

# The Wasatch

From northern reach to southern stretch the Wasatch  
Capture cloud cargoes lifted by Pacific  
Winds from spouting whales and fish in flight,  
From drying bodies on beaches at Malibu  
Or sweating *in labore veneris* on Mexican sands:  
All vapors of the deeps and shallows congregating  
Around Nebo or Twin Peaks, swirling and churning,  
Metamorphose into dropping rain and snow.

The sculpture of the landscape came from winds  
Bringing the rains that dredged valleys and crenelated  
Crests: sharpening skylines over ages and draining  
Detritus from a thousand gouged gullies  
Onto Basin plains that sank in silence  
As the Wasatch reared skyward on faulted scarps  
Beside them: isostatic clash in contrast—  
A thousand feet of uncompacted sediment  
Westward and Cottonwood granite to the east—  
While equalizers work away: granitic  
Feldspars decaying to clay, freed quartz  
Globules, and mafic minerals washing to plains,  
Rains scouring the mountains' stone face.

Crystals are living things, as mountains are,  
Conceived in dark recesses of the mother world  
To grow in slow gestation from the central heat  
And pressure of the womb, in genesis controlled  
By blueprint forces sure as DNA.

The Wasatch Mountains live, and living nurture  
Other lives—forests and fields—an equal  
Footing afforded weeds and flowers. Each patch  
Of land, aspiring to its climax, starts with weeds  
And builds superior forms to ultimate goals.  
Old fir trees topple or fires fell them, and life  
Blossoms at bottom again in lichens—fungus  
And alga bound siblings—and growing once more  
Toward trees with all forms fighting to survive  
By schemes devious and intricate: hybridizing,  
Flying, or playing dead for generations,

Tolerating salt or tasting sweet  
Or bitter—whichever advances dumb needs,  
Perceived without brain but purposeful as humans  
Seeking their ends: winged maple seeds in flight,  
Exploding pods of spores hurled windward,  
Seeds riding free in bellies of birds or in burrs  
On matted hides.

From lily to columbine,  
Ergot to evergreen, Wasatch is home ground:  
Background too, feeding and breeding other lives—  
Animal: miniature to mastodon whose bones, grounded  
Now, is extinct as the lake whose shores it lumbered by.

A working arrangement, mostly good, plants  
With animals—never sure though: think  
Of the ergot growing by Provo River and remember  
Rye fields in France and fingers of peasants  
Rotting off—(a caution: slipped symbiotic disc).

The Wasatch, alive still, living and giving life,  
Wind breaker and cloud catcher, predestining  
Utah's scene: cities in unique configuration  
On a Front, a condensation promising ballets  
And symphonies, plays and players in a world  
Not possible from sprawling towns scattered  
At random, mass lacking and centerless. Saddle  
An atlas and go see. But be back at sunset's  
Red westering, valleys shadowed but Timp's  
Top glowing from snow; and listen to sun-  
Sizzle drift into darkness and moondrone  
While star chants rise silent over the Front:  
Sustaining and shielding man—the last animal.

—Edward L. Hart