



ALVARO CARDONA-HINE

Collected Poems

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:

EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

Collected Poems

Alvaro Cardona-Hine

A Critical Reading Edition

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Alvaro Cardona-Hine in Truchas, New Mexico.

Editorial Note

This edition is transcribed from the complete original scans of *The Gathering Wave* (1961) and *The Flesh of Utopia* (1965). It retains source order, stanza structure, Roman-numeral subdivisions, dedications, meaningful spacing, and shaped indents. Narrow-page hanging wraps are rejoined. The earlier nine-page selected PDF is not used as a textual authority.

Contents

Archival Images	I
Editorial Note	2
Introduction	6
The Gathering Wave	8
<i>Preface to The Gathering Wave</i>	9
<i>[looking at the moon]</i>	11
<i>[the moonlight involved]</i>	12
<i>[he's come to the zoo]</i>	13
<i>[this is the season]</i>	14
<i>[it rains how it rains]</i>	15
<i>[the moss-covered rock]</i>	16
<i>[you and your life and]</i>	17
<i>[the old log ablaze]</i>	18
<i>[the plum tree in bloom]</i>	19
<i>[you hear frogs like that]</i>	20
<i>[only a cricket knows]</i>	21
<i>[the summer orchard]</i>	23
<i>[caressing at once]</i>	24
<i>[the swollen river]</i>	25
<i>[a house with a will]</i>	26
<i>[the fork on the road]</i>	27
<i>[chirimoya seeds]</i>	28
<i>[she can no longer]</i>	29
<i>[forcing the bamboo]</i>	30
<i>[the gathering wave]</i>	31
<i>[her golden urine]</i>	32
<i>[—loves-me—]</i>	33
<i>[mushrooms and ladies]</i>	34
<i>[peeling tangerines]</i>	35
<i>[the French horn buried]</i>	36

<i>[tangerines music]</i>	37
<i>[a few tangerines]</i>	38
<i>[the soil is so black]</i>	39
<i>[I hear the crickets]</i>	41
<i>[crickets crickets cri-]</i>	42
<i>[the moon in the sky]</i>	43
<i>[the white rooster dreams]</i>	44
<i>[the cry of the bird]</i>	45
<i>[I don't know the wind]</i>	46
<i>[the old woman died]</i>	47
<i>[the grave digger blinks]</i>	48
<i>[daytime flowers here]</i>	49
<i>[I hug the children]</i>	50
<i>[the village idiot]</i>	51
<i>[the way that you smiled]</i>	52
<i>[the cold blackberries]</i>	53
<i>[my grandmother's tomb]</i>	54
<i>[fog introducing]</i>	56
<i>[a neighbor weeping?]</i>	57
<i>[his very first snow]</i>	58
<i>[the snow patiently]</i>	59
<i>[poinsettias and wind]</i>	60
<i>[Christmas is like that]</i>	61

The Flesh of Utopia 62

<i>Acknowledgments to The Flesh of Utopia</i>	63
<i>Childhood</i>	64
<i>Agapito</i>	65
<i>The Old House</i>	66
<i>In Michoacan</i>	68
<i>Oxen Never Run</i>	69
<i>Cores</i>	70
<i>Coming</i>	71
<i>[This friendship that flickered]</i>	72
<i>Of the Absent Forever</i>	73

<i>Weather Cock</i>	79
<i>Dry Lucifer</i>	80
<i>Octagonal Portrait</i>	81
<i>Medlars</i>	82
<i>About the Barn That Is Round</i>	83
<i>Insurgent Laughter</i>	84
<i>Four Small Mexican Poems</i>	85
<i>Me and Chagall</i>	87
<i>Early Morning Childhood</i>	90
<i>Inundation</i>	92
<i>The Flesh of Utopia</i>	93
<i>Blood's Aftermath</i>	111
<i>Rush Hour</i>	112
<i>Homage to García Lorca</i>	113
<i>Three Costa Rican Poems</i>	114
<i>The Freedom</i>	116
<i>Desires</i>	118
<i>Sweet Terrorist</i>	119
<i>Three Poems of Early Compass</i>	120
<i>South Main</i>	123
<i>Vindication</i>	124
<i>Thirty Years</i>	126
<i>My Breath</i>	127

Bibliography

128

Introduction

Alvaro Cardona-Hine arrived in Los Angeles at thirteen, learned English, studied music, and found a literary community among the poets who gathered around Coastlines, Thomas McGrath, and the Incognoscenti workshop. *The Gathering Wave* (1961), one of the earliest American books devoted entirely to English-language haiku, compresses tropical childhood and California perception into forty-eight poems accompanied by his drawings. *The Flesh of Utopia* (1965) expands into long, spatially restless sequences of memory, politics, surreal humor, and friendship. This edition presents both early books complete from their source scans, restoring lineation, stanza breaks, dedications, and shaped indents while distinguishing physical page wraps from authorial form.

Biography

Alvaro Cardona-Hine was born in San José, Costa Rica, on October 15, 1926. Poetry and storytelling ran through his paternal family: his own later account named his grandfather, an uncle, an older brother, and his father as precedents. In 1939 his father was appointed Costa Rican consul in San Diego, but the family settled in Los Angeles. Cardona-Hine entered an English-speaking school system at thirteen, completed high school in Los Angeles, and attended Los Angeles City College, where scientific study gave way to music and composition.

He married young and traveled with his first wife to Mexico to study composition with Blas Galindo. Family circumstances brought them back to the United States, first to Washington and then to Los Angeles. While music temporarily receded, Cardona-Hine read Asian philosophy and poetry, Federico García Lorca, and other Spanish-language writers. He began writing poetry in 1945 and turned seriously to haiku after reading Alan Watts in 1957. In Los Angeles he joined Gene Frumkin, Stanley Kiesel, Keith Gunderson, and Fred Franklyn in the Incognoscenti, a workshop that met weekly for years. Thomas McGrath became an early advocate and helped place his first two books with Alan Swallow.

The Gathering Wave: Forty-eight Haiku with Drawings appeared in 1961. Its seasonal architecture and the author's own drawings made it an early landmark in the development of English-language haiku. *The Flesh of Utopia*

followed in 1965, gathering work first printed in *Coastlines*, *Dion*, *Trace*, *Crazy Horse*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Mainstream*, and other little magazines and anthologies. The books belong to Cardona-Hine's Los Angeles period, when his writing moved between concise visual poems and expansive sequences dedicated to friends in the city's independent poetry networks.

In the late 1960s Cardona-Hine began painting, initially to supplement his income after leaving his first marriage. He had worked for nine years in insurance and later found more congenial employment editing magazines and writing articles and stories. He inherited Gene Frumkin's private poetry workshop, where he met the poet and painter Barbara McCauley, his second wife. Painting became a major parallel career, with large canvases, one-person exhibitions, and work entering collections in the United States and abroad. His compositions were performed in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Washington, New York, Santa Fe, and by the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra.

Cardona-Hine and McCauley eventually moved to New Mexico and in 1988 opened the Cardona-Hine Gallery in Truchas, representing and selling their own work outside the conventional gallery system. He continued publishing poetry, fiction, memoir, and translation, including *Agapito*, *Words on Paper*, *A History of Light*, *Thirteen Tangos for Stravinsky*, *Spring Has Come*, *Sucursal de Estrella*, *The Song Less/on*, and *Phantom Buddha*. His honors included a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Bush Foundation Fellowship, a Minnesota State Arts Board grant, and the 2015 New Mexico Literary Arts Gratitude Award. A lifelong student of Zen, he was named an ordained lay sensei by Prabhassa Dharma Roshi. He died at home in Truchas on August 28, 2016, with his family and Barbara McCauley beside him.

The Gathering Wave

Stage I | Haiku, drawing, and Los Angeles, 1961

The complete sequence of forty-eight haiku, arranged by season.

Preface

At one time, the sonnet conquered the various tongues of Europe and became a form indigenous to all. Perhaps today, when the world has shrunk, we can begin to use the haiku as a form representative of our feelings and attitudes without too uncomfortable a posture.

The haiku is a Japanese form consisting of seventeen syllables arranged in three lines: 5-7-5. Other than that, the poem must qualify as the serene fusion of disparate elements. It would not be too far-fetched to state that the amalgamation of such elements has been the object of a great deal of world poetry. But the precise way that haiku go about it would best be understood in light of Japanese molds and the literature which has sprung up around them. Excellent sources are R. H. Blyth's four-volume anthology of haiku, and the writings of Alan Watts.

It was the contact with Mr. Watts' work back in 1957 which prompted me to use this style beginning in 1958. Prior to that, I had been operating in the vicinity of the Spanish copla, or popular quatrain, and this laid the groundwork for the compression necessary in haiku. And yet, paradoxically, haiku are, to me, very long poems, not by the number of words but by virtue of their climate. By being so enormously complete, so inherently peaceful, they can satisfy ultimate values.

This book is arranged seasonally, beginning with Spring (the drawings attempting a thematic ostinato to its general mood). Some poems reflect the world of my childhood, in the tropics; others indicate a northern climate, where I witnessed another life. In *The Gathering Wave*, I have collected some of the meaningful nodes of my life.—ACH

Spring

*From *The Gathering Wave**

[looking at the moon]

looking at the moon
suddenly remembering
to look at the moon

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the moonlight involved]

the moonlight involved
in the paleness of the rose
darkens the cypress

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[he's come to the zoo]

he's come to the zoo
hoping to feed blue flowers
to the antelope

First published in The Gathering Wave. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[this is the season]

this is the season
when chrysanthemums return
your gift of water

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[it rains how it rains]

it rains how it rains
birds of the mountain cower
in a few places

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the moss-covered rock]

the moss-covered rock
on either side endlessly
much endless water

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[you and your life and]

you and your life and
all the clean clothes of my heart
waving in the breeze

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the old log ablaze]

the old log ablaze
with a tongue-tied jettison
of orange mushrooms

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the plum tree in bloom]

the plum tree in bloom
five thousand miles of childhood
veiled at its wedding

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[you hear frogs like that]

you hear frogs like that
in bucket after bucket
of utter darkness

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[only a cricket knows]

only a cricket knows
how to saw the night in half
half rooster half star

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

Summer

*From *The Gathering Wave**

[the summer orchard]

the summer orchard
a turtledove calls softly
from its green tunnels

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[caressing at once]

caressing at once
both bull and black horizon
the summer lightning

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the swollen river]

the swollen river
drowns out the afternoon's raid
on his loquat trees

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[a house with a will]

a house with a will
and the ripples of the brook
inside the onion

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the fork on the road]

the fork on the road
precipitated by this
chirimoya tree

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[chirimoya seeds]

chirimoya seeds
in their bedding of white flesh
so dark so playful

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[she can no longer]

she can no longer
keep her two feet on the ground
ringing that school bell

First published in The Gathering Wave. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[forcing the bamboo]

forcing the bamboo
to throw them in the water
the naked schoolboys

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the gathering wave]

the gathering wave
sandpipers venturing in
among the children

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[her golden urine]

her golden urine
all over the squash flowers
the runaway goat

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[—loves-me—]

—loves-me—

loves-me-not

there are more loves than daisies

more daisies than loves

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[mushrooms and ladies]

mushrooms and ladies
dangerous varieties
are beautiful too

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[peeling tangerines]

peeling tangerines
somehow all that I care for
here in the fragrance

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the French horn buried]

the French horn buried
in its case of blue velvet
tangerines laughter

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[tangerines music]

tangerines music
a great many memories
and a few children

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[a few tangerines]

a few tangerines
and the world's population
just about doubled

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the soil is so black]

the soil is so black
and the leaf so very green
that the bloom is red

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

Autumn

*From *The Gathering Wave**

[I hear the crickets]

I hear the crickets
but if the wind were to change
I'd sit in darkness

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[crickets crickets cri-]

crickets crickets cri-
ckets crickets crickets crickets
crickets crickets cri

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the moon in the sky]

the moon in the sky
still the dandelion seed
lands in the water

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the white rooster dreams]

the white rooster dreams
that the loveliest hen of all
is out of his reach

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the cry of the bird]

the cry of the bird
plunges into the water
for an endless drink

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[I don't know the wind]

I don't know the wind
if it cares more for laughter
or for oblivion

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the old woman died]

the old woman died
in her proud little garden
lettuce goes to seed

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the grave digger blinks]

the grave digger blinks
high winds carry the spider
over the ocean

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[daytime flowers here]

daytime flowers here
come I'll race you down the hill
night time flowers

First published in The Gathering Wave. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[I hug the children]

I hug the children
and one in the bunch laughs out
hearing my heart beat

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the village idiot]

the village idiot
on the crests of the cypress
she's missed her supper

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the way that you smiled]

the way that you smiled
told me you had been eating
my sunflower seeds

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the cold blackberries]

the cold blackberries
hung just above the water
oh the swift river

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[my grandmother's tomb]

my grandmother's tomb
on a day of small white clouds
and eternity

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

Winter

*From *The Gathering Wave**

[fog introducing]

fog introducing
the grizzly bear to the stag
in an even voice

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[a neighbor weeping?]

a neighbor weeping?
leaving my bed to make sure
the corn on my foot

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[his very first snow]

his very first snow
our cat stock-still in the yard
arranging his thoughts

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[the snow patiently]

the snow patiently
and the wind with a slight tug
conversing with me

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[poinsettias and wind]

poinsettias and wind
and a wall and the night and
wind and poinsettias

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

[Christmas is like that]

Christmas is like that
a little louder echo
amid the brightness

First published in *The Gathering Wave*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.

The Flesh of Utopia

Stage II | The long poem and little-magazine network, 1965

The complete second book in source order.

Acknowledgments

Some of these poems appeared in the following magazines and anthologies: Coastlines, Dion, Trace, Crazy Horse, The Galley Sail Review, Renaissance, Choice, Prairie Schooner, Mainstream, Quicksilver, The New Orlando Poetry Anthology, Seasons of Poetry, Burning Water, and Poetry Review (Tampa).

Childhood

I know you, I live you, oh shadow
softly tinged with ritual
and violence,—do I not see
that wild demented girl rolling
on the crests of the cypress?
Do I not hear again the whispered hiding
of liquor from the law?
Do I not cringe once more from the lights
flickering at midnight?

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Agapito

Agapito, man of the soil, man
of the green instinctive triumphs...
—bootlegger, you knew the joys
and powerful hungers, worked
and begat

and showed me how
the birds are caught, and how
the midnight pulls the rabbits to the patch;
you were my father's peon when it pleased you, otherwise
you hid among the mountains where the linnets sing
and waited till the search was over, laughing
laughing and yearning.

Shame on you, Agapito!

Go straight, Agapito!

There was something like an embrace in the air about you
and it was very simple to be near you,
great peasant whose children abound
in the hills of my country!

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

The Old House

I

Down hill, near the river,
humid and kind,
leaned my childhood home
against the next.

I loved its quiet depth,
its ferns and geraniums
where an ancient turtle slept
with silent bellow.

In the perennial twilight
of the many rooms
one could always find
the solid servants of God

but...it was certain
to rain each afternoon
and who could ascertain his place
while the furniture of Heaven was being moved?

Our murmur would navigate
through the unending rosary
till the storm was past
or it was time for dinner.

2

The block of ice
the Company left each morning
was some kind of water
that held its breath.

The octagonal table
for a good game of poker
creaked each time
I wrote a word.

The dining room
had a gong

with Chinese characters
and a doleful sound,
it could never herald
more than rice or beans
though it could assemble
all my loved

and these were many,
mostly gone now,
mostly assembled
elsewhere.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

In Michoacan

Walking, long and long,
I reach a garden
of bougainvillea and violets
around a pool
that cuts the elbows of the sun

An old, brown church looks down
upon this truer heaven with slight bend
while a statue of Cervantes to my left,
unmoving and responsible in bronze,
hums in madness with the bells.

(...I write what I can
unlike the waters of the fountain,
on whatever they can)

The bellies of the virgins rust with rest
while saints of baroque dissipation,
with merely a hand,
turn the girls of Morelia into swallows.—

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Oxen Never Run

A field of unkept hay
with all the reverence of India
sprawling by.
Cattle. And the sharp haloes.

Clusters of cypress and pine
give themselves away.
Am I coming or going?

A dot in the sky
puts on Alps on the soul...
airs of the thinnest air
between morning, noon, and night.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Cores

The plows are asking for the milk
of the earth's torrential udder,
each man that tilts the fields
works the rough immaculate conception.

The winds are moving
Knee-deep in twilight,
in the coral silence of pines.

Each man that is wanted
lives intact in the heart,
awkward in the manner,
everafter in the soul.

Each soul that is wanted
yields the branches of her smile
to the whirlwind of a child.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Coming

within the cloud is the rose of the rock,
the murmuring plow.

Horizontal in the rock is the hour of columns
in the knowledge and the oven, in the wind that is coming,
a heated jungle of lilies,
a miraculous tiger of leaping honeys.

Distant roams the lemon cat unsleeping love
with the abandon of grasses,
dreams of maidenhair
burn between the hillstars,
His touch floats on the surface of the plain,
his wail reaches the waters of her bed.

Distant roams the sound of the bell's rough metal,
it has sunk in the fog the hooves of her rhythm!
It has reached the cooper of the moon!

The snake is held low by nothing but its weight
but our kisses are buoyant by their glory,
by the atlantic of their violet and the rain that plows the
earth.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

[This friendship that flickered]

This friendship that flickered
wildly and eternally,

this love that went loving
so deeply and so quickly

no word can reach,
no music compare, At best

the light of day explains it
when it's gone.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Of the Absent Forever

(Homage to Thomas Wolfe)

Comparable alone to blue dimension,
what are you but a harvest of naked,
erstwhile journeys?

I

Permanence in Flight

Golden in the wheat in dark October.
Golden and defiant in the tossing ears of the wheat.

Dark-green in the bent cypress
and like a shield of molten dusk
where it stands—
a twisted cypress clawing heavenward at an angle,
homeward perhaps,—and like an angeled flight
where the wheatfield ends, looks down,
and feels the sea below.

2

Absent Ourselves

We are absent ourselves
and like the night-unfolded, shining moon,
so much a part of each harvest's
unseen cut,

‘Oh early years,
grip this planet
of wind-made touch...

We are absent ourselves
and like some faulty fish, sleeping on its blank side,
as much inconstant, shadowy hunter
as dim, haunted flesh.

...of late-grown tide.—
See if your hand retains

a portion of the main.

3

Fleet Dwellers

We are the fleet dwellers;
our hands reassemble the gardens they came from
sleeping above the heart, folded and twenty.

We are the fleet dwellers;
our mouth of hollow ingredient
is soon silent forever

(conduit no more
between the ocean
and its foam),

We are the fleet dwellers
and the faint, faint completion
of permanence,

We are the fleet dwellers;
our eyes go singing towards the mountains
and feast beyond blood and simplicity.

4

Only at Intervals

Only at intervals
from the starlike to the touch
is anything suffused with beauty
long enough to be seen.

The rest of time moves them
in a gust of darkness
beyond the reaches of our transient gaze,
of our tacit understanding.

And only at intervals in a chain
does a man sing and weep
and know these things
through the channels of muck.
Only at intervals are we entirely noble, oftener

we lend our hands in search of diamonds
while the trees turn to rock
after dying.

The eyelid comes
between our wide eyes;
and we neglect the sparrows
in the exhausted sunshine.

5

The Story of Loneliness

(And four tales)

Oh loneliness! Birth-requesting loneliness
beyond the finest loudness of a tongue

your river's in the sky
an artery in the spoken mines'
salmon hue,

Oh loneliness! Where are your limbs?
Torso in the rain!

We crowd her voice
and her exquisite ways
into the heart

with hankering, persistent, unassuaged loneliness

and share our life
with northern lights,
pained wings
in the eave's intimacy

for loneliness is the thrombosis of towns.

Shun them?
We but sleep
in the walking
beyond them,

6

Homeward Bound

The ship is heavy in wishes to anchor,
it tosses and leans on its belly
while the Bibles, like undelivered Jonahses,
tumble in the cabins and the fingers of the crew.

The fish beneath the waters flee the shape
that, sinking, crowds their margin of tranquility
with timber and corpses,
paper, shadows and roses.

7

Nocturne

The cypress moans
by wind-swept moonlight:

wheatfields to bear
and October to last.

Beware the frost—
beware the gasoline
frogs.

The windmill?
The windmill is a puzzle
to the owl.

8

Manifested Star

Understanding that in a grain or wilted leaf
collect all the wrinkled steps of the horizon,
each April's winged ancestor
and each glance and task and repetition,
every tenement and love's beginning,
we plunge by labor into the mother
laying great store by her complete embraces.

When we hear the cleaving and turn
and see the old bent lines of water

disobey their settled ways into the central fires,
we shall look for an interval's compassion.

that we might find our sweet disbanded child
through the hum of creation.

II: Blue Prapika

the sun wallops the evening
the evening wallops the sun
is that what you wanted?

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Weather Cock

They went put the glories of the harem
to point to the weather
(to finger as it were
the ruffled air);
left a bunch of tin hens
(like steeplechased nuns)
to scare up the worms of the yard.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Dry Lucifer

dry Lucifer's come
dry Lucifer's come brought
blue spiders
blue spiders
red cider
red cider

outsider come weave a web
outsider come tell a tale

dry Lucifer's come
blue spiders
dry Lucifer's brought
red cider
'dry Lucifer's come brought...

outsider
outsider
come weave a tale.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Octagonal Portrait

After Picasso's Tete de Femme of 10/26/39

The hair is a good loud broom
of parallel witches and black wind,
a wild pack of nights
with crisp owls in between.

And the mouth is green!
The mouth-is an ant-hill
of mushrooms deep.

The chest is a wide forge
and the nostrils the frank bellows
of the lungs below.

...AS she leaves I notice
the rigorous boots of her breast
walk nailed beneath the wooden arches
and the patches of her dress,

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Medlars

Medlar trees! (from backtimes)
I remember you in the outskirts of town
once a year getting dangerously golden
until the schoolboys couldn't study
just thinking of those heavy clusters hanging.

Tight little trees waiting
with your deep leaves powdered up in expectancy:
one day we forgot you,
one day we forsook the glossy mistake of your seeds.

Medlar trees before the blood thickened!
Medlar trees before the pandemonium of sex!

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

About the Barn That Is Round

I

Something fragile about the slowing hills.
Seen from a vantage, the scraping wind
on clear days, the cloud's bare touch,
the water's oxen lick,—all absorbing them,
reducing, lifting, wafting them.

And with the storm, the rasping of heaven
and the bending farms, the splitting
of branches, the swelling and racing
of streams, the heaves of an océan
upon the rocky knees, breaking them,
devouring the buried wing,
the countless breasts of my star in the rain,
meadows, candles, ancestors with pointed milk.

2

Summer and drought...
fissures, cracks thick with spiders,
the land yawns when it tightens its belt.

The parched design of the nights
outlines the ghost of a plow
on a tablecloth of chalk.

Summer and drought...
the prairies want
clouds and firemen, municipal or divine.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Insurgent Laughter

Insurgent laughter!
You swell up from the past
and feed on tears.

You break forth
through formations of trouble
irresistible as blades through the winter.

And you come
and are among us
and depart once more.

When pain is among us
you go,
oh sensitive, capricious laughter.

You come when we least expect you,
you laugh at how we escaped
and escape us when we're caught!

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Four Small Mexican Poems

I

the Mexican boy
asleep on a heap
of purple onions

dark syrup
on a mountain of tears

II

my brother
leaping from a bus
abreast of doves

follow me
he whispers
pushing his way to a bar

(the mysterious package
under his arm
being a time-bomb
of poetry)

III

hawkers

the loud one
pregnant

the gentle one
with child

IV

hey
beggar

how hungry are you

very hungry
senor

could you eat this whole sheep's head

oh patroncito
just you let me
show you

show me
beggar
show me

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Me and Chagall

I

I said

Marc

I said

what is color

to which Chagall answered

color is blood

blood

I stuttered

broken down

forgotten blood

he said

sitting up

(he was in bed

with a cold

he had just remembered)

well

I said

(trying

not to get paint

all over my overcoat)

painting is...

very close to murder

he replied

in a light vein

2

another time

Marc and I were sitting

in a cafe

Marc

I said

say something
I was just thinking
 he said

yea
that haiku of yours
the one with the squash flowers
and the runaway goat

what about it
 I asked
I'm the only one who could paint
a runaway goat
where'd you put it
in the sky
 of course
 he replied
with one of the flowers in its mouth
that'd be great
 I exclaimed
 why don't you do it

no time
 he said
 puckering up his lips
and giving me a nervous look

3

you won't tell anybody
 not a soul
not even your wife
 not even my wife

well
 here it is
 I've painted a Negro

hey

wonderful
great
to hell with your secrecy
your promise...
you're crazy
this is great
it's brilliant
I am sorry
it's a failure
you've painted a Russian Negro
Marc
a reverse albino
Russian enough to go to heaven
I wasn't thinking of heaven
he said
opening a window
and letting it out

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Early Morning Childhood

out!

child
geraniums
frogs
sunlight on the top branch

alas

with its one shot
the light
inflicts a thousand cherry wounds
upon the coffee trees
potatoes bloom (let them)
aping the few stars
the soil below
a lump and nebulae

he jumps from the lemon tree
into the camomile bush
cucumbers on the fence
tender their green penises
beside the passion fruit
he leaps from the camomile bush
back to the lemon tree

in the stable (odorous)
Agapito

that wonderful man
chops bananas
(emerald)
sugar cane
(dark red)
in so doing
drenches the trough
quiets the lowing
oh hunger
vicinity of eyes
black pools of the cows
the knife chops on
(silver

wet silver)
hunger
is breakfast ready?
the oven grant us
our daily bread
in!
child
in!
mud cakes and all
you're welcome (God!)

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Inundation

suddenly she places
a cold foot
against my leg

no
it isn't Spring
and it couldn't have been
that bride of long ago
it is the deep blue sea

dawn heaves a sigh
the shutters move like gills

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

The Flesh of Utopia

good morning
invisible innocent whatever
have you seen a little object
called the Universe anywhere?
what?
you and I located at the center?

These partly mnemonic, partly narrative poems, based on a suprarrealistic approach and striving toward an ontological goal, are convenient entities involving varying affective speeds. They are conceived, not so much as organisms defined in time and space, but as organisms suggested by those two dimensions. If the sentimental undertone of impermanence is the main theme, so are even the components of each poem, by and large, a reflection of this now slow, now hurried fugue.

The dedications stem from a desire to more emphatically share the loaf of bread, six months in the baking. There is no direct relationship between poem and person so dubiously honored. But these people and many others to whom I have dedicated poems elsewhere are a main cause for the existence of my poetry. To each and all a slice—I only apologize for the heels.

I

to Charles Robinson

cumulus
clumps of white snails
mating strangely in the horizon
shapes melting into forks of foam
high in the sierras
condescension
the water chuckling over water
water lisping on a throat
of stammering pebbles
and getting stuck in the memory
fishbone
and the weeds

the weeds wind
pure delineation

memory has a pair of eyelids
that I like
memory has a pair of tusks
and a gunnysack

I remember my wholesome pockets
—ever had wholesome pockets?
I remember my armpits
I remember my lungs
yes if I were to return
I would remember my lungs
they were sacked by the blood
morning-glories with the rasp
of husky bells

I remember lifting half-submerged rocks
out of the current
loaves of embraced quartz
blushing ore and wet
I remember little eddies of loam float away
I remember a given sunlight saying river river
on the tipsy wash of that awakened water and
the green tongue of a drafty leaf or two between the two
wound depths
constantly and out of breath flapping its I and axe and ache
and I

the echo grinding all sound to dusk
in the pestle of another valley
fishbone

I remember the warm rocks where I would dry
the frail stockings of my skin
to the high indignant stare of a hawk
until those rocks and I
solidified like all the nearby cows
sad acquiescent captains of marooned grass
looking the vehicle of eternity in the eye
their udders
fingers of the fat felon of time

asleep in a quiet garrison of sand
the pelvis cows slapping the gnat
come nuzzling this dream awake
oh sweet november in my land
womb after my petal

II

to Gene Frumkin

the warmth of it and some
darkness called your privacy and
cool windows and some hundred feathers
veiled in the hallway and the long black
hair combed straight before mass and petals
from the bent tips of the flowering trees
dust from the munificent road and
the itchy scalp of grass
worth smelling

shirts without ribs and tugging skirts
and the fist of corn smashed
into the angel of the stove
singed and confused by love
like a rooster

the soil of hunger
the sleepy wall
disorganized lemons
organized oranges
birds
the arrival of the tablecloth bubbling with oxygen
the slope towards the river gambling blue
my eyes and the warmth of it
this vintage and this softness
and the lost wind molting

III

to Stanley Kiesel

collisions of the train
the ocean's breeze

and Sunday
you—Walter—spilling out with your dimes and magic
uncle
and I today retrieving the cymbals of laughter
in this handsome ambulance of memory
Pachico of the silver kiss
classic and matriarchal
electric Neine
Quetica

I hear the voices the mullion of voices
each sustaining the branches overhead
and the silent formal foam of bread
and with ease the beloved dead
sustain my instantaneous sight
with ease the big contractual system of the roots

they have visited us and I have eaten the most
cousins let us chase one another while the
grownups chat arranging the crumbs of the meal in
geometric patterns meant for the pigeon's eye
let us go looking for fossils by the tracks

there is nothing to lose
I will myself support them through the afternoon

IV

to Charles Harrell

with the clouds and certain sausages and lungs that
climb the earth to the point of watching the
various valleys swish at their feet and
sink surely the apron of sound stains a
deep purple and the sight of moss turns the underside of
mushrooms into whales

just as
with the chattering skim milk jaw with
the shoulder and the wounded peach trees in the
fog a delirious bride soaring over the cold twig of
dawn sheds a deep and hollow radiance over all
embrace her and a gown of water tumbles everlastingly

with
the blood of the effortless body

embrace her
and beyond the village and as it turns out
beyond little ones and their mammas beyond
camellias squirrel-faced markets and roads under
construction beyond the rain and older children
presently with
grandmothers buried or alive and if alive smoking
gossiping
shuffling the coals of the fire

a gravity overwhelms the shovel
a definite embarrassment the toolshed silence readies
for
bed puts on its night-gown and detects a bird-cage in its
chest so that carelessness becomes the studied radius of
the hand and objects have a day and a name and
circle taciturn for various altitudes of soul
the tiny pain denying any sorrow

if not
why is it that on high they have begun a duplication
a moon a lemon a duck hatched in a brood of chicks?
Vv

to Bert Meyers

this and that
tomorrow with enormous eyes
very sure of themselves
yesterday with its early start
today or what we called it then oh beautiful corpse
portions of the soft evening itself
rocking back and forth in its darkening porch
fragments of the season
of the brook and the sunset
and the trees plummeting into the sky
and at last retrieved by the beak of a hummingbird
with relatives in London
sections of Christmas shared with illness
its morning for instance

or its running down the hill at full blast
or the sway of grass caressing the sensitive face
of the sky

you have pinched their cheek grandma
you were there rummaging through the cupboards
and they in turn have veiled your face from sight

quite gone aren't you?
quite absent from the afternoon paper
the life even of its rubber-band
having eloped mysteriously with laughter
how well I recall
god
they even slapped your echoes from my smile
breaking my teeth with kindness

the loud shout of the tomatoes the
chillies peanuts. and the onions can still be heard
father has done well by them
but how the cashew tree will hound him

VI

to my father

infancy of clay
honest as its breath
nativity
snow in the cotton of your touch

november
december
the wind out in the corridor
what a merchant
how long will he examine the chandelier?

the peasant boys come down at last
to talk about their sins
cool mosaic

their mountain rises
a little of its violet
has made the river think

twenty
thirty
he's an old priest
the peasant girls come down at last
to talk about their sins
a wood dove calls
what is the use of moss
if not to mute their love?

do not hurt so
do not hide and hide and hide
my father has a little donkey
that shakes its head and cries
that shakes its head and cries

I will not hurt again
I will not hide and hide
I'll come and hold your hand
and talk and talk and talk

VII

to Patricia Darrin

the morning you lift the blankets
to find that icicles hydrangeas polyps
have replaced your body
that this horse leaps
that those birds graze beneath its hoofs
that the sunlight itself
rolls with a touch of english

the morning silk and glance are one
the eyes of cattle like spools of the stuff
the morning you. think courageously of nothing
and it all bears you out notorious
bandits and bells pried loose of
all cement shots pirated fingers instructions
to fold at the edges inspirational messages

the morning god vomits over you
and you say thanks god for the beauty in my life
this thing you have done is indeed beautiful

god of holy communion
god of priests on location
god of stupid pies elevated by elevators
god of audiences astounded by their own carcasses
god of soapsuds
god of icicles exploding in the sunlight
god of hydrangeas and of the hands of hydrangeas
god playing pianos and pianolas
god of telephone calls
god of strawberries merely a suggestion

the night you plunge a sword into the squash
the night you grow fat in all directions
the night you go medieval
the night you discuss it without words
the night you write the morning you lift the blankets
only to find that icicles hydrangeas polyps
have replaced your body
that this horse...

VII

to Sol Margolis

that big Dane
sparring against a sack of sugar
loose stockings
perpendicular at times
salty
very narrow

that road winding around the zoo
deep
purposeful
jammed with sad butterflies
and with butterflies shedding this darkness

that celerity of small bewitched animals
listening to music to the voice of a male
as if they weren't offended

I wonder if we didn't raid
the loquat of their eggs too often

if we didn't crowd their flesh
with the hooks of a shout too early
I will dress more carefully now
I will address the ravine
and provide benefits for the crocodiles
that they should grow on rivers
that they should wait for their babies with a smile

that big Dane
he became a stadium
he ambled through the walks with purpose in his knee
a blade of grass as referee between his jaws
he loved laziness with the certitude of grounded fruit

and he was no Dane
Max and his dog were naturalized Danes at the black
market

but he was no Dane
he wasn't even a good chauffeur
he made love to exploited girls
to washerwomen who sang under his breath
ferns banks of lilies wore the marks of his efforts
but slowly lifted their broken stems again each day
and allowed the snails to sail with a renewed mast
into the evening

IX

to Bob Chuey

at birth and steadily for one year
the afternoon concentrates on a beetle
it aids him buoys him feeds him his flyspeck lunch
calls him moose to his horns

and softly kindly the lights go on
as if the men at the switches were embracing
the corners gather momentum
efferent gentleness
the lime of a falling star catches you yawning
and crumbles into your mouth
you sit there at the curb
the rose-colored clay of your fingernails itching

the flavor of mahogany a river

I never saw him wear his hat again nor his fist
and he never made another wooden toilet in his life
laughing over my left-handed use of his tools

the maid said he was dead
and I hugged that word like a dirty old blanket
till he closed his eyes folded his hands
plowed the earth deeper than his oxen
and visited my dreams

at three the solitary sound
at four the smell of navigation
at five the field of strangers
but at eight

 at eight
 oh pure universe
another one of your children holding onto her skirt
that he may be heard over the unfed birds

another one of your mountain paths
holding its breath a while
that the hill
and the wind
may sleep

X

to Carlisle Schmitzer

when crossing the park
 in silence
 your lunch over
you may be mulling over that tremendous little story
 you heard last week
but remember that your shadow
 that bolt of cloth
unfolds from you
 through noon
 into the gravel
were you inevitable at all times
 in all places

at the warehouse
 let's say
 or at the bank
or when you sat in that wicker chair and slept
the way I was inevitable by your side
at your large pedestrian edge?

what a grand debate for my sheared logic
for its chemical pros
 its load of absent cons
as if I hadn't peeked into the barrel
or heard the spigot weep into the pail
as if my hand hadn't stroked your palmetto beard
while the clock announced the source of its malignancy
 with hiccups

inevitable of stunning pigmentation brutal if the fish
looked back brave in the crushed region contemporary
in effort in survival fearless in the womb your Bay Rum
typical of urine your feces tight a spendthrift clause
in the oligarchy of your life

I see you thus
 old man
 through this mangled grove
in this avalanche of dust contained by mittens
why tell them how your madness leaped three flights
 into the wind?
you walked a funny bride down the aisle of that wild
 affair
and from the stairway helped her throw that strange
 bouquet

congratulate for me
 if nothing else
 those last ten fingers
which mock the birthday of my lungs
which flaunt a dandelion in the breeze

XI

to Gonzalo Molina

the lovely tottering saints
the midget greatness
its gold leaf the crowd hope
pressing from all sides
hope clad in black
as if surging out of tunnels

Holy Week
nobody knows that the procession is a rally for
existence

Holy Week Holy Week
an octopus embracing the peanut vendor

the sun delivers its midday blow on the anvil of carnations
and the bladder speaks
and the thyroid in prayer
sinks with its sweat
into the linen of the moment
Christ is coming innocence and timber.

Christ with the plow of the nose into the forehead
oh peasants servants women of the balconies
beggars thieves miladies Christ
in the Autumn Christ the baker in the sibilant Spring

here is the miracle of my shoes without height
of my eyes without weight that
boredom ends at the knees that
hunger perishes in the navel that
death follows dying without echo
that nobody has a father without anguish
but now again the neighborhood
the slow descend downhill

swallows ‘

cobblestones

the broken main bandaged with dragonflies
the total of my aunts in the caress
and the night at last an ocean

XII

to Tom McGrath and Alan Swallow

Belgium in the moonlight
its one inch
first under this phase
and then again that other

Holland under water
its bouillon cube
a diffuse leviathan

Tibet
the Philippines
both terraced like the ricefields of my thumb

(I'll confess to the book
my fingers
like nobody's shoes
chasing the lavender icecube of surprise)
kind library
fledgling father
cello autumn cork wistaria key
in a bull-ring of opening remarks
the relation of peacocks to their necks
the fitting of dead autumn in its coffin
that proud cello with a streak of gout

isn't it important to bleed?
I am somehow slender and beautiful
said one of the coffee cans beyond reach
I am somehow predestined to bite your leg and rush
upstairs
well

if you feel that way about Indians you can peek
but I warn you
Christmas will never be the same after this
I think it was south you ran into the market
and the coffee broke your nose in half
and the congress of colors passed another law
prohibiting the use of less than one million eyes

to ever see a flower

sure enough there were riots and demonstrations
newsvendors and diminutive small little tiny bootblacks
swearing with classical severity
swarmed out of teeming cauldrons of soup
fighting alongside pigs' feet bluebells greasy coins
and the fine tooth comb of a cross-eyed rooster
all for the sake of their private lily

if you ever get the chance
listen to metal scoops plunge into gunnysacks of grain
it's a rich diving sound
boll weevils scurry to greater depths when this occurs
they become widows and widowers that simply

XIII

to Frederick Smith

bells they come from steam
wheels from statues
 from verbs lurking and lurching
 platforms obvious to the foot
out of dust come totems at their most peculiar gait
good-byes they all are
good-byes come from good-bye
good-bye from rabbit

forgetting comes from toothbrush
rust from sanitation
turpentine from wells
a mountain springs out of the hammock of the eye

to slap an orchid or a fly
its body quivers in the heat
and luncheon lapses in its lull
the senses drop their needlework
the yarn rolls on all fours across the aisle of noon
how spontaneous are my ribs
how sensitive my callouses
like distant herds of waterfalls
—their tusks soft Braille against the sky—

they press towards a common rendezvous
dark laughter has begun to emanate from cocoa
to seep out of the unexpected breast of the cocoa trees
out of the lips and lives of limitless green Negroes
when suddenly my father points to the sea
and the sea reveals a suburb of its sea the
Adam's apple of its sea the monumental emerald aching
of the sea the sea the emerald sea the somehow sea
after which you're never the same

the suitcase the bougainvillea the hotel where
dawn is served for breakfast
the park more vertical of palm than wide of gull
the parapet the tuck the smell the horizon space
distance time and tide
the huge deliveries of nothing

sad is the sway of leaves
the crab without wave and the almond without soul
sad is the moon capsizing from one's hands
into the hands of the dead

XIV

to Estelle Gershgoren

one fish two sirens three girls
three girls two sirens one fish
the salt frowns
and they meet at the beach
sugar laughs
and they find themselves in the market
do they want to get very far?
their rhythm sleeps in the water

Pinocchio will swim beside the fish
and I will mix with the two sirens
but who will cripple the girls
in their castle of cormorants?
a gipsy comes by offering his services
he's dressed in silver and. travels
in pairs with his shady shadow

the three accept
he orders a banquet of hairpins and rooks
 harpoons and flutes
the innkeeper is grinning
the sailors are dancing
and beggars are gorging
amidst clever sayings

who misses a key?
who knocks on a door?
not I and not I and not I and not I

and not I
but ask blond and brunette
and the little red mite
in the linnet's red glare

XV

to Mel Weisburd

a column of ants
because I've found frogs and begonias
ambiguous as hell in the dew
and because all of Sunday and the next day
it was those little devils rode with us
in the same coach
picketing our hard-boiled eggs

they finally got off at Satan Falls
from the window I was able to witness at first hand
a boy drop a match in a hole mother of Gaul
there was a gush of red lava covered the immediate
 area
the park was evacuated and we had to stay on the train
all of Wednesday on Thursday towards noon they
were carrying bits of leaves into the hole
founding "
 as the conductor ruefully told me
an underground railway and a communal kitchen
I've just reached the capital and been handed a hot one
it now appears that on Thursday the begonias broke

down
under what was termed a routine police interrogation
a news blackout has been imposed at bull-frog
headquarters
there are sirens screeching through the streets
of this succulent hemisphere at this very moment

Friday and Saturday were busy days
all eight-legged insects suspected of sabotage
were rounded up and Elena Jimenez de Cardona
my grandmother
as a matter of fact
was resurrected and allowed to melt
the yellow crayon of a grapefruit near a stove
creating instant marmalade with heavy casualties.

oh mighty frogs
oh weak begonias
oh busy ants
oh single file

XVI

to Odette Meyers

being another item
but succumbing at birth
to this temptation of oneness
to this round radish of a squeeze
other hands become mine other fists
other eyes
compact superfluous and arresting

and sometimes their help
sometimes their whip and frequently their courage
their subtle mixture of goodness
—as in cupboards—
names me bread
and names me wine
I beg you to avoid so much confusion!
in consideration of the many
who came to this body as I was leaving

or who left when I was standing at attention
I want to emphatically deny the rumor
that I have boasted of a soul

the earth!;
remember at all times its metonym
its preamble of a moon.;
and these protons these seismic stallions

gardenias are anchored in gardenias
but in consideration of all who gave of themselves

to make this fellow possible
(and they were disappointed!)
I have compromised and led a pagan childhood.

have had my qualms
and favored a Buddhist hagiology of Christians

my Communists digest

their babies know the way to strength
oh regional synopsis
oh nostalgia
but truly
if I court the abyss I shall sprout wings wings
if I court the abyss I shall sprout wings

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Blood's Aftermath

I am but a purple sound
when the wrinkled fish blow the candles out

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Rush Hour

earth
clad in wheat
deafens the ray...
house let's find:
a silent town
this heart is clogged

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Homage to García Lorca

To Stanley Kurnik

oh deep hedge of low roses
how did they get my heart over there
I ask myself unstrung squandered like that
surprising ash tomorrow

oh spring twiggy christmas
and have you unwrapped
the loose packages of green

the green that grows wind-told profane.

tiny garden windows hanging loose from the earth
wild dispensation

he was killed for the poet could walk among cinnamon
 moons.
stained sweetened natural
yes while I pass by swiftly oh fearful
'of my own courageous undertakings

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Three Costa Rican Poems

I

Micaela
the servant
singing a lullaby
in her room

the night
upon the lemons
round

(singing)

if rain
upon the linnets
wet

(singing)

if fog
upon the stone wall
moss

2

Sunday morning
on the table
a jar of honey

the girl next door
taking a shower

the tile
(imagine her)

to forget
I pour the honey
upon a loaf of bread

near the river
the mill is quiet

(mahogany planks
 buttress

the sleep of butterflies)

3

gone
gone
the wind
from the flowering trees
gone
the defenseless meadow
the child
out of his living childhood
(the rain has sunk
 through the summer grasses)
thunder
you candle-lit affair
ora pro nobis

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

The Freedom

1

the poet belongs
he said

look
he's signed his name
at the bottom of the river
within the shell's expectancy
into the snail's long crawl
the blind man's need
the baby's head

2

in my dream
an engineer was connecting a siren

a poet
was convincing a moth
to nibble on a star

come A.M.
my comb'll order
the product of my head around

but hush
dawn is plucking a memorable rooster
from its usual bag of tricks

3

by dint of those two lights
a third
he said

he must be a mammal
with words for kindly weapons
a mammal

with Latin for a dying tongue
but a man at last
for miles around
and ages up

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Desires

wing
I would fly
with your passerine flesh
stained a deep purple

and still in summer
touch the rind of valleys
gorge the bell-shaped pears

seed
you clogged mallet
a rooster is clearing its throat
a velvet fly is borne aloft
on the horns of a bull

(piece of licorice on the dust
nobody knows you
pick it up
go wash it)

storm
your black hands
are my roof
the old hard bed is drenched
I am gone

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Sweet Terrorist

In the water that I drink there is a fish cries: murder!
murder cry the birds my lungs cohibit
while specks of dust the ground supports
are massacred in patches on a walk.

The table where I eat is but a steaming shambles
where root and leaf, where fruit and seed are rent,
and luckless beasts of tame surrender
forego their meadow to their bones' dismay.
But that's not all, for men as well cry: care!
and women sift my hunger in their minds
before they venture to reveal their own
untimely needs of permanence.

My children, as they wonder at a flame
that calls them to the taste of ash,
dear partners of ironical pellagras:
they cry: alas! their woes amounting.

And I? I carry guilt on guiltless shoulders
and sorry for my foot and mouth
must dance and sing in form
until they conquer me with the same leap
and fierce secretion: trap and strength,
that heedless turn, that chronic and unlovely doom.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Three Poems of Early Compass

I

when I was a boy and my father had amassed several days
into a Sunday
the two of us would go for a long walk in the country
we'd pack a lunch and sit beneath some tree in a song-infested meadow
eating a heartful of berries during the growth of one who
comes to fatherhood now
we'd visit an acquaintance or a relative distant to surprise
taking care the while to stop in some country store for a
drink before returning
(sarsaparilla for me)
potent clouds would be piling up for the evening shower
and at last the sun would go by leaning on a stick and
looking through the windows
glasses and tales would pause reluctantly in mid-air
burly men would swallow the stray concussion of a laugh
father he'd take the nugget of my hand in his and lead me
home
block-long wall in back of the town's distillery
wall of related odors
pock-faced wall where the sun would each day line up and
shoot
a bunch of shady characters called elms "
wall sabbatical with night
improper under midnight
of days
your litany of ads proclaimed remedies that cured
now incurable diseases
but which fading
peeling
exposed an older set of ills
lime that went to heaven with the breeze
moss most vertical to green
fissures inhabited by nectar

urchins had a time
running along the side of you and peeing to their heart's
content
charting thus
with native tool
the wave-length of their bladder
(lovely sport that turns unwanted urine into the wine of fun)

old wall
you mean something to my life
your monotonous reaches
the solitary confinement of your shadow
have been voices of patience to my days

there is something of yourself in me
something that slowly crumbles and whose meaning is
the excuse
for a spirit that seeps through in bittersweet waste
aghast at all that it must do with its aroma

3

I realize now that my father had a strange knack for the
pathetic
for taking me on long unwitting trips to the nowhere of a
shadow
environments of insane cypresses
eyes of death-goaded peasants
opaque rooms of clock-suffused stillness
where clairvoyant voices clung like tired ferns to abysmal
curtains

I may have been eight when he took me to the enormous
garden
of a patient and abiding and inscrutable friend of his
a gentle man of long standing
hands roughly petalled
eyes in equal shares of light and sorrow
who built huge wreaths behind the shack of death

I nearly drowned in daisies and smothered among violets
suffocated in carnations
crucified my sight with roses

that man and day float through my years in careful
suspension
together they reject the coloring that gloats upon virginity
and keep a common strength that only liquids muster
his flowers I have come to expect
and of his secret errantry I know the tragic bywords and
still more tragic altars
but I thank the gloomy innocence of age for abeyance to a
peaceful virulence
a hush and veil of subsequent neutrality gathered in that
country and at that age
south if I recall by the outskirts of town
I thank sadness for a man serene as water
who scanned his whereabouts in heaven and lost all
and whom my father remembers in his writings

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

South Main

To Charles Harrell

a woman
do you hear me
a woman on that roof
gathering her clothes from a clothesline

happiness is no small matter
the wind has
among other things in a joyous itinerary
dried them on the asphalt roof of the Santa Rita hotel

in that ashtray
the sun puts out its cigarette
and
simile exhausted
filters down the corridors
of a year that is gone

this masochist a block away
his elbows on the sill
dry geraniums purring for a drink
for sometime obsessed with beauty everywhere
is the supposed witness

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Vindication

For A.C.T. on her sudden death

Upwards now
into nest and entrail
I send my hands to pluck
I send my tongue my sorrow
and my tenderness
and forget the annoyance
and these returning
justify
in utterance and dignity
all of the grey vulgarity
you may have shown
or betrayed
betrayed
where death never does
but rather
when purpose turns to flotsam
that was childhood once and a cluster
and proves that laughter can die.
and go rotten
it comes to make it into brightness again

proof is my compassion
and the way that corpses laugh
or smile
or look
in the cleaner fabric of remembrance

don't trample on it oh brother
or stranger
let it go whole
for the living to forget the dead
not speaking ill of their flesh
verging into spirit
or oblivion
faults
errors
let them go

and not recall whether virgin or whore
whether it's I go first or you
for death is a kingdom in reverse
or a mirror where you part your hair to the right
or a lake where you breathe in the depths
and always a dignity recurring
or a vagabond
and in his dirty pockets
this apple whose cheek burned to the sun.

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Thirty Years

after the heavy rain the roof is strangely quiet
the turtle emerges from its bed of geraniums
tears of steam streak the kitchen windowpanes
an urchin runs downhill into the night
having finished the book I turn the pages backward

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

My Breath

the sun hid inside a cantaloupe and sang
a white pigeon of moonlight burns over the cliff
ten thousand years of blue water above a purple shell

First published in *The Flesh of Utopia*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.

Bibliography

Primary and secondary sources

Book and journal titles are italicized throughout.

Works by the Author

- The Gathering Wave: Forty-eight Haiku with Drawings. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961.
- The Flesh of Utopia. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965.
- Menashtash. Santa Barbara: Little Square Review, 1969.
- Agapito. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.
- Words on Paper. Los Angeles and Fairfax: Red Hill Press, 1974.
- The Half-Eaten Angel. 1981.
- When I Was a Father. 1982.
- Four Poems About Sparrows. Eyelight Press, 1994.
- A History of Light. Sherman Asher Publishing, 1997.
- Thirteen Tangos for Stravinsky. Sherman Asher Publishing, 1999.
- Spring Has Come: Spanish Lyrical Poetry from the Songbooks of the Renaissance. Alameda Press, 2000.
- Sucursal de Estrella: Poemarios Iniciales y Finales. University of New Mexico Press, 2007.
- The Recumbent Galaxy. With George Kalamaras. 2010.
- The Song Less/on. il piccolo editions, 2013.
- Phantom Buddha. 2013.
- Lhude Sing Cuccu. 2015.

Works About the Author

- Elizabeth Glixman. "An Interview with Alvaro Cardona-Hine: Poetry, Prose, Music, Art and Thirteen Tangos for Stravinsky." *Eclectica* 10, no. 1 (2006).
- Jim Kacian. "Book of the Week: The Gathering Wave." The Haiku Foundation, July 10, 2017.

Joan Logghe. "In Memoriam: Alvaro Cardona-Hine (1926–2016)." New Mexico Literary Arts, December 4, 2016. Local archival copy.

Estelle Gershgoren Novak, ed. *Poets of the Non-Existent City: Los Angeles in the McCarthy Era*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002.

Alvaro Cardona-Hine author biography. New Village Press.

Colophon

Publication and production notes

This critical reading edition was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers, Los Angeles, in 2026, as part of Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry.

The poems were reset from the source pages identified in the editorial record and datasheet. The book was composed in EB Garamond on a cream field at 6 × 9 inches. Its designed cover and selective archival opening follow the Julia Boynton Green production standard.