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## All Aboard the Succulent Wave

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ALL ABOARD THE SUCCULENT WAVE

By

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Bachelor of Arts in English Literature  
Gonzaga University  
2009

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

English Department  
College of Liberal Arts  
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
August 2012

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## THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

**Oscar Oswald**

entitled

**All Aboard the Succulent Wave**

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**Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing**

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**August 2012**

## ABSTRACT

All Aboard the Succulent Wave

By

Oscar Oswald

Prof. Claudia Keelan, Examination Chair  
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*All Aboard the Succulent Wave* is a collection of poems written over the past three years. It is the product of major shifts in my faith and trust in language. The manuscript is divided into three parts: “The Staccato Monsoon,” “Today /// A Poetics,” and “Elliptics.” Each of these sections concerns a particular theme about my language, my god, and my soul.

I wrote many poems that used language to find god. In these poems, those designated by “/// A Poetics,” I write about what is holy to me in the moment and about how the instantaneous sense of my spirit propels language naturally. My poetics refers to isolated – though similar and familial – attempts to articulate my faith-in-words and, therefore, the sublime.

I spent much of my time as a creative writer questioning the purpose of poetry, demanding that it speak for some unfamiliar community or generation – a poetics of experience, progress, and humans. Those were disturbing times. The “/// A Poetics” poems indicate my faith in myself, in the momentousness of poetry and its bright logic against the stuffy trough of the past. I can say with some certainty now that I believe I exist because of the poems in time.

There is no choice between language and god. The two are the same: a process. Sometimes there is god and sometimes there isn't. God flits when language does, and language leaks when god happens. This is why faith is essential to my poetry. It is a secular faith in the power of language to irrupt into newness, into time. Hopefully that is where god is, my origin (speaking from my soul). So experience comes into play somehow – it's always there – but experience is never the point.

These poems testify to moments when I felt relief from my doubt as I wrote. I can remember when and how I wrote most of them. These were memorable times because I felt the time and articulated it. When I could not or would not articulate time, I wrote bad poems. It was very difficult to let myself stop writing when I had nothing to say, when I didn't believe in anything, simply living along and perhaps reading the news. But when this lapsing became a load, I wrote. My writing, at its happiest, happened as I decided to write, perforating my doubt with wonderful pricks of faith. I tried to tell myself what I wanted when I wrote and why I wrote about god and my soul.

Thank you Claudia and Don and all the other poets I found through your encouragement. I mean especially the French poets and the newish American writers, Lyn Hejinian, James Tate, and the like. I came to understand American poetry and therefore my aesthetics (leading to my soul) through the work of translated foreigners. Growing up, I never trusted the Americans, being one myself. I thought there was something up their sleeve, a stupid trick only a few privileged people knew about, and I wanted something else. Then I read who they read and it all made sense. The Americans' poetry was so much simpler after identifying their foreign models. To paraphrase Robert Hass, everyone is writing about the same thing! Seen in that light, that

anticipation for flashes, most poetry was much more interesting and worthy of imitation.

Which leads me to these poems I wrote. I hope you enjoy them.

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# 1: The Staccato Monsoon

It is fitting that poetry be inseparable  
from the foreseeable, but not yet  
formulated.

- René Char

...a poem is tough by no quality it  
borrows from a logical recital of  
events nor from the events  
themselves but solely from that  
attenuated power which draws  
perhaps many broken things into a  
dance giving them thus a full being.

- William Carlos Williams

## It Becomes Mine

tickled and topsy-turvy  
the little world  
yesterday  
the little word  
yesterday

go go gadget  
go go apostle  
i left my newest curiosity  
in reno  
the mexican food was terrible  
and i eclipsed the little road

i seed pistons on the body of this body  
then to death i am a stranger  
the kind of acquaintance  
one never mentions  
even to the acquaintance  
and there is fruit  
fathomlessly

## The Grove Beyond Summer

i blew the whistle  
i returned the limp crimson  
vampire i wore  
when it was too hot to be embarrassed  
and topless comedians  
wouldn't encourage my nipples too

trailheads: prefer my left  
side and tangentially  
condom advice  
the easel yesterday everybody knows  
glued sandals  
to the kids on swings

i am the green difference  
between the trees  
near enough to tackle the sky  
with my commercial lobe

## The King

a quarter catches you  
dripping with rowboats  
we lasso  
and bring to cream

when you cork the ratio and leave  
i'll spread your blankets back in the pool  
into the pitch we play with open steel

## The Ceremony Watching Young Ones

quality i am glad to think  
flavor burning on a comb  
its petrol purple in the curtain between carrot's nectar  
and cumin above the loaded palm

the diamond in the rat  
control cocked to sunwash my two bodies  
paired by the delight and gold in their heroics  
quick dynasties and latitudes there to be light  
in cornfields blunt with coal

## All Aboard the Succulent Wave

what a challenge to forget the bedtalk  
when an entrance supports the night  
the hairclip leaving the kettle i know  
teased ginger from the catsack's leaking height

first bellybutton first mauve first necklace  
the twelve cracks my back makes make my house twelve  
lessons in the tunnel to the airport so many light riffs  
great across the ceramics made mug in my hand



Home /// A Poetics

i found mother  
and i didn't touch her  
briefly raising her with my rising oil

both ripe and shallow  
i am tall  
and my back breaks to eat bakeries whole  
rinsing them down with core mercury  
    i drill daily from my open child  
flecked past weightlessness  
into landscapes waxed with laughter

Riddle /// A Poetics

i am built to bring no change  
i am built to weather snow  
and heat and thrown stone

who am i?

## Desideratum

### I.

follow me whether  
my scalp can launch  
my head doomsday  
peach  
the game the bees deserve  
to earn my endless supply

pan-fried to flame on the combing glaze  
my magnet gaze for pilsner and string  
framed correctly to the exit screen and more  
footsteps more hollow and heavy nectar  
trace canvases and chew the cuticles  
on the author's finning grass

### II.

i scratch both sides  
to prove i like the smooth gift  
between her thighs  
returning royal stems to my remarkable home

her better barefoot  
her pocket hands undressed  
in the slim spree between loving me  
and slapping my wake  
tucked by flame into day

Samantha

my thankless mask and her pleasant furrows  
left soft accordions in the car  
when it was time to dissolve in the woven sauna  
kept at bay by captains welcoming sand

## Campaign

they struggle towards  
the jingle  
ice cream comes  
to the park  
i've waited  
for the silent birds  
to defecate  
for minutes their  
whistles their fire  
in the dry  
pincecone tree

Spirit /// A Poetics

my self my only forward

buzz in missionary flight

    better marrow

soft and still where it never was

Nearest Acropolis

blown and bent into giraffes  
in the new stripe on the animal's next leg  
my episode sends curfews into the light

## Rinsing and Shaving the Broken Hair

legumes bandaged on the open floor  
mass plastic fertile with exit nectar kiss kiss  
and keep me championed on the exit body  
naked with horseplay like a pistol

the contest spreads at lunch  
capitalizing my initials o o  
though to be believed it risks nothing  
but handshakes between friends in the lovemaking bed



Beowulf /// A Poetics

i didn't need a hero  
so the heroes knew me well

Bravest

the late butterfly  
    popped balloon, at the moment  
its signature struck air  
owned:    legendary wrist  
and uncle hand

to open to shorten to piece  
apart and wave  
my skin in skin  
    soft as berries  
i shape a solid breast    nice redwood  
wickedly untubed on my desk  
each as they were before their yarn

## In Love

shirtless itching soup and semen

pencil pencil dental floss scumbag

the door is cracked and i expect bugs

Dad

the catcher's mitt spoiled by violins

nobody's written anything in months  
the idea being  
i'm dead

Hypercube /// A Poetics

*“I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will be the bard of personality”*

- Walt Whitman

the incomplete stash  
originated in bongos –  
    they broke and were stolen  
in spokane  
i rescue them here

on the road  
one way is pure horizon  
and the other a field of words  
ready to suppress the road

i test truly  
i task little bugs  
with finding other bugs  
i'm lonely

Alert for the Double Bridge

fretless from daughter's  
pancakes

    i ripen

whole chords against the gong:

all faucets and the wealth she started

    my hair in fins between her fingers

pencil-skirt pencil-skirt anti-gauze

perching the game on a slide-finding ghost

## Access to the Sublime

made the gateway end by noticing it curl  
my little pile and my favorite hymn  
sunk into an engine in the sky  
and an engine on the road



Atoms /// A Poetics

lovely atoms  
on woven things and pianos

the beautiful soul the questionable soul:  
god  
or god quilted  
by the guess that owns the loam

## Another Theater

the room adds window  
when the wind wants to get in  
it's sexy in there

# 2: Today



# A Poetics

welcome to the attention and applause of the sun

from birth      look up

I spread my small mouth

swallowing

barely there

to strip the woodpecker bare

nothing iffy    just plates and silverware with nowhere to go

I smoke eclipses

ellipsis in my lungs

when I wrote a poem for everybody

it popped some color or sound and splashed

thickly on something beneath itself  
beyond

crimson and white

beacons                      gently

so whispers lend static to the allied spring

hymn to raspberries:  
I bucket my god

my cherries: my justice –  
the butter popped and smooth across every miracle

gentle  
milestone: ribbons flexed for christmas, from  
mom

when pleasure snips joy  
in two  
both bodies  
cancel each other out  
both pleased  
just to say  
yes to whatever seems best...

we were born  
despite  
our soul  
and thankfully  
there is the one  
I believe I am and even moments  
I am apart –  
two gods also  
delighted to see the other



between rock and rapid: rapid pearl:  
silos

whitewater's  
mother

mountain  
curtains

*the blue popped out of the brown  
and finally let everything in*

light and lighter

delight holds the birdhouse

in the air      between friends

pinching the grape minute

from another grape minute

hold steady      for heaven's sake

me  
and baby water  
begin to coincide  
with the light: the frigid steam  
happens every time –  
follow my moss  
it's marble  
it outruns the sun

next exit: egg at full growth

happily lapsing

wings and new volition

plugged but still peeling off

in vicious links and verve

met metal that could move it

next exit:  
light and lighter  
light  
caking crests  
    from honest  
wood  
    I sky-map outdated stars  
    with neighborly warmth  
    as they brim  
blue access  
continuously  
    about  
to admit to the birds

*this happens all the time*

if I agree to my evil other and give in for the right thing  
am I pleased in success?

I win and lose  
either way so happy  
just to flex  
with positive time  
slipping instincts into my ear

Why worry? I'm the highlight here

If beauty can't complete me

It's a birth

I hurl happily

To the winning side

LOVE PERFECTLY

And some box will begin

To flit with ecstasy and steam

Cheesecloth in clam chowder

Like elbow soup:

The glint left over from pacing the dawn

I breathe

I use fishbowls to breathe

and the basin springs and swallows my rumor once again

permission

sweet glue

treat me to the wax and the guillotine:

the parsley –

risk

warping it and moving on



rearrange me in the rolling box

before I land

in the right space:

strut aloof stars

how upwards

how easily they admit my leverage:

lust



*A Brief Note*

we brought the parts from somewhere else

sharing them in architecture:

supple grids

along the clean bridge which spoke

with beautiful legs

we'll end up there

sewn by horizontal prisms

graciously trusting the corpse:

a new beginning:

a harbor

a milestone repeating

healing time backwards and forwards evenly

spoiled by its homeless rays

trust this science  
and answer the absence  
of the ground:            solo:

the clarinets of the perfect god

I meant to salute alone

see me.

I like the love

I proudly accept

my value:

THE LANGUAGE:  
half apple

in triumph with the LIGHT AND LIGHTER

the medallion

soft and gooey now!

speaking no further of my prizeworthy flesh:

this new flesh

elevates me in providential

summits!

however curiously I began  
my name

I began to hold it

always the relief

waned in stationary eddies

hard red

sliced on the husk: juiced

flesh and newsprint gray

how the brief period

without amnesty

rang in jubilant bells!

# 3: Elliptics

I don't believe in infinity, I don't believe in finitude either. The result is awkward and so is the word "inevitablative."

- Lyn Hejinian

It Licked Me

i want it to grow feathers  
i want its blackness back  
from other birds

there they go  
into the grass



Little Prom

as many fingers  
as the horizon  
    so much sparkle  
next to trusty green

the sun  
brief sausage  
in the palms

Away from the Window

a ball on the end of a stem  
and the stem dissolved by sight  
into brittle cream

harmless fire  
kids flopped cloth to chest  
on everybody's grass  
the eye patch on the arm  
of the hand pulsing the world

Tribute /// A Poetics

in no mood  
to tell time  
    clouds collide  
and the system begins  
taking all our condoms and balloons  
to the place where they die:  
Reno

i am my mood  
and my weather sticks to satisfying apples  
and my mailman separates  
into a chorus of smiles

    that's it  
the sky says:  
Jacques

    what a whistle  
    to come home  
leaving the company of mothers  
the roots that wave in my body  
the simple jesus action  
    boom sonnet boom sonic  
grouping cheese plates cheddar  
everywhere arranged  
in slices fine and fat

yes reno yes wheat bread  
yes style and eating  
the patio  
with my socks off

Pilgrim

mother  
in tender summits  
    plunged deep  
into juice

    my other joys  
take me home when they still come

    i'm deep and deeper  
still clearly stiff  
and soaked

My Soul /// A Poetics

i am truly flute  
the woodwinds  
i remember  
and the brass:  
god atoms  
slip in straight waves  
barely enough  
to streak and become whole

Relief /// A Poetics

a marble with wings  
and i'm next to nothing  
come  
coating each raindrop with silver  
    i pray  
the sun will laugh  
once the sun gets a job

    can i summon  
the interrupted sand  
where turnips grow?  
    please let this river end  
in paradise  
please chew this bark  
to a pulp  
    build  
a pew

Will

the trailheads marked by a tongue behind everybody

## The Bronze Morrison

i pinned the lawnmower's blades back  
in a saxon weave  
:  
it is beautiful  
to say it happened



## Breaking Waves

I lost the precious  
thing, her tint, her  
soul, the voice  
I locked on to, attention over the blue  
and bothered screen. Reach  
softly. Borrow the night  
once, give it back

News /// A Poetics

out of advice  
the plastic knife  
the dead bird and  
ventilation all nod at me  
to write little aphid  
in the wisps of my leg  
instantly dead  
and the silence broken by  
the tongueless building  
the skyless birds

Species: Star

i soften the soft light on the soft house  
and i live

fatherless and motherless too  
i harbor dread

The Prize /// A Poetics

my lineage my pigments  
with rainwater  
my atrium curling  
into the razor ready for the spoon

now doorway now patio  
now an arrow and phone  
halved barrels catch light  
in red spray by the road

dogear paradise  
and i'll return  
to ease my ascension under heaven's vanishing arch

Quietly Home

or one  
eyebrow

        i win  
and the great white leak  
in the great white roof  
thrones me in my bulb and splendor

Joy

a corner  
brightened

The Edge Plunged in Autumn

to clip and seam afternoon flowers  
    piercing earlier trees  
    i already have more  
and can make it small  
    which is joy

home: more outlets  
when i smash the gravity  
tucking my horizon into a string and a knob

A Great Day to Remember What the Child Saw

i tie myself to an airplane  
i cook squash and it softens

i switch the sky an oboe's  
    bright long light  
above the clouds –  
    long  
live my reed-splitting lips  
when i blow and curl my toes

werewolf moon my fluffy  
torch  
    wedged cheek to thigh  
i pulse and pattern with profit  
and i can open the rain



For My Friends

when i arrive  
what's next after? porridge  
as in children's stories  
cuttlefish bandits overarching vowels  
and so the disaster gets better

last night i shouted "acrobat"  
and i was close  
to saying "carrot"  
thinking *carrot*  
i passed through  
cemetery after cemetery  
and for a change  
bought beer in tonapah

VITA

Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts, English, Minor in Theater Arts, 2009  
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