

- O¹ s.m.** 1. Letra do alfabeto; o seu nome é *o* e representa os fonemas vocálicos posteriores ou velares de abetura media. 2. Nome da letra *o*. **obs.** Fonoloxicamente hai dous tipos de *o*, un aberto [ɔ] (*porta*) e outro pechado [o] (*lonxe*).
- O² art.** Artigo determinado masculino singular (*o libro*).
- O³ pron.pers.** Forma do pronome persoal de terceira persoa, acusativo masculino singular (*non o quero*).
- O⁴** Símbolo químico do osíxeno.
- O⁵** Abreviatura de oeste (O.).
- Ó¹ [ɔ]** Resultado do encontro da preposición *a* e o artigo masculino *o* (*vai ó mar*). **Ó que**, tan pronto como, así que. **obs.** Na escrita é admisible tamén a forma *ao*, que ten idéntica pronunciación [ɔ].
- Ó² interx.** Expresa diversas impresións, como sorpresa, admiración, asombro, pena, alegría, etc.; ¡oh! (*¡ó, que desgracia!*)

From the *Gran diccionario Xerais da lingua*

The continual and necessary transfer of knowledge in text and within the conventions and broken conventions of textuality is—like breath and like language itself—also in the *O*.

I think of the chains of citation that rhythms carry in any language and anywhere in the world.

At first, it was the *ô* of French, of Baudelaire and Mallarmé, of Rimbaud: that sound of surprise or longing come from the inner pulse of the body. A small sound, a syllable, a scribble, barely a scribble. Powered from a respiration, the expulsion of air from the lungs by the pressure of the diaphragm, the centre of embodiment.

Solace. *Sol. Soleil.*

Then it was the *o* and *ó* of Galician, *galego*, the *ó* being that same surprise, and the *o* simply a definite article. I say “a” definite article because unlike in English, where “the” serves all purposes, in Galician, as in other romance tongues, the definite article “agrees” with the grammatical gender and number of the noun: *o, os, a, as*. It makes me giggle that we have four definite articles in Galician, as what could be less definite than four instead of one? Yet in Galician, the *o* is not “definite,” but “determined,” *o artigo determinado*. Determinated? Un-terminated? Unending?

Further, in Castilian (which people call “Spanish” because of colonization), *o* is or. Or. I like that quite a bit too, *o* as an indeterminacy, or as a determinacy left to the reader to make good on, to select.

The Galician *o* is the word that I coaxed into Canadian English in the titles of three books of poetry or of “poetry-research-struggle-amend” that were published on the cusp of and in the first decade of the twenty-first century: *O Ciudadán* (2001), *O Cadoiro* (2007), *O Resplandor* (2010).

The *O* in these titles, read by speakers of English on the cover of a book in English, mutated into *Oh* or *Ô*, the breaking-open in surprise or admiration or longing that admits a queer endeavour. For I received my *O* back from readers as *Oh*: the exclamatory surprise scribble out of the pulmonary apparatus that keeps us breathing.

But my word *O*? In Galician, yes, it is grammatically gendered masculine (questioned and inhabited as a lesbian girl in *O cidadán*, a book that responds to Europe and to the possibility of woman as citizen) so as to accompany its noun: *ciudadán*. In English, reading “ciudadán,” we suspect *citizen* even if we don’t know the word and—in 2001 at least—can’t find it in a dictionary, we receive *citizen* as strangeness, perhaps, as the *future/past stranger in our midst* whom we accept among us (and this is crucial—the border must be penetrable to be a border at all). Then *O Cadoiro*: the falling place, the waterfall, the place of falling down, and thus: of poetry. Making poetry is a kind of falling down, the book says, a humility, a making-small (but intense), inherited from the medieval cantigas of the Iberian Peninsula written in Galician-Portuguese, a radical lyric turn from speaking to god and history to addressing instead the singular and secular: another . . . *human*.

And *O Resplandor*! In English, can we help but read *splendour* there? So again, we don’t need a translation . . . the mysterious splendour, re-peated, re-splendoured . . . it is another word, again, for *poetry*.

Poetry again!

In its very definition, a vibratory splendour.

“I write it so as not to fOrget,” she says.

“Oh,” they say. Oh.