

# Granite and Grass

Donald Hall

*Ragged Mountain Spirits,*  
by Christopher Hill Morse, 1999.



1

On Ragged Mountain birches twist from rifts in granite.  
Great ledges show gray through sugarbush. Brown bears  
doze all winter under granite outcroppings or in cellarholes  
the first settlers walled with fieldstone.

Granite markers recline in high abandoned graveyards.

Although split by frost or dynamite, granite is unaltered;  
earthquakes tumble boulders across meadows; glaciers  
carry pebbles with them as they grind south  
and melt north, scooping lakes for the Penacook's trout.  
Stone bulks, reflects sunlight, bears snow, and persists.

When highway-markers cut through a granite hill, scoring  
deep trench-sides with vertical drillings, they leave behind  
glittering sculptures, monuments to the granite state  
of nature, emblems of permanence  
that we worship in daily disease, and discover in stone.

2

But when we climb Ragged Mountain past cordwood stumpage,  
over rocks of a dry creekbed, in company of young hemlock,  
only granite remains unkind. Uprising in summer, in woods  
and high pastures, our sister the fern breathes, trembles,  
and alters, delicate fronds outspread and separate.  
The fox pausing for scent cuts holes in hoarfrost.

Quail scream in the fisher's jaw; then the fisher dotes.  
The coy-dog howls, raising puppies that breed more puppies  
to rip the throats of rickety deer in March.  
The moose's antlers extend, defending his wife for a season.

Mother-and-father grass lifts in the forsaken meadow,  
grows tall under sun and rain, uncut, turns yellow,  
sheds seeds, and under assault of snow relents; in May  
green generates again. When the bear dies, bees construct  
honey from nectar of cinquefoil growing through rib bones.

3

Ragged Mountain was granite before Adam divided.  
Grass lives because it dies. If weary of discord  
we gaze heavenward through the same eye that looks at us,  
vision makes light of contradiction:  
Granite is grass in the holy meadow of the soul's repose.

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*Donald Hall is the poet laureate of New Hampshire. His work reflects  
the natural and cultural landscape of the state.*

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