

## Tying Bean Strings / Robert Morgan

Hoyt Mountain rose cool over its abutments  
as we worked away from the creek,  
hanging not clothes but threads every  
foot on the half-mile line. The clods  
seemed sharp as broken glass.  
One hand noosed the rough jute  
to the wire like filaments the beans  
would run and light with leaves, while  
the other tied the lower end to twine  
we'd later nail at the ground.  
Our weft would trap the vines and  
lead them straight at the noon  
sun. Sweat bees dug and stung.  
The lint of hemp and barky lumps  
stuck to our sweat, rashed sunburned  
shoulders. Wind took the finished rows like  
hoisted sails and the field cruised  
under its cloth far from harvest. I cooled  
my feet in the sand near the creek.  
By evening rabbits would cut loose a few panels  
as they came out to feed on the young sprouts  
and the spans would blow free as gossamer  
in the night breeze, evade the grasping runners.  
Next morning we'd find the strings tangled  
on splintery poles and unravelling like yarn  
in the dew, ends swollen  
like brushes from wiping the clods.

## Take Yourself Back / Diane Wald

Please keep these comments in sequence. I have to move  
by the end of next week: the fact that time grows shorter  
is just another imperative I can resent. Take yourself back  
to whatever you were doing this date in 1953. My brother  
hadn't been born long. I was starting school. His face

was something I'd once flail with a hairbrush, later something I wanted to kiss. Someone said, "Don't you kiss your brother goodbye?" and I was afraid that the past was coiling too quickly, felt it around my neck.

I am trying to alert you to a slippery fact: that every night passes once of course, but you can usually choose where to sleep. Try that chair in the spare room. It may still be very lonely there, but you will recall tonight quite clearly then, and the sequence of surrounding dreams. If I calculate correctly sixty times three-sixty-five brings me well over twenty thousand, that many nights. I would like to remember a very great deal: even a short life has length, a short life, backwards.

## Circolo Della Caccia / Peter Davison

*(for Douglas Allanbrook)*

Italian butchers love the shooting season.  
It lasts at least six months, some places longer.  
Thrushes, larks, and other speckled singers  
hang up to ripen, dangling by their bloody  
beaks, eyes glassy, feather coats bedraggled.  
Any old bird who makes it through the season  
has lasted out a war—the hunters number  
twice any army Italy has mustered—  
and this produces natural selection  
for songlessness or silence in the woods.  
Just scuff your shoe on any gravel walk  
and thickets are vacated on the instant  
with a desperate scramble and a chirped alarm.  
Then hours go by without a glimpse of a bird,  
just distant songs of sex and altercations.  
You wonder why the hunters mightn't shoot  
the swallows that patrol the city rivers  
hell-bent as bats, or bag the swifts that twitter  
above your head at cocktails on the terrace.  
Though songbirds of open spaces, fields, and mountains