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All Aboard the Succulent Wave

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ALL ABOARD THE SUCCULENT WAVE

By

Oscar William Oswald

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

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August 2012

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Oscar Oswald

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Department of English

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August 2012

ABSTRACT

All Aboard the Succulent Wave

By

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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

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Degrees:

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

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