

OLTERNOTIVES

Samuel Brzeski

O of a searching sucker on a protruding tentacle
pulling on the face of *Seaside girl little seven*
as she tries to devour a cephalopod alive
all 280 suckers defending until the end
of the livestreamed video
chtonic
cthulu
chronic
as you do

O ye of little Faith

O of the lips, encircling the cavity
a peripheral circumference of padded flesh
around the mouth—the cavern, the orifice, the tunnel
around the voice—the breath, the pulse, the resonance

Oops-a-daisy

O as a multiplicity of potential personalities
each having a momentary yet momentous effect upon my internal monologue

O is a page
O is a sage
O is an ex
O is the next
O is a goof
O is a kook
O is a position
O is an omission

One foot in the grave

O as a return to a tradition of oral narratives
the daily voice
the quotidian vernacular
the lingering lingo
a learnt language
of aleatory aphorisms

One hit wonder

- O as an opposition to X:
 - O with an empty ravenous belly
 - X as a negation of that hunger
 - O as an unobstructed space for alternatives
 - X to shut them down
 - O for a feeling response
 - X for a decidedly empirical methodology
 - O for a question
 - X for an answer
 - O for a conjunction
 - X for a connection
 - O noughts
 - X crosses
 - O wins
 - X losses

OXOXO

Gossip girl signing off

- O as a preface to worship
 - the mouth opening, widening
 - neck craning forward, soon to embrace the pose of the exultant O

- O as the preface to pleasure
 - the mouth opening, widening
 - neck craning forward, soon to embrace the pose of the exultant O

O mournful misery¹

O solitude!²

O Friend,
begin a loftier song³

O Superman
O Judge
O Mom and Dad⁴

O God in Heaven

O Heavenly Spirit

O Jesus

O.K.

Open Mouth of the Fool

The first card of the Major Arcana, The Fool is generally a positive card indicating new beginnings. If it appears in your readings it could mean that you are on the verge of an exciting, unexpected new adventure. Your new adventure will bring you along a path which may require you to make a leap of faith, but you will grow as a result of this experience. The change this card can bring will usually be a welcome one.

Off with his head

Okey-dokey

O caught a reflection of himself in the glass of a shop window

In the mirror, he sees himself there where he is not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; he is over there, there where he is not, a sort of shadow that gives his own visibility to himself, that enables him to see himself there where he is absent: such is the utopia of the mirror.⁵

O, what a heaven is love

O, what a hell⁶

Offhand remarks

For a while I have been corresponding with O about the sounds in our ears and the words on our tongues. O talks about comets, Jonathon Richman and going to the desert. I talk about fire, blue skies and my friend who killed herself. When we first met I said something disparaging about the country in which I was currently visiting, a comment that I immediately regretted.

O sent me a poem that she wrote.

It was about sharing the same dream.

It was about being thinly spread on a pane of glass.

It was about roasting chicken on top of raw sourdough.

Oh that summer feeling is gonna haunt you for the rest of your life⁷

Octopus Oracle named Paul

Paul was a common octopus who could predict the results of football matches. He had a career spanning 2008 to 2010 based out of the Sea Life Centre in Oberhausen, Germany. Accurate predictions in the 2010 World Cup brought Paul worldwide attention as an animal oracle. During divinations, Paul's keepers would present him with two boxes containing food. The boxes were identical except for the presence of the differing national flags of the relevant upcoming football match. Whichever box Paul ate from first was considered his prediction for victory. Paul correctly chose the winning team in four of Germany's Euro 2008 matches, and all seven of their matches in the 2010 World Cup. He also correctly chose Spain as the winner of the 2010 World Cup final.

In all, Paul amassed an overall record of 12 correct predictions out of 14 attempts.

Paul's success rate was approximately 85.7%.

Paul had an agent. Paul's agent was called Chris Davies.

Paul died on 26 October 2010, aged 2 and a half, which is normal for Octopus years. Chris Davies said *It's a sad day. Paul was rather special but we managed to film Paul before he left this mortal earth.*

On cloud nine

Obedience

there are two kinds—

we can obey the force of gravity or we can obey the relationship of things⁸

Occultisms—a list of seven practices

1. Hermeticism
2. Seances
3. Demonism
4. Human Sacrifice
5. Satanism
6. Divination
7. Necropants

Open houses

One man bands

Open hearts clubs

One night stands

I kissed you when your lips were formed in the hard circumference of an O. This was not a move you took to prepare for the kiss, but in fact was a result of you being halfway through saying the word *balcony*. Yes I kissed you whilst you were in the middle of saying a word—caught quite abruptly—and the rhythm of your breathing was not quite ready for the kiss. As a result of this surprise, you inhaled a sharp breath of air just before our lips met. This did not result in the gasping swoon of romance that I perhaps had imagined, but instead procured a sound rather more reminiscent of the pressurisation of a confined area.

I have never been very good at romantic timing.

Of all the gin joints

in all the towns

in all the world

she walks into mine⁹

O Come All Ye Faithful

Joyful and Triumphant¹⁰

Ort proctice:

If Music is Muzak,

then Art is Ort,

Painting is Peintang,

Sculpture is Skullpture,

Architecture is Architakture,

and so on.¹¹

O is telling stories
to a wide circle around a campfire
one howling chronicler performing
with odyssean orations of disorderly events
told through stretched lips with a long tongue

Oh you thrill me
I know you, you, you thrill me
Darling, you, you, you, you thrill me
Honest, you do¹²

Old chestnut

Old hat

Offret

In 1985, when filming the climactic final scene of *Offret*, Andrei Tarkovsky's last film, the camera jammed and the footage was not captured. In this scene, Alexander, the struggling male protagonist, reaches a cathartic mental episode and burns down his family home. Alexander believes that he is committing an act of self sacrifice in order to save his family and the world from certain destruction. The house burnt to the ground, and the camera jammed. Tarkovsky panicked, thought his film was ruined, and retreated into a deep depression. Rather than give up on this scene so integral both to Alexander's resolution and to Tarkovsky's vision, the house was built again and burnt again. The second time it was filmed using two cameras.

Opportunity

In 2018, on the evening of experiencing the climactic final emotional episode at the end of a tumultuous romantic relationship, I watched a large uninhabited house burn from my apartment window. For a moment, it looked like the entire block would light on fire and torch my current residence in the process. In this scene, O, the struggling male protagonist, reached a cathartic mental episode and considered leaving every one of his belongings to burn in the shared home in an act of self renewal. The blaze was stopped before this could happen. O panicked, knew the momentary plan of renewal was ruined, and retreated into a deep depression. Rather than attempt to regain the feeling of awareness that O felt on that night, instead I travelled to Berlin, where my mind was built again and burnt again.

Odour of sage slowly seeping
from an oblong collection of oddly shaped sticks
smouldering and smoking through the unburdened rooms
of a newly procured abode

Out of sight

Out of mind

Over the moon

Out of sorts

Open season

Open palms

Olympian effort

O is meditating before drinking his morning coffee. He employs the mindfulness of breathing method of meditation; drawing a breath in through the nose, holding and counting, before tensing his lips in a tight round circumference whilst expelling the outward breath.

He is repeating this methodology whilst trying to block out the following background noises:

- roadworks
- downstairs neighbour's radio
- belly rumbles
- memory of something inappropriate he said to a quasi-friend at a party approximately eleven months ago
- seagull
- car engine
- right shoulder pain
- fart
- void
- tap drip
- late

Optical illusions

Tim Leary, in his LSD experiments of the 1960s, searched for the possibility of a collective consciousness through synchronising the consumption of large doses of LSD in a group environment. These occurrences took place in houses in which all of the rooms were connected by intercom. Participants shared their hallucinogenic experiences and spiritual awakenings into a microphone, which was then broadcast across the whole house. Particular attention was given to those who were experiencing bad trips. Their screams, wails and projected horrorscapes were shared with all at a maximum volume, echoing around the abode.

I have read that the intention of this practice was so that the negative experiences could be distilled in the collective consciousness of the group trip, but all I can think about is the horrific sonic shockwave of several contagious individuals in dire existential panic rapidly transferring the pain of the void through auditory transmission.

So many sonorous vocal vibrations in a confined and constricted area.

Ouija boards

translator of the sub-conscious

or a gateway to the spirit world

whatever they might be

they are listed on Wikipedia

as being suitable for ages eight and up

Organised chaos

O, I am slain!¹³

Open the pod bay doors, HAL¹⁴

Orion's belt

Rather than the more familiar three star constellation seen in the sky, this can also refer to the collar of Gentle Rosenberg's cat (also named Orion) in the film *Men in Black*. In this collar can be found an entire galaxy—the Arquillian Galaxy. *Men in Black* further invades our sense of scale of what could constitute a housing for a galaxy in the closing scenes of the film. As the camera steadily zooms out from a suburban street in America, we see the planet, the solar systems, the Milky Way, etc, finally to reveal that the galaxy that we are inhabiting is actually contained within a marble. Our marble/galaxy is in a sack of other marbles/galaxies that appear to be part of some type of intergalactic marble fight between two monstrously massive translucent blue beings.

Ocean Drive

Don't know why you're so blue
Sun's gonna shine on everything you do
And the sky is so blue
Sun's gonna shine on everything you do 15

Out there

When astronauts saw Earth from afar for the first time, they described a cognitive shift in awareness after seeing our planet hanging in the void. It's been more than 50 years since the Apollo 11 mission took three astronauts — Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins — to the moon and back. On July 16, 1969, the day of the launch, the Apollo 11 crew became some of the first people to look down at Earth from space. Aldrin called it *a brilliant jewel in the black velvet sky*.

This state of mental clarity was called the overview effect.

*In space, no one can hear you whistle*¹⁶

O is making crop circles again

This time he is taking extreme care to ensure that each plant is bent at exactly the same angle

One swallow doesn't make a summer

Opus Magnum

In alchemy, with reference to the divine work of creation and the plan of salvation within it, the alchemistic process as a whole was called the *Opus Magnum* or *Great Work*. In it, a mysterious chaotic source material called *materia prima*, containing opposites still incompatible and in the most violent conflict, is gradually guided towards a redeemed state of perfect harmony, the healing *Philosopher's Stone* or *lapis philosophorum*.

First we bring together, then we putrefy, we break down what has been putrified, we purify the divided, we unite the purified and harden it.

*In this way is One made from man and woman.*¹⁷

Out on a limb

Off the wall

Often forgotten

On the wagon

On the warpath

One's own essence

The Gnostics believed that the first and most fundamental form of knowledge is good news, and concerns the divine nature of one's own essence: the soul appears as a divine spark of light. The second is bad news and concerns the terror of the situation: the spark of light is subject to the influence of external dark forces. Imprisoned within the coarse dungeon of the body, the soul is betrayed by the external senses; the demonic stars sully and bewitch the divine essence of one's nature in order to prevent a return to the divine home.

O, wind,
if winter comes,
can spring be far behind?¹⁸

Osiris

The ancient Egyptian god of fertility, agriculture, the afterlife, the dead, resurrection, life, and vegetation. Quite a busy god. This multitasking deity was one of the first to be associated with the mummy wrap. When his brother, Set, cut him up into pieces after killing him, Osiris' wife Isis collected all the remaining pieces of his body and wrapped them in fabric to create some semblance of the whole that he used to be.

Also a brand of skate shoes.

One for the money and the free rides

It's two for the lies that you denied
All rise
All rise¹⁹

Orbital rings

The gravity of Saturn ripped apart one of its moons that ventured too close. The ruins of it can be seen in the dusty rings that form an orbital disk around the planet, crowning the act of violent destruction with a halo made from the zombie moon.

Saturn aka Kronos aka Time.

Saturn is the melancholy planet. Death bringer. Time keeper. If death is the horizon of life, then Saturn is sliced by its own horizon line.

Saturn aka Kronos aka Time.

Once in a blue moon

O is playing Halo

he can't quite get the hang of it today
the controller feels strange in his hands
his palms sweat too much
his mouth is dry and his head aches

One for the road

Old soldiers

never die

they simply

fade away

O, what a tangled web we weave,

When first we practice to deceive!²⁰

O for a life of Sensations

rather than of Thoughts²¹

Oh, and in case I don't see ya:

Good Afternoon,

Good Evening,

and Good Night²²

Adaptations, derivations and replications from the following sources:

- ¹ *From the Temptations* // Robert Smithson
- ² *O solitude! if I must with thee dwell* // John Keats
- ³ *O Friend, Begin A Loftier Song* // Elizabeth Stoddard
- ⁴ *O Superman* // Laurie Anderson
- ⁵ *Of other spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* // Michel Foucault
- ⁶ *Blurt, Master Constable* // Thomas Dekker
- ⁷ *That Summer Feeling* // Jonathon Richman
- ⁸ *Gravity and Grace* // Simone Weil
- ⁹ *Casablanca (1942)*
- ¹⁰ *O Come, All Ye Faithful* // Anonymous Cistercian monks
- ¹¹ *Beige Pursuit* // Sara Magenheimer
- ¹² *You Send Me* // Sam Cooke
- ¹³ *Hamlet* // William Shakespeare
- ¹⁴ *2001: A Space Odyssey (1969)*
- ¹⁵ *Ocean Drive* // Lighthouse Family
- ¹⁶ *Alien (1979)*
- ¹⁷ *Büchlein vom Stein der Weisen* // Unknown
- ¹⁸ *Oda to the West Wind* // Percy Bysshe Shelley
- ¹⁹ *All Rise* // Blue
- ²⁰ *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* // Walter Scott
- ²¹ *Letter to Benjamin Bailey* // John Keats
- ²² *The Truman Show*

Written as a response to the interaction between the two exhibitions *Department of X* by Nanna Hougaard, and *Concepts of O* by Kjersti Sundland.

Hougaard's sound installation *Department of X* explored the formation of empirical scientific and academic knowledge through the algorithmic reconfiguration of several conversations between researchers in various disciplines. The work was experienced in a confined area surrounded by speakers, with an intermittent light source. The exhibition took place at Lydgalleriet, Bergen, between 10 Jan and 2 Feb 2020.

Concepts of O looked at alternative sources of esoteric and occult knowledge practices, and suggested ways in which a mystical or magical perspective could help us to understand a contemporary global economy of attention. Sundland's exhibition contained conductive copper structures, recorded accounts of mystical experiences and objects that were subjected to instances of interference. The exhibition took place at Kunsthall 3,14, Bergen, between 10 Jan and 23 Feb 2020.

Samuel Brzeski is the Lydgalleriet Writer in Residence for 2020.