

D

I

S

K

C

H

R

a

Ö

I

D

B

S

m

n

T

a

I

n

O

DIAMONDS

PRINTED IN CANADA

COPYRIGHT  
CHRISTIAN  
BÖK ©2003

COACH HOUSE BOOKS

# DIAMONDS

CHRISTIAN BÖK

**DIAMONDS:** AN EXCERPT FROM **CRYSTALLOGRAPHY**  
SECOND EDITION REVISED · BY CHRISTIAN BÖK

SOLD AT: 1-800-367-6360 & [WWW.CHBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.CHBOOKS.COM)

C IS FOR DIAMOND

THE one gem  
made OF one

element — CARBON

CHIMNEY SOOT

CRUSHED COAL

CHARRED WOOD

FIRE at ITS CORE

my FATHER  
was a SAD  
GEMCUTTER

HE MADE JEWELS MORE PRECIOUS  
BY SMASHING THEM, SPOKE ONLY  
WORDS PARED DOWN TO THE EDGE  
OF THEIR SILENCE, AND STROVE

TO BREAK INTO (BREAK OUT OF)

each HOUSE  
OF MIRRORS

HELD AT THE TIP OF HIS TONGS

my FATHER  
TAUGHT me  
PRECISION

HE RETIRED, NERVES  
SHOT BY THE THREAT  
OF A SLIPPED RAZOR

a DIAMOND IS

TRANSPARENT CHARCOAL:

a DARKNESS

UNDER PRESSURE

SO INTENSE

ALL THINGS ARE

CLEAR, BUT JUST

THE eye sees

BE SURE TO REMEMBER:

THROUGH IT

DIAMOND DUST IS BLACK

my FATHER once

GAVE me a GIFT

an APACHE TEAR

a BLACK PEBBLE

OPAQUE UNTIL HE HELD IT

UP AGAINST DIRECT LIGHT

THEN THE SMOKE

TRAPPED INSIDE

BECAME VISIBLE

AFTER HOURS OF SOLITUDE  
WHEN DRUNK, HE RECALLED

THE NATIVE WIDOW  
WHO LAMENTED HER  
LOSS FOR SO LONG  
THE GREAT SPIRIT  
TRANSFIGURED HER  
TEARS INTO DROPS  
OF BLACK CRYSTAL  
THUS BEQUEATHING

TO ALL WHO FALL IN LOVE  
KEEPSAKES OF HER SORROW

my FATHER  
TOO BROKE  
TO BE WED  
NEVER GOT  
my MOTHER  
a DIAMOND

HE CLAIMED TO ADORE HER  
TOO MUCH TO PROFANE HER  
WITH GEMS MADE OF ASHES



BLOWTORCH a DIAMOND

ENKINDLED  
WHEN RUBY  
IT BLAZES

JUST AS  
MELTING DRY ICE

VAPORIZES AS A BREATH

ORGANIC STONE

NOT STERILE  
BUT BURNING

CRYSTALS MADE

FROM THE SAME

THING AS LIFE

LIFE: THE PERCENTAGE OF LIGHT THAT A DIAMOND  
REFLECTS BACK TOWARDS ITS VIEWER

FIRE: THE DEGREE TO WHICH A DIAMOND REFRACTS  
LIGHT INTO ITS COMPONENT COLOURS

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

my FATHER OPENED THE FIELD  
GUIDE TO CRYSTALS TO PAGES  
WITH FINE PRINT TO SHOW me  
HOW TO DECIPHER a LANGUAGE

He gave me HIS gemCUTTER'S  
eyepiece AND LEFT me alone  
TO REVEL IN DETAIL – EDGES  
OF SERIFS, FIBRES IN PAPER

ONLY LATER DID He TEACH me  
HOW TO SOUND OUT THE WORDS

LIFE x FIRE = BRILLIANCE (ALL THIS IS TRUE)

PLATO WAS  
THE FIRST  
TO REGARD

a DIAMOND as  
FROZEN QUINTESSENCE

a SOUL IN  
SUSPENDED  
ANIMATION

a VESTIGE OF HEAVEN  
WITHIN EARTH

my FATHER  
TAUGHT me  
PRECISION

HE STUDIED  
MINERALOGY  
AT ANTWERP

TENDED SAW  
FOR a FIRM  
IN BRÜCKEN

SAW  
one  
GEM

TAKE TWO  
YEARS TO  
BE SPLIT  
INTO TWO

ALL HIS LIFE an ATTEMPT  
TO see THE FREE POINT  
TRAPPED IN PERFECTION

DEI MUNDI

my FATHER  
PUT FAITH  
IN no GOD

a MEMBER OF THE CUBIC  
CRYSTAL SYSTEM

PLATONIC SOLIDS

a DIAMOND DENOTES  
THE HIGHEST  
STATE OF SYMMETRY

nature needs  
no TOOL  
and DIE  
to make

an IDEAL ARRAY  
OF CUTS, ACUTE ANGLES

ITS OCTAHEDRONS

CRYSTAL:  
S(HARD)S

D  
I n  
a m o  
I n  
D

a DIAMOND IS AN EQUILATERAL TRIANGLE  
THAT MIRRORS ITSELF THROUGH ONE SIDE

OVER DRINKS AFTER HOURS  
OF STRESS OVER DIAMONDS  
AN EXPERT IN THE MAKING  
OF FAKE GEMS BET NO ONE  
WAS ABLE TO TELL OF TWO  
GEMS WHICH WAS THE TRUE  
ONE, WHICH WAS THE COPY

WITHOUT  
USE OF EITHER  
SCRATCH  
PLATE OR LENS

NO JEWELLER  
WON THE BET  
BUT THE ONE

WHO LET  
THE TWO

GEMS  
DROP  
INTO

HIS CRÈME  
DE MENTHE

THE ONE THAT SANK  
SLOWER WAS A FAKE

adamas means INVINCIBLE

no KNOWN Jewel  
IN THE mineral KINGDOM  
RIVALs DIAMOND

KING OF STONES  
adamant IN THE silence  
no WORDS BREAK

IN(DI)VISIBLE as a STAR

ONLY DIAMONDS  
SCAR DIAMONDS

SAWYERS THOUGHT  
MY FATHER CRAZY

HIS MIND MAKING  
HIS HAND FINISH

THE HIS WAS  
DAY EYE CUT

ITS ADJUSTMENTS  
TO THE SAWBLADE

OPEN BY A STRAY  
CHIP OF DIAMOND

BEFORE BREAKING  
OUT IN A SCREAM

AFTERWARDS  
HIS REGRET

HIS SIGHT WAS SAVED  
BUT NOT THE DIAMOND



mAZARIN, RONDELLe, PERUZZI

a DIAMOND'S  
CUT IS JUST

TRILLIANT  
PENDELOQUE  
BRIOLETTE

a JEWELLER'S

CHIFFRE, MARQUISE, JUBILEE

PRETTY name  
FOR a WOUND

my FATHER never  
BREATHING a LIE  
BRILLIANTEERING

DESIGNED TABLES  
UPON WHICH ONLY  
THE eye FEASTED

FASHIONED GIRDLES  
AND CULETS TO FIT  
IMPERVIOUS ARMOUR

ERECTED PAVILIONS  
ABOVE WHICH KITES  
AND STARS HOVERED

THE BRUTED  
GEM SET IN  
ITS DOP IS  
SCOURED BY  
THE SCAIFE  
a GRINDING  
DISK OILED  
WITH a MIX  
OF DIAMOND  
POWDER and  
LUBRICANTS

a LAPIDARY  
GRAMOPHONE

ITS STYLUS  
WEARS AWAY  
ITS SONG  
even as IT  
SINGS IT

my SHOCK  
AT BLOOD

THE MEREST  
HAMMERBLOW  
on a BLADE  
WHOSE EDGE  
CUTS ALONG  
a KERF CAN  
SHEAR AWAY  
THE FAULTS  
OF any GEM

ADAMANTINE  
DISCIPLINE

INFLEXIBLE  
EXACTITUDE

WHERE HE NICKED  
a CHEEK SHAVING

TRANSPARENCY  
IS THE GAUGE  
OF ALL VALUE  
WHEN CUTTING  
WHEN WRITING

a DIAMOND IS  
an ABSENCE  
OF NOTHING  
BUT DARKNESS

OCCLUSIONS  
SUPPOSEDLY  
DEPRECIATE  
PERFECTION

PERFECTION

my FATHER SPOTTED FLAWS  
BY BREATHING ON a STONE

TO DULL THE LUSTRE  
THAT OBSCURED THEM

BUBBLES  
FEZELS  
CRACKS  
naATS  
CLOUDS  
GLATTS  
FRINGES

He SHOWED me a DIAMOND  
WHOSE DEFECT RESEMBLED  
a DIMINUTIVE BUTTERFLY

CaRBON STRAINS  
TO CREATE LIFE

IN THE IMAGE  
OF ITS FLAWS

DIAMOND IS FORMED BY DETONATING  
GRAPHITE IN a COMPACT CONTAINER

DIAMOND:  
FLAT BLACK  
  
GRAPHITE  
  
BENT CLEAR

[CRYSTALLIZED CARBON  
GRAPHITE AND DIAMOND  
HAVE NEARLY THE SAME

ATOMIC:     BLACK ICE  
MATRIX:     a LATTICE

a COLD JIGSAW PUZZLE  
ITS PIECES HEXAGONS;  
ABANDONED HONEYCOMB]

[SWEET SPACES  
BETWEEN WORDS  
BETWEEN ATOMS  
IN AMONG THEM  
STRONG BONDS]

my FATHER DETESTED      a BLUNT INSTRUMENT  
WRITING                      BY WHICH HE DULLED  
                                    EDGES OF PENKNIVES  
WITH a DULL PENCIL      (my OWN KNIVES) TO  
                                    SHARPEN THE POINTS  
WRITING                      made IN HIS manual  
TO HIM meant USING      ON DIAMOND-CUTTING

my FATHER ONCE STOLE a DIAMOND DISCARDED  
AS WORTHLESS AT WORK AND USING CORROSIVE  
AND SAWBLADE ETCHED INTO IT HIS MONOGRAM  
AS THOUGH TO BE RID OF a SCAR BY LEAVING  
BEHIND HIM a SCAR, a name TO OUTLAST HIM

MEDIEVAL ARABS NEEDED NO LASERS TO CARVE  
THEIR PRAYERS ONTO THE FACES OF DIAMONDS

a SHAH CAPTURED IN WAR REFUSED TO SURRENDER  
THE LOCATION OF THE KOH-I-NUR, THE MOUNTAIN  
OF LIGHT, EVEN THOUGH TORTURERS BLINDED HIM

a DUKE WHO NEVER LET HIS GEMSTONES BE TAKEN  
FROM HIS SIGHT FOR FEAR OF LOSING THEM LOST  
THE FLORENTINE WHILE IN BATTLE, THE DIAMOND  
FOR DAYS AMID WEEDS THEN MISTAKEN FOR GLASS  
BY A BOY WHO SOLD IT TO A MONK FOR A FLORIN

AVOIRDUPOIS  
TROY ounces  
  
THE SLIGHT WEIGHT  
OF ONE CAROB SEED  
CAN TIP A FRAGILE  
BALANCE OF FORCES  
IN A COMMONWEALTH

my FATHER  
APPRAISED  
THE VALUE  
IN CARATS  
FOR A GEM  
  
WITH THE USE OF NO  
SCALE BUT HIS HAND

THE ORLOFF WAS STOLEN FROM THE eye  
OF a GOD BY a SOLDIER IN THE GUISE  
OF a PRIEST SO THAT LATER a PRINCE  
MIGHT TRY IN VAIN TO WOO a CZARINA

a SULTAN ONCE WORSHIPPED THE matan  
BECAUSE OF THE DEMONS LOCKED IN IT  
SAFEGUARDING THE LAW OF HIS EMPIRE

my FATHER TRUSTING  
NO FICTION BECAUSE

IT TOLD LIES  
TOLD me ONLY  
TRUE STORIES

ABOUT THE EXPLOITS  
OF men OWNING GEMS

a WEALTHY COLLECTOR  
JEALOUS OF a FUTURE  
POSSESSOR COMMANDED  
SERVANTS TO SHATTER  
THE PIGOT, ITS BITS  
IN HIS GRIP CUTTING  
HIM AS HE LAY DYING

HOPE WAS HIS CURSE



CULLINAN  
EXCELSIOR  
LESOTHO  
COROMANDEL  
BERGLEN  
KIMBERLEY  
VICTORIA

IMPERIAL  
DIAMONDS  
SUNDERED  
TO ADORN  
WEDDINGS  
AND WARS

VIOLENT WORDS UNDER MINING

SLAVES excavate  
RAW ICE  
OUT OF THE BLUE

TOPSOIL  
FROM an EXTINCT  
VOLCANO

WARM KIMBERLITE  
ITS ASH  
a STARRY meadow

YIELDS DIMINISH WITH DEPTH

AD DOMINAM OMNIS

GEMS DOT A SKY  
WITH THEIR OWN  
CONSTELLATIONS

A HANDFUL  
OF STONES  
FLUNG MOONWARD

A PROMISE  
TO SUMMON  
METEOR SHOWERS

EVERY VOW  
A NET SET  
TO CATCH STARS

EVERY LIE  
A RIP CUT  
IN THE THREADS

WE FUMBLE  
FOR WORDS  
AMIDST CINDERS

WE BARTER  
WITH BITS  
OF BRIGHT HAIL

SIR ISAAC NEWTON  
IN THEORY  
DEFINED DIAMOND  
AS AN "UNCTUOUS  
SUBSTANCE  
MUCH COAGULATED"

THE BLOOD  
OF ANGELS  
CONGEALED  
INTO HARD  
TEARDROPS  
OF PURITY

THE PHYSICIST EVEN HAD A DOG NAMED "DIAMOND"  
THE GIRL'S BEST FRIEND WAS ALSO ONCE A MAN'S

LONG DIVISION  
AMONG SAWYERS

WORD  
=23+15+18+4  
=60  
=4+9+1+13+15+14+4  
=DIAMOND

THE REDUCTION  
OF ONE  
TO  
TWO TO  
MAKE MILLIONS

my FATHER BECOMING  
THE GIFTED PROTEGÉ  
DESPITE POOR BIRTH

CRYSTAL  
CLASSES

DISCOVERED UNDERSTOOD  
ARITHMETIC PERFECTION  
BY READING BY SOLVING  
TRIG TEXTS ON HIS OWN  
WHEN SEVEN WHEN EIGHT

ORGANIC  
UNITIES

MAGICAL  
SQUARES

THE TRANSCENDENTAL 71 89 17  
CORRELATION PROVEN  
BY EULER'S THEOREM 5 59 113

$e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$  101 29 47

my FATHER ALWAYS TRYING TO MAKE HIS  
TAUGHT me MIND FIT THE MATHEMATICAL  
PRECISION STRAITJACKET - OF a JEWEL

DIAMOND HAS a HIGH  
THERMOCONDUCTIVITY

ABSORBING HEAT  
FASTER  
THAN any OTHER  
MATTER  
KNOWN TO EXIST

a PRECIOUS COATING  
TO COOL MICROCHIPS

every JEWEL a FIST  
WHICH STRAINS  
TO KEEP HARSH LIGHT  
FROM SPILLING  
THROUGH ITS FINGERS

CRYSTAL FILMS  
MINIATURIZING  
COMMUNICATION

my FATHER  
THE MODEL  
OF POETIC  
RESTRAINT

THE TONE OF HIS  
VOICE UNCHANGED  
even when ANGRY

my FATHER  
COULD NOT  
FORMULATE  
THE WORDS  
TO CREATE  
OUT OF US

one macLE  
a TWINNED  
GEMSTONE

He DeEMED  
me a naïF  
a NATURAL  
FACET yet  
TO BE CUT

THE BLADE OF SILENCE BETWEEN US

THE UNSPOKEN BURNING INSIDE HIM

MORE LIFE means  
LESS FIRE, MORE  
FIRE means LESS  
LIFE : He FOUND  
a way TO STRIKE

a DIAMOND  
TO STRIKE  
a BALANCE

BETWEEN THE TWO

I  
am  
I n  
a  
DI m  
DIAMOND

APRIL BIRTHSTONE  
REVERENT FOREVER

MEDICAL REMEDIES  
IN ANCIENT TIMES  
CLAIMED DIAMONDS  
NULLIFIED POISON

STEEL INDUSTRIES  
USE DIAMOND BORT  
AS ABRASIVE GRIT  
IN IRON GRINDING

ARABIC ASSASSINS  
MIXED INTO WATER  
POWDERED DIAMOND  
TO EXECUTE KINGS

THE RED COUGHING  
OF my SAD FATHER  
SIPPING HIS LAST  
SHOTS OF LIQUEUR  
LACED WITH GLASS  
TRYING TO ESCAPE  
THE VERY DIAMOND  
CRUSHED INTO HOT  
ASHES INSIDE HIM

I am, and I  
am, and  
I am, and I  
am, and  
I die, amen

a DAMNED DIAMOND  
FOR a MAD DOMAIN

my FATHER  
UNTO DEATH  
TAUGHT me  
THE DIVINE  
ENDURANCE  
OF DIAMOND



THIS BOOK HAS BEEN  
SET IN A MONOWIDTH  
TYPEFACE SPECIALLY  
CONCEIVED FOR THAT  
PURPOSE: PANOPTICA

FONT BY NICK SHINN  
FROM SHINNTYPE.COM

**Diamonds:** an excerpt  
FROM **CRYSTALLOGRAPHY**  
BY CHRISTIAN BÖK

CRYSTALLOGRAPHY IS THE MINERAL SCIENCE  
WHOSE NAME MEANS 'LUCID WRITING.' LONG  
OUT OF PRINT – BUT AVAILABLE ONCE MORE  
IN A REVISED EDITION – THIS REMARKABLE  
WORK OF AVANT-GARDE LITERATURE STUDIES  
THE BORDER BETWEEN SCIENCE AND POETRY,  
AND REVEALS THAT TO WRITE WITH CLARITY  
IN EITHER DISCIPLINE INVOLVES THE MOST  
INTENSE THOUGHT, MUCH IN THE MANNER OF  
'LUCID DREAMING.' THIS BOOK SHOWS THAT  
IN THE LANDSCAPE OF EVERYDAY LANGUAGE,  
POEMS REPRESENT CRYSTALLINE FORMATIONS

ON SALE NOW AT [WWW.CHBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.CHBOOKS.COM)  
1-800-367-6360  
AND FINE BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE