

## TOM WAYMAN / Three Poems

### The Man Who Could See Time

The man who could see time  
claimed it has a blue tinge  
like a bruise, or meat beginning  
to go bad.

It's texture  
that of a bale of straw  
or a woven basket

except the intertwined stalks  
fill all space—not drifting,  
he said, but chockablock: the very stuff  
of everything, although  
permeable by each object,  
including ourselves,  
ordinarily perceived in three dimensions  
despite existing also in the fourth.

String theory, he noted, posits  
several other dimensions. He could not discern  
those.

He could see time  
but he was looking for the soul.

## The Woman Who Heard Time

wouldn't specify the sound  
she listened to. *Think tectonic plates,*  
she said, *when they collide, there's subduction,*  
*right? One plate slides under the other?*  
*The present, in a similar manner,*  
*continually rides over the future.*  
*Noise is vibration*  
*and how could this moment not generate a tremor*  
*as it pushes atop what was, until this second,*  
*the next moment? In string theory, too,*  
*the most elementary particles*  
*are vibrating threads. That can't be silent.*

*Regardless of source, vibration*  
*is motion in time. Thus time's clamor*  
*is time hearing itself.*  
*Time is the kitchen of the universe*  
*and you bet there's a racket*  
*where things are cooking. But the noise*  
*can't be compared: not to a pulse*  
*or faint tinnitus when the world is quiet.*  
*What does a bell sound like*  
*other than a bell?*

## If You're Not Free At Work, Where Are You Free?

Voices murmur concerning "a work/life balance"  
or reverberate with conviction about  
"our revered parliamentary heritage"  
or intone why municipal tax subsidies are needed  
to persuade someone to finance  
construction of a new mall. The words surge and drop and swell  
like the fluctuating clamor of the drunken dinner parties  
—symposiums—where the ebb and flow of wit  
created the concept of democracy,  
while around the guests  
the lash, shackles, branding iron  
ensured that grains and animals were raised  
and brought to market, the meal was concocted  
and served; locked windows and beatings  
that resulted in broken limbs and teeth, permanent hearing loss  
meant grapes were harvested, wine fermented,  
bedchambers readied. Days, years of hopeless sweat,  
the shattering of families  
caused fresh flowers to be grown, cut,  
arranged amid the company in vases  
other slaves threw on wheels slick with wet mud  
—flowers also placed  
along the Senate's benches  
in preparation for the next debate.