

a treasury
it amasses
via twists
knit among
runic gaps
almost all
regalia to
ornament a
thought as
lacing can
mimic gold
cast alloy
set aglint
at auroras
a tapestry

a tapestry
it affirms
via tropes
that atoms
along clad
string can
encrypt an
alphabet a
formula to
uplift all
adept airs
long cries
set adrift
at abysses
a threnody

a threnody
it arouses
via tempos
odic grief
using calm
lament and
erotica to
disquiet a
pageant as
utmost awe
might avow
epic glory
set alight
at arcadia
a treasury

THE XENOTEXT, BOOK I ∞ CHRISTIAN BÖK

Christian Bök has written what promises to be the first example of ‘living poetry’: he has enciphered a poem into the genome of a microbe, so that this microbe can, in turn, ‘read’ the poem, responding to it by manufacturing a viable, benign protein – one whose sequence of amino acids enciphers yet another text. ∞ Book I of the *The Xenotext* is a kind of demonic grimoire, introducing the conceptual foundation for the two poems to be enciphered: ‘Orpheus’ and ‘Eurydice.’ Book I is the ‘orphic’ volume in this ‘diptych,’ addressing the infernal, pastoral heritage of poets, who seek to supplant Nature in both its beauty and its terror.

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On the reverse: ‘The March of the Nucleotides,’ an internal acrostic poem, modelled on a DNA strand, whose sequence encodes an alpha-helix protein.