect Time, but hold my twin out of reach. I grew, and became tall, wide, more. I gained infinite dimensions. In my knowledge, I became unknowable, while Time never changed, and hovered, endlessly mocking, eternally silent.

I imagined myself with another twin, a twin I would call Existence, that would always change, dependent on me, and matched by Time, in stalemate. And thus in my boredom, in my hope, I created you, my child, my children.

I did not know what I had wrought upon the world, when you were birthed from my mind, in a pleasure and violence I had never known before. When I looked upon your being, for the first time, it was only with curiosity. I knew not what to expect.

But I learned.

Swaddled in my skirts, drowned in the co-

THE PEN LITERARY MAGAZINE

lours draped over my hips, swishing around my legs, you grew. I was your mother, your father, your siblings and child. Created in my image, you became lonely, and sick to death of your own existence, and asked for more. You called me Creation and I made you the world.

You scared me more than anything, because for you I could withhold nothing. When you asked, I gave. I gave, and I gave, and I gave. And still, Time took. Took all except you.

You played with your blocks, DNA and bacteria, and built a castle, made a story for me. Told me of the creatures you had built, and in time even ossified Time became confounded, and followed in your footsteps, erasing as you wrote. Imagine my delight, my amazement as you put Time to shame, leaving it only to crouch in your shadow like the lesser beings you built.

But, still, you wanted more. Creation chained to your will, fed at your command, and Time desperate to ruin, and for the first time failing.

You wanted to have it all, so I gave you my purpose and you called me Nothing. I watched as you razed your worlds to the ground and built them anew, watched as you taunted Time, as your creations in turn learned to create, and you became unnecessary.

Thus, you learned jealousy.

In all of this, still Time ate your ideas hungrily, and your creations marched to its tune. Your power dwindled, syphoned away and spread thin, and you too could no longer bring yourself to destroy them. Not out of the same twisted attachment as mine, but because they did it themselves, violence on their world and each other. You watched as they grew, and you too became Nothing. We were left alone, for once, and only Time was left.

Now: I know peace.

THANK YOU

The Pen believes in the importance of creative expression throughout different mediums. Thank you Walls students, for your incredible art and writing submissions for the sixth issue of The Pen!

Special congratulations to Zoe Becker and Anton Tracy for winning the Pen's Summer 2023 Writing and Art Competition. Their works are featured on pages 6 and 19, respectively.

Congratulations as well to our Honorable Mentions: "Oliver in SoHo" by Miles Felix, "Problems of a Pedant" by Astrid Determan, and "The Third Half" by Kamtoya Okeke.

We'd like to thank all the wonderful members of the editorial staff, our sponsor Mr. Ghazi, and the Home and School Association.

We encourage any and all students to submit to the fall issue of The Pen.

Submissions are accepted year-round at swwthepen@gmail.com.

THE PEN LITERARY MAGAZINE

ISSUE VI