San Antonio Review

Passing Time

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Published on: Nov 06, 2019

Updated on: Jul 21, 2020

DOI: 10.21428/9b43cd98.4abf1688

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"Turkeys V," photograph, Elaine Verdill

He woke to the sound of dogs barking outside,
the faint glimmer of dusk barely stretched under the closed doorway.
He felt his way with fingertips searching for the nightstand light,
with the soft click and amber glow, he began to dress.

Pants, socks with mended holes in the heels,
T-shirt freshly scrubbed the night before,
hands still sore from the hot soapy water.
Shoes, scuffed, but shining like brand-new nonetheless, thanks to his homemade shoe polish.

The house remained quiet, mother and father gone or still asleep.
He peered into the refrigerator searching for signs of breakfast,
a lone egg shimmered in the translucent light.
He cracked, whipped, fried, and gulped it in one motion.

As he stepped outside, darkness still dominated the faint rays of sunlight.
He began his long trek, down the dark asphalt road that shone like black diamonds.
Left, right, straight for a time, cut through a small field of knee-high weeds,
passing sleepy houses as lights blinked them awake,
at last he came to the final stretch of road, over a bridge on a hill.

He crossed the wooden bridge, shoes clacking like a tap-dancer,
quick glances over the edge,

as he saw and heard the rush of green-brown muddy water below.
Over the hill at last,
the red brick building gleamed like a newly picked apple.
He peered through the windows, glancing at the face,
hands cupped around his eyes, the hour hand pointing to the six.
(An hour well before teachers and students would arrive.)
He sighed a contented sigh, happy his journey was over,
glad to be on time, yet wistful and wishing he had a clock at home
and knew how to tell time.

He sat and waited, just passing the time.

Margaret Cantú-Sánchez is an instructor of English at St. Mary's University where she teaches various composition and literature courses with a focus on Latinx theory and literature. She received her Ph.D. in English, with a specialization in Latino/a Literature from The University of Texas San Antonio. As an instructor at a Hispanic-serving institution, she strives to include multicultural texts in all courses, especially those within the core curriculum. Her publications include explorations of how to approach the teaching of Latinx literature and theory. Currently, she is working on a book focusing on the use of Gloria Anzaldúa's philosophies as interdisciplinary pedagogy.

A long-time photographer and poet, Elaine Verdill also paints with acrylics. Her images can be found in such publications as Calyx, A Journal of Art and Literature for Women; Foliate Oak Literary Magazine and The Sonder Review.