
Patchwork of Time

Calli Grimes

"Time is visible in all places. Clock towers, wrist-watches, church bells divide years into months, months into days, days into hours, hours into seconds, each increment of time marching after the other in perfect succession. And beyond any particular clock, a vast scaffold of time, stretching across the universe, lays down the law of time equally for all."

-Alan Lightman

Every time I was the seeker, I would close my eyes so tight that my head shuddered and my nose scrunched up, my tiny fingertips forcefully pushed against my sealed eyelids. Even before I pronounced the first number my peers would scatter like a handful of marbles hitting the ground, rocketing toward every angle. "One...two...three," I envisioned each number in my eyes, as I slowly worked my way towards the golden twenty. My eyes hidden, I counted the seconds, while everyone else in my world hid, and it was my job to find them.

The air was musty with the smell of aged, yellowed pages in old, worn books with their covers protected under a film rubbed off from the grease of fingertips. Like the pages, the lights were yellowed; not neon or halogen, but golden. The floor was glossy, and the reflection from the lights above exposed the scrapes and scuffs from years of travel. Flip-flops of hot August afternoons; the traditional, black home-

coming formal Stilettos; squeaky plastic snow boots; muddied football cleats; sweaty gym shoes, all their prints were there, preserved in marks of the floor. People ran down this hall, sliding and swinging, late into classrooms. People meandered down it...keeping up keen eyes surveying the premises for that special glance from that special someone. Some people cried, but many laughed. The hall was so long that it could make almost any noise sound like bellowing laughter.

No matter what happens, we can never live the same moment twice. And even if you walk down the same hall, or stare at the same lights, it is still impossible to step in the exact spot as before, with the exact force, and that exact mind. Every time you look at that light, you see it differently. It's brighter in spots, it makes you feel different, and it makes you think different thoughts. When I left Normal Community High School, I knew that I would never be able to return. And even if I did, I would walk with a different gait; my air would be altered from the last breath I took with me when I left those halls.

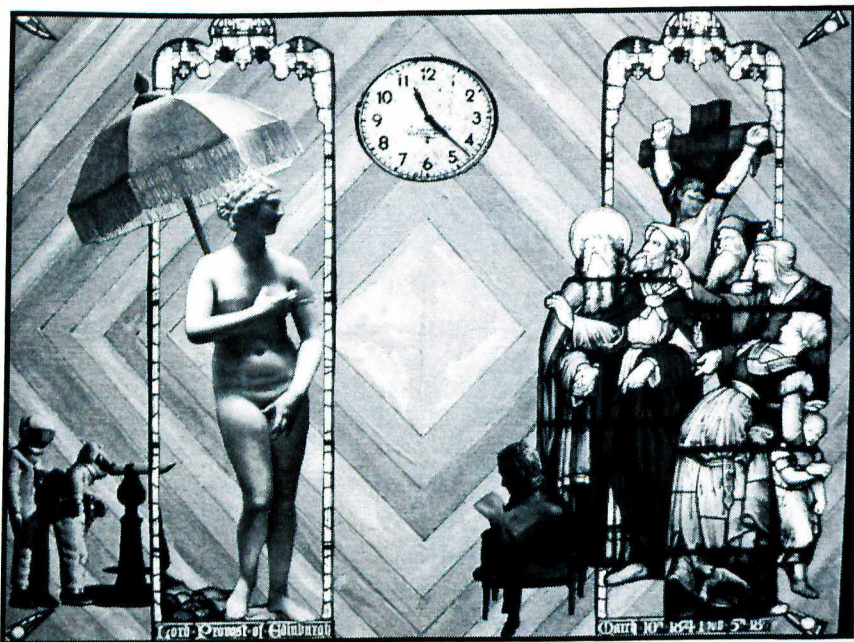
There were clocks everywhere: every classroom, cafeteria, gyms, bathrooms, offices, auditoriums, and even janitor closets. It was always the same clock, with a bulky round black lining and big numbers. The only color on them was the second hand, long, thin and red. It seemed like they were the frame of the school, the structure of which the walls were built upon with their constant pulse, thin and red, ticking the day away. The students would come with the stroke of eight and hurriedly rush through the open

doors at precisely 3:20 p.m. Like rats, trained at the tone of a bell.

That is just how we are; it is how we are made. In fact, there is an entire protein complex installed within each human, our circadian clocks tick with each moment while our natural alarms are set, and reset every day. Any distraction or alteration in these expected schedules can cause great repercussions. It has been found that if a biological clock is severely misdirected, it can be the initiating event toward the path of utter mania. How many mad scientists and great writers have denied their bodies alarms for sleep

Mary of Space and Time

Andrew Wright



to work deep into the night? Probably all of them, for their craft runs deeper than the physicality of their bodies...and under their delirious minds, suffering from exhaustion and malnutrition, they bring beauty into the world.

Perhaps one of the most important things to know about our own clockwork is that it is neither reliant nor free from the world around us. The sun holds no full power over what we decide about the day.

There are days when the sun, and time, really matter more than most days. Like the day that there was a slight, brittle chill in the air, but the bright sun made people forget their jackets. It is the kind of day that standing still causes shivers, but even a steady walk pumps the blood enough for comfort. If you were running on this day, even though it was well into November, it was like a mid-August afternoon, complete with burning cheeks, intense rays of sun, and constant sweat running rapidly off of foreheads. People were running on this day, in Bloomington, Indiana, with their school colors reflecting from their jerseys and numbers pinned on their chests. It was the Division One Collegiate Regional Race, and teams had gathered to fight for a chance to step up to the National Championship starting line, nine days following the fire of the gun.

The short grass of the golf course held fresh dew on its tips that the sun quickly soaked up. The entire course was constant rolling hills, weaving and flowing into each other. There were some trees, espe-

cially lining the sides of the course, where nervous racers sprinted to minutes before the start to relieve their bladder and anxiety. This was it. It was one of those days that could be the end of something great, or the beginning of something amazing, both of them looming in the air, like shadows of uncertainty, hanging over heads.

When the gun went off a surge of energy raced through the crowd as the runners fought for a good position. Scattered, tiny, electronic beeps speckled through the air as bystanders started their watches, monitoring each millisecond of the race. That was what this was all about...time. How fast could one person get from the white chalk line at the start, to the white chalk line at the finish? The lines were pretty much the same, but the stomach could easily distinguish the difference, from the surging electricity at the start, to the bottomless ease of the finish. From the beginning, all the big names pushed their way through the pack: Notre Dame, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio. Among these giants, one navy top seemed to protrude from the jumble of jerseys behind her, and white, bold letters on the front bore the name of Butler. A small division one, private university, Butler was thousands of students behind the others competing in this race. But that didn't matter to the leading jersey. Victoria Mitchell took a commanding lead, leaving the bigger schools to follow her trail. And by the end of the 6K race, she crossed the finish line with an astonishing 23 second victory over a pack of racers, sprinting for the second place finish.

"Time, Time, Time! What was her time?"

screamed the frantic man next to me. He wore a red zip-up track jacket and held a clip-board in his left hand, his right raised to his forehead shading his eyes from the brilliant sun. His pencil was shaking and the sun rays glared off of his glistening, hairless head, oozing with sweat. He was breathing heavily, as if he had been running beside her, dashing to the finish.

"20 minutes 37 seconds," an unknown voice yelled from deep within the crowd, lined and huddled on both sides of the path. What a moment: hundreds of people gathered, waiting with these seconds of their lives devoted to the proclamation of a measure of time. What a moment: to be the first across the line and no one will ever cross it the same way, with the same steps or thoughts. And for that single moment, she held victory in her own steps. She held it in her hands, and in her eyes.

I wonder if the people at the start of the race saw 20:37 when Victoria ran by. Even though time is sometimes measured by a machine around our wrists, it is still very much susceptible to human error. I'll bet anything that some watches read 20:35 or 20:38. The chronometer was created in the 1750's and sailors would use them on their ships for navigation. Time was guiding their way into the unknown world. Did Victoria's watch guide her in front of the rest, to the finish and the crown? Can time really direct us where to go?

The bus was big, bulky and stuffed with people nodding off as the bright lights flashed through the big windows; the lights flashed through the darkness of

nighttime. The people were fighting the tired tugging on their eyelids and the air. Fighting the sleep were the young with their big coats, stocking caps, and mittens hanging from their sleeves. Old men hung their heads as white hair peeked out by the corners of their old-time grey hats that matched the grey in their skin and eyes. The colors of the bus were bland with age from use, bland like the battered colors of the coats.

There had been no room to sit, so I held tight to the cold pole, my body knocking the middle-aged business man in front of me, and the young poet behind me. He was a poet of the streets, rhythmically bouncing his upper torso to the beat so loud that it blared through his headphones. To my left and to my right survived an entire river of human heads. Some were lower, resting like their bodies on the cold, city seats, and a few were taller, towering over all others, like kings looking down, judging their subjects. Through the uneven levels of hair, sat a man and a woman, resting. His smooth, mocha colored skin matched her hair perfectly. Her strands were almost lost on him as they leaned their heads on one another, eyes closed. Her head was lower, placed almost fully on his shoulder. His was tilted, embraced with the top of her scalp, his neck only slightly slanting. Together they rested, leaning on each other, leaning in more ways than one. Their eyes were both closed, hiding them from the adverse years and struggle of the insipid colors of the bus. Above them, hoisted at the front was a long, electronic sign, which kept flashing 11:08-11:08-11:08 in big, red, electronic letters. Spaces and lights made up each number.

Like the sign, each passenger flashed forward their own emotions of this night in Chicago...all of them with their own way to flash the yearning for slumber; longing for the world of dreams and fantasies to escape from the tepid colors of the bus, the florescent lights of the city, and that incessant flashing red, reminding them that time continued to move, and could never be stopped or altered. All they had was this constant, flashing red, leading them home.

When I drive home I always take the same road which is the epitome of mid-west America complete with flat land and walls of corn on both sides of the pavement. This time night had settled deep and dark, while the only light visible was the yellow of my headlights illuminating the road in front of me and the tiny green clock on my dashboard, nagging the corner of my eye, and at one glance it read 11:09. The road always makes me want to sing, and on this particular night "Don't Look Back in Anger" by Oasis was blaring and my voice bellowed with the music, trying to match the booming from my speakers. I was singing louder than usual, digging deep into my stomach muscles and pushing out air in long breaths. My body moving with the music and my knuckles were white from my clutch on the steering wheel. I am not sure why I had been so overtaken with vivacity. Maybe it was because my cross country team had just qualified for the national race that Monday. It might have been because this road was taking me to see the faces of those who walked with me down the long, golden high school hall – walked with me through late nights,

tears, parties, and discovery – with our laughter jumbled and preserved in the air above the aged floor. Perhaps it was because I would see the friend that causes my eyes to burn at the simple notion of saying goodbye even before we meet. I would see her in the Chicago Union Station the next morning. But regardless of whether it was the past or the future that set fire to my smile that night doesn't really matter. For I held that moment in my hands: loud music and fingers gripping the wheel, with the lights and the night, guiding me home.



Roots

Amanda Marks



Ocracoke Lighthouse

Joe Bargdill