

Reading (Story of) O

Pauline Reage's notorious novel *Histoire d'O* (1954) was originally written as a series of love letters to an absent lover. Every night for three months, parents and son sound asleep nearby, she wrote in her notebook, lying on her side with her feet tucked up under her, a soft black pencil in her right hand....

Reading (Story of) O (published soon by Uniformbooks, Uk) brings together *(Story of) O* a graphic and semantic reworking of the original story (English and French words coexisting on the page) accompanied by two fictional texts *(Story of) A* and *(Story of) E*, and *Reading Notes*, a series of suggestions to read this text, so that you may find your way through it as through you own story.

Sitting in our own little world our eyes wander between what we see what we know and what we seek, heart and mind hovering in-between. Some words speak to us more than others. We pick one, caress it with our breath, just enough to make it ours, our self-consciousness temporarily abolished by the vertigo of another's language.

"To a greater or lesser extent, everyone depends on stories, on novels, to discover the manifold truth of life. Only such stories, read sometimes in a trance, have the power to confront a person with his fate. This is why we must keep passionately striving after what constitutes a story." George Bataille. Blue of Noon appendix: The author's foreword (1957)

Reading Notes

On the first page of (Story of) **O** you see letters aligned on the page. You imagine the words they form addressed to you. Or perhaps you remember writing them, but to whom? *Il y a toujours en nous quelqu'un que nous-mêmes nous enchainons, que nous enfermons que nous faisons taire.*¹

Perhaps there are a few of you, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 sitting not too close to each other, at arms length, with a clear view. You are reading aloud to yourself, seeking **O** in every word, your voice barely audible to those nearby. Words reach you from other mouths, echoing yours. You may want to listen for a while or repeat them, echoes of your own.

There is a number printed at the bottom of each page, each digit indicates the maximum number of words containing traces of **O** that can be released. 1 on page 1, 3 on page 3, 2 or 5 on page 25, 7 or 9 on page 79 etc...

Others may be present watching, listening. *Il faut un complice pour ce genre d'écriture, comme il faut un complice pour ce genre d'action.*² All ears are suspended between echoes and premises of **O** unbound for a moment, knowing that love is not the first desire that fixes it, or the hazardous gestures bringing two minds and two bodies together, but the waiting and doing in between that first spark (*un regard / un geste / une lettre*)³ and a full stop.

O go stroll
notice no

¹ *There is always inside of us somebody whom we keep in chains, locked up, whom we silence.*

² *One needs an accomplice for such writing, as one needs an accomplice for such actions.*