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Deferring to the Assertion of National Security: The Creation of a National Security Exemption Under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

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Hanging Rock

*William Keener**

Stranded by the glacial melt,
an oblique block, fifty tons,
canted, tipped, not yet slipped
into the abyss, in mid-morning
stretch, practicing poses:
naked warrior, reclining hero,
postures altered by the angle
of light, its routine of ancient
praise, a thousand thousand
salutations to the sun:
downward rock, followed by
lord mountain pose, a balanced
erratic—Sierra granite paused
between long geologic breaths,
holding asanas for centuries.
Yoga perfected by stone.

* William Keener (J.D. 1977, University of California, Hastings College of the Law) practices environmental law in San Francisco.

Gold Leaf on Granite¹

William Keener

Light
on this vast Sierra scarp
is an easy path to reverence.
Yes, the flat Punjabi plain
has its own holy shrine,
the gleaming Gurudwara
that dazzles devotees
with walls of hand-struck gold.
And balanced on
a Burmese mountain top
is a great rock, held
by a strand of Buddha's hair.
Pilgrims climb for miles
to illuminate
their sacred boulder
in lavish golden paint.

We face east on Glacier Point.
The sun reaches out
with its last glinting hammer
to beat gold leaf on granite—
the incendiary mica,
the crystalline quartz, ablaze.
As far as our eyes can see,
the world gone gold.
How malleable our lives,
to let sight ordain the temples
we defend, true believers
reading from a gospel
of earthly light.

1. "Gold Leaf on Granite" was first published in *Camas: Nature of the West* (U. of Montana).

Black Feathers, White Bones²

William Keener

Barren tundra lay beyond
the groves of stunted spruce.
In the scant Alaskan light,
we drove no farther north
than a snowdrift where ravens
stripped the carcass of a moose.
They argued, picking the last bits
of frozen flesh from its ribs.
The Athabaskan know this bird
as Grandfather, whose voice
is harsh, whose speech is wise.
Only ravens stay the winter,
splitting the air like black axes,
their shadows sharp against
the drift of snow and grip of ice
where the ragged hoofprints end.
Yet ravens are a toothless tribe,
and never enter skeletons as we
and wolves and wolverines
have always done, cracking bones
to melt marrow on our tongues.
How vast their domain would be,
the ravens think, if they could
sink the white hatchets of teeth.

2. "Black Feathers, White Bones" was first published in *Alehouse*.

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