The OC: Season One
A Poemization

Francis Raven
* a dusi/e-chap
www.dusie.org

francisraven@gmail.com
Preface

Brothers bound not by blood but fate deals the upper hand. Well, I don’t know what to say except that you totally had my back out there.

It is often repeated: your parents choose your experiential superiors as surrogates. They are always wise beyond their years on account of their poverty, their raw skill their charisma is fully developed.

Without biology hindering the case teen dramas bury us in the question of deciding who we want to be.

It’s important, these trivial matters are important: who stands behind you, who you believe, what risks you take when...
1: Pilot

Let's start with numbers:
the drama's odd.

Is it three girls and two guys or
vice versa? Actually

it's even with a rotating fifth:
Ryan & Marissa, Seth & Summer

with the extra voice (Luke, Oliver, Anna)
providing the show with the necessary tension.

The premise sparks with a crime to make worlds collide
in the absence of a plan. Not Ryan's own scheme: no, a sibling

pulls the threads of his wife beater: Get Smart!
Besides a pilot is not even really part of the series;
sometimes the actors change; they definitely don't have as much money
for sets, but the acorn of the show must nevertheless demonstrate

its ability to spread its limbs over households nationwide:
except, as a result of Nielsen

a bias remains against shows with a fervent audience
but with little universal appeal but they will take him

into their home; Sandy, Kirsten, and Seth will take him in.
The question is: will you?
2: The Model Home

If you break the law
the main question is
are you subject to the laws
of the land
or not?

He is trying to convince Kirsten that
he belongs, first
in her model home
and then
as her son.

We’re from different worlds
means different laws apply.
In hers, the cost of a mistake
is lower than in his
where any wrong move
locks the cuffs.

Fortuitously, the way he laughs
indicates that he’s already
a part: an interruption
that will show
everyone (including himself)
who they are.
The Gamble

It is burned as bridges

are not just his lawyer: how will it be okay?

Of course, Sandy must witness some of the cruelty
if only to instigate Ryan’s second childhood: “an improved infancy.”

Luckily, it was only a model
and not real life
left for flames, though it signified the smoldering of
certain associations. Therefore,
to become new parents

the birth mother must get so drunk
she admits to her own failures and splits:

    You hold your family together;
    I tear mine apart.

And the gravity of the show is finely woven

but, news flash, immunity is not for sale:
Dawn’s trashy booze gives way to Kirsten’s own Chardonnay binges
in a later season:

    way over our head.
4: The Debut

(Episode Score: 9.4)

Every figure must be debuted to try it on for size: debutantes, theft, a new family member, romance. You have to let people judge you. You simply have to.

The camera pays attention, objectifies. There’s a stage for a reason. *You know what girls find sexy? Confidence.*

But with that bluster some are decked; some are almost expelled. Some answers are not worth hearing.
5: The Outsider

There is a both ways.

As the foreign enters he brings an entrance into his world.

The moral: it’s not a good idea.

In an early novel that seems funny now, rogue planets were expected to enter the solar system, pulverizing the earth before leaving. Or, you could go with the more recent comment courtesy of George: the theory is that if one’s relationship self and one’s independent self met it would bring about the cataclysmic end of one’s independent self.

On the other hand The Outsiders (Coppola, 1983) are always hot: the tension between two groups The Greasers and The Socials “Socs” puts Ponyboy Curtis and his best friend Johnny Cade in a bad spot. Ryan is always in a bad spot:

between his potential and his violent roots there is very little to say and he is not good at saying it in a pool party for two that will inevitably be short lived.
6: The Girlfriend

The awkwardness of introductions
because asking what we are is all that we are
as far as the eye can see. Gabriella’s
hot body slinks out of the pool, shocking
that she’s with such an older man.

The parents’ plane is separate and separating
but worlds colliding
is necessary; interference is part of growing up.

*You hooked up with my grandma?*
*Actually, that’s kinda hot.*

The impossibility of parental satisfaction brings its own clouds.
But the sun is shining. The sun is always shining in California.

Of course, seeing something means something
always witnessing world-building you don’t understand
but which gives you insight into that world, though not your own
forces you to do something, changes something,

*You’re too late* means she’s already had sex with Luke.

Starcrossed also means crossing.
7: The Escape

Getting out of the city
was always a realization
although philosophy happened within

a realization that needs to be hidden
under guise of a nerdy comic book convention

but he doesn’t know what happens in TJ
because what happens in TJ stays in TJ

except
whatever occurs out of the city
remains out of the city

is not true

if the people are the same
the events are the same:
impending divorce, cheating boyfriend:

the inside breaks into the outside:
Marissa’s overdose.
8: The Rescue

After the excess: consequence.
Her mother is reasoning back to causes:

First, she assumes Ryan
is the prime mover:

_You’ll never get the chance_  
to see her again; you even try

_and I’ll make sure you’re thrown_  
_back in juvie where you belong._

Then she blames Jimmy:

_You’re the one who destroyed this family._  
_You lied to us. You stole money from your clients_

_and your friends. Why do you think_  
_she took all those pills?_

But Julie never sees herself
as possibly capable

_of causing that kind of damage_  
in her daughter’s life.

But, the more she acts
the more screwed up the world becomes

_which leaves the kids_  
to plan their own escape from

_Marissa’s impending sojourn to a mental institution:_  
_Summer in a candy-striper uniform and_

_Luke finally showing his allegiance, directing their getaway:_

_Take the stairs._
9: The Heights

On the verge after summer
trepidation before
the first day of school:
are we scared of things being the same or of completely changing?

*I'm not nervous, I'm just not going* is reversed into
*From Such Great Heights:*

“But everything looks perfect from far away
come down now, but we'll stay...”

but we’re not talking about space
as in the video
just a ferris wheel

you’ve jumped on
in a grand expression of love. Hence, the world is composed
of gestures, not of facts

nor of words, except *we’re always one mistake away
from losing you.* The perspective from that kiss in the

wobbly
cheap carnival ride

from those heights
from the idea of change

is that the first
in a succession
of firsts

is the day of continuity: The choices will all contend
for control of the
oncoming sequence of stability. That is,
growth requires multiple seasons.
10: The Perfect Couple

Part of the point is that Ryan disrupts their lives just enough for (at least) the viewer to see that despite the glamour their lives aren’t any more put together than the kid from Chino’s.

Part of the point is the glee of watching others fall; but the crack in the glee is the fact of the glee which is why our self-image is repaired only when we cheer as Summer, like, realizes that she, um, likes Seth Cohen

and kisses him, fully challenging her self-image commencing the arc of the background romance: the backbone supporting all the melodrama.
Just as
we only have one President
so we only have one family
which makes it seem like
it's just a matter
of timing
which it's not
in the same way
a man can only serve one master
is not a matter
of timing. There is something deeper
in the choice
than the moment
we choose, which was
the moment a brother released you from prison
(you've got a chance little brother;
you've got to leave me behind;
leave all this behind)
after you fulfilled a duty: to procure a stolen car
and deliver it to a chop shop to pay off his debt
while the mixture of your old life
and the direction of your SUV
firmly unites you & Marissa:
it's good to be home.
The obvious answer is that Luke's constant bullying and homophobia is due to his latent knowledge that his father is gay. Thus, the discovery is that much more heartbreaking.

There was a lie (his dad's, that he was straight) and to cover it up another lie was told (a more systematic non-linguistic lie concerning the nature of their family and thus, Luke's actions towards dorks such as Seth) by another. That is, his self-identity was forced into being the negation of his father. That's okay, fathers are always killed or forgotten about which allows Ryan and Luke to be friends, an utter necessity for the show.
Sing a round with me:
   Because before Chrismukkah
   There was festivus
   That holiday
   For the rest of us.

The message is:
you don’t have to choose
but the possibility of a choice
is pure indie-rock wish fulfillment
and it’s not really until this episode
that the viewer realizes that
Seth is the hero for the writers, their alter-ego.
The choice they
(actually, a singular woman writer, Stephanie Savage)
present him with
firmly indicates their allegiance:
between the hot and the cool.

Two gifts exemplify this dichotomy
that can only end in tears and growth:
Anna assertively hands him
a graphic novel she wrote and illustrated:
The Adventures of Seth Cohen and Captain Oats.
She’s the writer. He often chooses the written.
Summer, hearing that he likes comic books
wears a slanderously sexy
Wonder Woman costume under her dress
for him to undress.

Thus, both gifts
make Seth a hero. However,
he must decide the conditions under which
he is willing to be the hero of his own life.
14: The Countdown

Funny how a good year
passes so close to another’s worst
   as intimately, spontaneously:
   the Thank You after an I Love You

is the changes everything.
That is, there are no plateaus
just a constant climbing, hacking fingers into stone
and a falling of your girl
into another man’s posh hotel room

as you rush, slow motion style
towards new year’s midnight
against impossible obstacles:
e.g. a surrogate aunt’s debt-ridden debauchery
locking you in the poolhouse
until she needs you to break up the party

and you break free just in time to
breathless snap penthouse’s door open
to the beat of both the countdown and
the end of the soundtrack
   (“Dice” by Finley Quaye & William Orbit;
    Featuring Beth Orton).
15: The Third Wheel

The third wheel is sure it can be lost.
The third wheel explains that the joke is that it only requires two wheels to coast.
The third wheel is sure there’s nothing to it.
The third wheel was the first time a band, Rooney, made a special appearance.
The third wheel needs advice on how to turn, how to tell Summer.
The third wheel is an alternating wheel.
The third wheel is where the show gets its dissatisfaction, known as suspense.
The third wheel is also the wheel that connects.
The third wheel covers up the fact that he wants to be the second wheel.
The third wheel is never just a bagel.
The third wheel is slashed so Ryan offers Luke help changing it.
The third wheel isn’t clued into the fact that Seth and Anna are dating.
The third wheel has never been to Paris.

It’s a good day for third wheels.
It’s a good day for a third wheel to fall off.
Sandy married Jimmy's highschool sweetheart, Kirsten thus changing Newport's history forever. However, after Jimmy went bankrupt and lost Julie to Kirsten’s father Caleb, he and Sandy “The Sandman” Cohen finally became friends even though Jimmy, in a moment of weakness, tried to kiss Kirsten while she was helping him paint his divorcee’s bachelor pad after she lent him $100,000 without telling Sandy.

Before they are rivals men must recognize each other as such;
as men; many lights flash in many heads

since Jimmy’s favorite job ever was managing The Lighthouse in his 20s Sandy concludes that they should partner to reopen that venerable Newport restaurant again but Jimmy hasn’t really grown up. Oliver hasn’t really bottomed out; he is just looking for a ploy into Marissa’s heart and though he will slip past rivalry his sleazy lack of self-consciousness, his inability to recognize others as self-conscious will allow him only to destroy never to get the girl.

Similarly, the restaurant will only ever end up being a negation: cash.
17: The Rivals

The female me, but an inversion is not hot.
Seth and Anna never fight. What’s hot about that?

But if the quality, humor, they see in her new other
is the quality you are known for

your jealousy will make you do the crazy.

You can always lie about your psychology.
and now I don’t trust you. You see, the letter

wasn’t for Marissa even though it was in Marissa’s locker.
It was (supposedly) for Natalie who ended up being a hotel clerk.

Of course, Oliver planned the whole mixup
“based on a guy a friend of mine dated

who faked having cancer to [hang on to her].”
Fortunately, that plot point would be short lived:

Oliver’s life extended only

from “The Best Chrismukkah Ever” (Season 1, Episode 13)
to “The Truth” (Season 1, Episode 18).

Death to the death of characters!
They live in the mind of screens worldwide!
**18: The Truth**

*It’s not about what I believe, I wish it was. It’s about what you did.* Actions are their own proof; your intuitions must find their own. They can’t always see the larger game plan, that Oliver’s footwork, tight with riches, has been designed to ensnare your earnest instincts. They’re all you’ve had to go on up to this point: *but if you want to stay; if you want to be part of this family* [standing in for community] *you’re not going to go anywhere; you’re not going to see anyone unless Kirsten and I say it’s okay.* This, of course, will give you time to think about the fact that in outward appearance you and Oliver are remarkably similar: rage, loneliness, lack of stable parental figures. Unfortunately, this similarity will be a benefit to him for the first few rounds. You’ll have to hold your fists in check; he’ll know how to use them. But, importantly, the question of character will eventually reveal Oliver’s manipulations as the extravagances of his subjectivity pass into madness. He’ll think he’s teaching you a lesson, but he will, in fact, be the lesson, a lesson to the others about your character, but unfortunately he will also be a lesson to you, that although you have been taken in you are still alone, can’t trust her, shouldn’t. Judgments require more than intuition, more than what they can’t see. Unfortunately, when the proof is in, the pudding is cooked, hardened against relation.

Locked in his hotel room, fake suicide behind him he picks up the gun and is revealed as a fraud;

a defeater, defeated
as you must decide if Marissa’s lack of trust

can be mended. The flipside of beautifully blowing in the wind:
growth cannot be taken for granted. A show has to earn its moments.
19: The Heartbreak

If she’s there to talk about it
she’s there to change the equation.

There are always equations:
it’s a type of math you don’t understand.

You’re in a new city closer to the ocean.
You can go under: the dating has begun.

But underneath: the guns the lies the drinking the drugging
they remain the same. As numbers fall, scrambling emotions

one of the wheels, Oliver, has succumbed to the winds of other shows;
thus, the physics of drama requires another: an imbalance.

If you think she’s just here
for one episode to serve some cocktails and

I can’t see if those are shrimp
but the point is Look how easy it was for

someone to come into our lives, come between us.
Therefore, who knows how far this flirting

with Theresa
will go?
20: Telenovela

They've been showing reruns of the O.C. on the soap opera network.  
And what has been learned from this proximity?  
First, you can do anything. I won't even give examples. 
But, you can make people appear  
from anywhere, from any lousy time in anyone's history: BEWARE!
But, Second, these connections will be overloaded with emotion.  
Emotions hide the extravagance of the situation, conceal outlandishness.  
If the emotions are real the scene cannot help feeling real. That is,  
until Seth breaks the suspension bridge of fiction with his constant mention  
of Victor's sexy handlebar moustache in ironically watched Telenovelas  
whose function is to hide the heroism of his romantic last stand on the coffee cart  
whose hands are the moment of rewind that never fail to bring tears.
21: The Goodbye Girl

What kind of kiss was it? What level of kiss? Where were your feet? Where was your tongue? What did the kiss mean? How did you even get the part? How did you put enough words together for the audition? What’s a possible answer to that question, anyway? Do you really want to know? Dating the show, was it a Christina/Madonna peck? Or was it a full on Al and Tipper Gore liplock? Does it change your feelings for Marissa? Where will Teresa live? Will she always feel like a second-class citizen if she moves to Newport? Why don’t you feel like that? Why do you fit right in? What are you, some sort of chameleon? You know she can’t move into the poolhouse, right? And everyone keeps asking, if she moves to Newport, will she rent or buy? Shouldn’t she go back to Chino and at least face Eddie? What’s the main difference between the real O.C. and the TV O.C.? Do you even know who the first actor cast was? Do you think it was you? Are you going to get her pregnant? Wouldn’t a teen pregnancy negate the originality of the show? If you get her pregnant will you want her to keep it? If she keeps it will you do the right thing? If she keeps it will the baby resurface in another season? Have you thought any of these things through? You really need to get thinking! If too many questions must remain unanswered your actions may be what are questionable.
Of course, the teen drama is all about finding ways of prying itself open making itself real again about finding the emotion stuck on the ferris wheel but we’ve been tricked too many times before.

Nothing can be straightforward anymore:

we must catch Julie and Luke in the act.

We must witness the absurdity of the TV Seth: Grady Bridges:
   Thank God I had my camera phone.
   They are the autograph of the 21st century.

   Trying too hard for a bon mot

along with the how does that guy do high school? Earning is self-aware.

It's the one time that Paris Hilton can make it real.
23: The Nana

There is a home away from home:
there is something you need.

You will bring it back.

What has happened since they took him in?
Ryan developed a sense of humor.

You will bring it back.

A reversal: seems like
I could get in a lot more trouble where I’m from.

You will bring it back.
The Proposal

In the admission of secrets

I'm leaving town, but that's what I want to tell Marissa. Please, please, five minutes it's not that much to ask

and then I'm gone

to unpack is to admit
that this life is real

but this life is real

but I think your best friend's room is really disheveled

sometimes it just takes a friend

to show you what you already know: a lot's changed in a year.

You are a self and have to go through life

“continuing to affirm the happiness of one's initial leap”

with Jimmy Cooper's name

on the liquor license it'll never go through, but since

selfhood is propaedeutic to learning

it appears that we will have to live with who we are

at least until the consequences of the following seasons take hold.
25: The Shower

A shower is not just what will wash over you; it also has to be thrown for you, at you.

You can bite your feelings, swallowing the pit of someone else getting in between you and your boyfriend on the eve of your mother’s wedding to a sugardaddy who is blackmailing you to move back in with her even though she tried to have you locked up, but you will still feel abandoned even if you don’t act so. That history is a fact, a stone off which our shower sprays. A shower is a spray of booze, of bitter relatives and gifts: as if you needed them the second time around.
26: The Strip

Dear O.C.,

I have watched you everywhere:
in Starbucks, in hotels, at home
on airplanes, and even on the chinatown bus
secretly and out in the open
with wine and with coffee
with dinner and with breakfast.
I have watched you
on sick days and in full summer health.

Dear O.C.,

I began watching you at the behest of a friend.
He said I should give you a try.
What’s it about? I asked.
It doesn’t matter; it’s so cool.
At first you were overbearing, ridiculous, pure fantasy.
I mean, kids don’t really live like that, do they?
But then, you were fantastic. To be honest, it was the passions you engendered:
wish fulfillment glued together with honest emotion:
the pleasure principle and the reality principle married at long last.
I just want you to know that I have always taken you seriously.
I have never, not once, liked you ironically.
It’s all or nothing with me.

Dear O.C.,

I love you every angle and every frame.
27: The Ties that Bind

which is not to be confused with the later Grey's Anatomy

These Ties That Bind (Airdate: Nov. 13th, 2008).

Stay with me
is what they always say
when someone is dying
as if staying awake
will prevent the end

of the season

but it won’t;
after you go to sleep tonight
there will be
no more

until next season

as innocence is bound to experience; as the place where you are

is bound to the place that is represented: that is, wouldn’t it be great if I could
actually watch you in Orange County? Or would that break some sort of time-

space continuum?

In that case, pleasure would tie itself inside the sail of reality

as the final credits rolled (Airdate: May 4th, 2004)

before summer.
Epilogue: Series Finale

The End’s Not Near, It’s Here
(Episode 92)

The viewer shoots six months into the future, six months after the earthquake shook everything away from its foundations. And what do we want to see after the plot is free from the necessity of another season? That is, what could we want from the end that we could not get from the beginning? Whatever the answer, we deserve an ending. We’ve stuck with the characters for long enough and we deserve something from them. But what is it that we deserve? They call it closure, but it is something more like the possibility of extension. We want the right choices to be made. We want the characters to fulfill themselves; that is, we want the characters to fulfill their Characters. Don’t for a second think that we don’t depend on them for our fulfillment.

A TV show, but especially a teen drama, thrives on the tension of the guy not getting the girl (think of Joey and Dawson as you think of Ryan and Marisa), not having fate line up for an easy life, and not making the right choices (then, if it’s a great TV show, showing the viewer the consequences of those choices). At the end, though, this tension can be released. Of course, in the case of the O.C., much of this discharge already occurred when Marissa was killed off at the end of the 3rd (and inarguably the worst) season. In an interview, the O.C.’s creator, Josh Schwartz, said about the decision to kill Marissa, “This was always going to be a season of great upheaval and change, and at the end of the year, with graduation and people moving out into different directions, we always knew that the show was never going to be the same.” To explain, Marissa was killed in a car chase at the end of their senior year; that is, she was killed right where most shows falter: between high school and college. Her death provided a poignant foil to the troubling shift that most shows face. Thus, killing off Marissa was a formalist’s answer to an essentially formal problem of teen dramas. It covered up, and therefore brought to a radical conclusion, certain aspects of the show, and allowed the fourth season some (often humorous) room to breathe. This is just to say that, in some sense, the fourth season of the O.C. was a bonus, for it allowed us to see the importance of the struggles of the characters apart from the central drama of the show (that is, apart from the tragic love between Marissa and Ryan).

In this extra inning, the characters are living in an era where the lessons of the remarriage comedy have been essentially absorbed. As Stanley Cavell defines this genre, the “central idea is that the validity or bond of
marriage is no longer assured or legitimized by church or state or sexual compatibility or children but by something I call the willingness for remarriage, a way of continuing to affirm the happiness of one’s initial leap, as if the chance of happiness exists only when it seconds itself.” That is, we know that happiness as a couple depends upon the flourishing of the individuals in that couple. There is no question of that. This is why Seth has to push Summer to be an environmentalist on her own (that has to is the viewer’s ethical demand). He says, “You gotta go, Summer.” She answers in a way that serves the purpose of assuring Seth that she loves him, “but what about us?” He replies, chivalrously, “This is for us, it’s for both of us.” That is, he has grown.

Our problem, different from the problems of the past, is that we don’t necessarily know what will make us flourish. We can only guess. But we can help each other guess (with the help of an epilogue). Julie will go to college and not marry either Gordon Bullitt or Frank Atwood; Seth and Summer will get married; Ryan will become a contractor. This ending is a seconding of selves for each of the characters. Happiness exists in the validity of eternal return, which comes in the infinite loop of reruns, and conquers such a return’s concomitant terror. Nietzsche writes that his “formula for human greatness is amor fati: that one wants to have nothing different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity...not merely to bear the necessary, but to love it.” An epilogue is a love of fate, at least a need to control fate, or the illusion that we do. Since an is presented to us as being in the future it can really only be a guess, a guess that is made between writer and audience, a promise that we make together, a performative of last words.