

for the summer at me, the yield from  
digging holes and tying strings,  
lugging hampers in the mud with heat rash,  
stings and blisters. In my room I'd sit  
with dirty feet and sweat-ripe skin  
on the clean sheets and unwad the damp bills  
to press in stacks like pages of a ledger  
of the hot days, the green and gray ink  
more lasting than sunburn or callouses,  
and telling of my labor with a one-eyed  
lit pyramid. I collated  
and banded the leaves in bundles  
and counted out the coins like next year's  
seeds into the old tobacco pouch.  
That consecrated metal was an abstract  
drawn off the soil and sweat and  
cast into a jewelry of value.  
I meant those struck emblems to act  
as compact fuel, like nuclear pellets,  
to power my long excursion out of the sun  
and beyond the ridges, and put  
them all in a paper box above the closet  
door to trade later, the young summers  
become signs to be translated  
again into paper, ink and paper,  
in the cool timeless leisure I saw  
while washing my feet on the back steps  
and spitting melon seeds  
into the cricket haunted dark.

## Walnutry / Robert Morgan

When walnuts grew in stands like oak  
or hickory in some mountain coves  
and the timber market lay  
over trails and feisty creeks,  
some cut their big nut groves the same  
as pine, and sawed out planks for

porches, barns, even hogpens.  
With never stain nor varnish they  
took the weather for a century,  
growing stronger, like cement.  
The seasoning took twenty years.  
They didn't need the meat as  
long as there were chestnuts.  
Where the cows had rubbed  
Their stalls shone like mirrors.

Rainy Sundays in late fall my father  
took the egg basket out to the walnut  
in the chicken lot and gathered  
half a bushel. The hull ink  
tanned his palms.  
Inside he set them on the hearth  
and peeled the sooty rinds off  
into the fire. They  
censed the house with raw  
fumes. He sat there all afternoon  
on the warm rock cracking with  
his mason's hammer, holding the shells  
on end so they split clean,  
working careful as a sculptor  
to get the little figures of meat  
intact from their molds,  
and dealt the pieces to Sister  
and me for hours while rain  
flared on the windows and burst in the fire  
compacting brighter on the diet  
of shells. That night I'd throw up  
the oily seeds gluttoned all evening,  
and remember again the ground  
under the big walnut  
purged bare by the drip  
and dissolution of  
the tree's powerful bile.