

POETRY



*Johnny and Pappas, Jack Lovell,
2005*

FIVE TRANSLATIONS OF ARTHUR RIMBAUD'S "VOYELLES"

by Christian Bök

The following is a series of different approaches to translating a single poem—Rimbaud's "Voyelles," given below—all of which are set to appear in the upgraded American edition of Christian Bök's *Eunoia*, due for release this fall. We include explanatory notes by the author.

Voyelles

Arthur Rimbaud

**A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes:
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,**

**Golfes d'ombre; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombelles;
I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;**

**U, cycles, vibrations divins des mers virides,
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux;**

**O, suprême Clairon plein des strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des [Mondes et des Anges]:
—O l'Oméga, rayon violet de [Ses] Yeux!**

“Vowels” is a semantic translation of “Voyelles” by Arthur Rimbaud, preserving the rhyme scheme of the original, while enforcing the rigorous, syllabic contours of the alexandrine line.

Vowels

Christian Bök

**A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: the vowels.
I will tell thee, one day, of thy newborn portents:
A, the black velvet cuirass of flies whose essence
commingles, abuzz, around the cruellest of smells,**

**Wells of shadow; E, the whitewash of mists and tents,
glaives of icebergs, albino kings, frostbit fennels;
I, the bruises, the blood spat from lips of damsels
who must laugh in scorn or shame, both intoxicants;**

**U, the waves, divine vibratos of verdant seas,
pleasant meadows rich with venery, grins of ease
which alchemy grants the visages of the wise;**

**O, the supreme Trumpeter of our strange sonnet—
quietudes crossed by another [World and Spirit],
O, the Omega!—the violet raygun of [Her] Eyes....**

“Veils” is a homophonic translation of “Voyelles,” preserving, from the original, the sequence of the sounds, but not the meanings of the words—the two poems sound alike when read aloud.

Veils

Christian Bök

**Anywhere near blank rage
you veer, oblivious.**

**Jade array, calico azure
evanescent talents.**

**Unaware, corrosives flow
to my shackled hand.**

**Key bombing an auto tour
to paint her colour.**

**Gulfs of amber contours
evaporate the tint.**

**Linseed glass or oblong
freezing dumbbells.**

**Upper pressing cashiers
do deliver verbals.**

**Dance the clear, elusive
rinse of paintings.**

**Icicle fibre meant divine
daymares varied.**

**Pity paid to see my dynamo
poised to rid us.**

**Cool chimes, a primal green
for studios.**

**Spur my clear plan astride
a stranger.**

**Cylinders versus diamonds
a decision.**

**Hollow, my gray ovule does
decide you.**

“Phonemes” is a homovocalic translation of “Voyelles,” preserving the sequence of vowels from the original, while replacing all the other components of the poem with different consonants.

Phonemes

Christian Bök

**Phantoms, infernal,
without refuge or return—phonemes.**

**We will hark if such
resurgent souls ordain a dreamt verse:**

**A (offspring of perfect
murders, so unseen that stranglers**

**fulfill no crime, and thus
mourners must call the unjust schemes**

**overdoses); E (charmed
slumber that engulfs the sleepers,**

**cradled by dreamlike
Sirens who sing mankind, forlorn themes);**

**I (corrupted archangel,
shriven when mercy redeems**

**all shadowy spectres
who plunder shipwrecked believers);**

**U (the Sphinx, beheld
by disciples, then by infidels:**

**a riddle that grieves
a king; a truth that crippled minstrels**

**must bewail in epics,
like staunch martyrs whom Furies spurn);**

**O (untempted Saint,
who lends this typewritten utterance**

**its fervency
—an endless cycle of perseverance).**

**O, how the Bards
abolish symbols, when the letters burn....**

*“Vocables” is a perfect anagram of “Voyelles,” permuting the lexicon of letters from the original.
(I suppose that this poem owes a debt of gratitude to the “Sonnagrams” of K. Silem Mohammad.)*

Vocables

Christian Bök

Eternal, you beguile love or ruin—vocables.

Jejune vassals quote ten codas in reliquaries:

A (the ceaseless verses at occult monasteries;

requiems of dust, bound to nebulous particles:

Embers of gold); E (graven urns in sanctuaries;

brass bells, unsold, decreed priceless for our canticles);

I (a senseless verse—a spell, garbled in pentacles;

choruses, deemed perverse in desolate nurseries);

U (a universe, expressed as a murmur of tides,

all its perplexing maxims, exquisite suicides;

dim minds, transcended by vivid, hexadic prisms);

O (a vesper, stressing serenades or solitudes;

a clever muse, to generate endless interludes).

O, my elegiac ode, ends in paroxysms...

“AEIOU” literalizes the referent to the title of “Voyelles” by removing from the original everything that is not itself a vowel (including consonants, punctuation, and letterspaces).

AEIOU

Christian Bök

**AOIEAIOUEUEOEUEOEE
EIAIUEUEOUOAI AEAE
AOIOEEUEOUEEAAE
UIOIEAUOUEUA EUUEE**

**OEOEEAEUEAEUEEEE
AEEAIEIEOIAIOOEE
IOUEAAEIEEEEEEE
AAOEEOU EIEEEIEE**

**UEIEEIEEIEE
AIEAIEEAIAUAIEIE
UEAIEIEAUAOUIEU**

**OUEEAIOEIEIEUEAE
IEEAEEEEOE EEEAE
OOEAAOIOEEEEU**

TWO “STIR-FRY” TRANSLATIONS OF ROGELIO SAUNDERS

by Sara Gilmore

Click either “English” or “Spanish” at the bottom of the screen to see this page of the poem in one language or the other. Mouse over the poem to generate a “stir-fry,” a combination of English and Spanish phrases composed at once by Saunders, Gilmore, yourself, and your computer. Credit for the term “stir-fry,” and more importantly the code, to Jim Andrews of vispo.com, whose stir-fry collaborations with author Pauline Masurel appeared in Wag’s 1.

Ionizations / Ionisations

Birth City (The Poet Returns) / El poeta regresa a su ciudad natal

SIX TRANSLATIONS OF HANS CARL ARTMANN

by Rosmarie Waldrop

verbaristic scenes

*imagine: a good-
looking dragon comes
through the window and sits
down on your bed...
(pericles de louvain)*

vienna, 24 may 1954

verbaristische szenen

*stell dir vor: ein gut-
aussender drache käme
durchs fenster und setz-
te sich auf dein bett...
(pericles de Louvain)*

wien, 24. v. 54

enter the stage from left to right:

**tanaquil de lammerfors
nunckelprast pasha
emir whittlesplit
wenceslao wifelfrost
selim acornsieve
almansur boobytwine
velvet of ashofrings
springor thousandgold
ellismere waterfowl
noureddin archinear
dandelys de taillelor
bulbul lutenoath
bridel windbride
maurizia firehord
count kwarrelkwick**

**von links nach rechts
in die szenerie kommend:**

**tanaquil de lammerfors
nunckelprast paschah
der emir wittelspliss
wenceslao weibelfrost
selim eichelsieb
almansur bubenzwirn
velvet von aschenvau
springor tausendgult
ellismere wasserfogel
noureddin archenzohr
dandelys de taillelor
bulbul lautenschwuhr
brautel windsbraut
maurizia brandschatz
graf vlinckxhändel**

**rautundeles luster
belshazzar murdr
alpestris tiffinist
ddr. king bellyborn
decoy imperator
vinveli flagurnian
winesome twywood
nobelira honeytarm
stomax atheletes
runtelzap handreader
salaris r. heartwright
rosenhard collarborg
ursaw von glonnensalt
candide le circumstrut
sfinx von argentail
bailltimorus ornaminx
hludewyk ter tigervind
malcon sungalc excelsior**

music:

**rautundeles lüster
belshazzar mordl
alpestris jausenist
ddr. könig magenborn
lockschrei imperator
vinveli flagurnerin
weinsam zweenholtz
edelmira honingtarm
maguntz atheletes
runtelzirg handleser
lohn r. herzenprecht
rosenhard schlüsselbirg
ursaw von glonnensaltz
candide le circenstruth
sfinks von argensteiss
bailltemourus ornaminct
lhodewyk ter tierenvind
malcon sungalc excelsior**

musik:

rhymes, verses and formulas

pluto is
down...

if pluto
is down—
what's
up...?

well:
pluto is
down...

like I told you

oo

richard
coeur de lion
plantagenet
came in
and took off
his pilgrim
cloak...
then they all
saw
that it
was
king
richard
coeur de lion
plantagenet...

oo

reime, verse und formeln

pluton ist
unten..

wenn pluton
unten ist--
was ist
oben..?

also:
pluton ist
unten..

wie gesagt

oo

richard
coeur de lion
plantagenet
trat ein
und tat
seinen
pilgerhabit
ab..
da sahen
alle
daß es
könig
richard
coeur de lion
plantagenet
war..

oo

if you
go to hell
your ass
is put in the stockpot—
if you
go to heaven
you think
with relief:
alright then
once again
i've
deservedly
lucked out...!
I upholstered my
chair
now i'll sit in it...
if you
go to hell
you get to
choose
the most fitting
rotisserie spit...
if you rise
up into heaven
you have a choice
of little lamb-clouds
to sit on...
hence we may infer
not only
in this world
but also
in the beyond
everything
is arranged for
the com- or
discomfort
of our
backside

wer in die
hölle kommt
hat den hintern
im brodeltopf --
wer in den
himmel kommt
denkt sich
erleichtert:
na servus
da hab ich
wieder einmal
verdienterweise
glück gehabt..!
wie man sich
sesselt
so sitzt man..
wer nun
in die hölle
fährt
darf sich
einen kommoden
bratspieß
aussuchen..
wer aber in den
himmel steigt
hat eine auswahl
in schäferwölklein
zum draufhocken..
wie man also
daraus ersieht
ist nicht nur
im diesseits
sondern auch
im jenseits
alles
auf das wol-
oder übelergehen
unsrer hinterseite
abgestimmt...

guileless graveyard song

o my rosecolored mouth
how you have grown pale
still I cannot comprehend
all these candles lit for me
in a fog of tears...
birds cry in the humid vale
the casket cannibal we fear
has kissed your inmost heart
night has fallen fallen on the hour
over your body so sudden so cool...
farewell to thee...
farewell o time of dalliance
welcome o worm concomitance
here I stand before thine wall...
already they approach and weep
cortege of torch and prayer steep
mourners wailing in a heap
hold their breath and quietly
cut the last loaf of bread
I alone in my white sheet
no more moon and stars will see

treuherziges kirchhofflied

o mein rosenfarber mund
wie bist mir sehr erblasset
ich kann es noch nicht fassen
daß man mir schon die lichter tragt
durch einen tränennebel..
die vögel schrein aus feuchtem grund
der kannibal der truhen
hat dich zu tiefst ins herz geküßt
der abend ist gefallen diese stund
auf deinen leib so kühl und jäh..
ade..
ade du zeit der schäferei
und grüß dich dunkles käferreich
ich steh vor deiner mauer..
schon kommen sie mit fackeln..
mit viel gebet und prozession
naht sich der trauerhaufen —
mit stillverhaltne[m] atmen
zerschneidet man das letzte brod
und ich allein im weißen tuch
seh nimmer mond noch sterne..

**from: the exceedingly fine
songs of noble caspar,
commonly called tomfool**

**ink horn
pepper corn
balsam horn
barley corn
poland isn't
all forlorn
behind in front
old lovers
early grave
spare me a dime
on the cairn in the cave
woods and thorn
rome is yet
of stone and bone
how cool the church
a place to moan
lark and
blackbird
guttersnipe
candlemas and
pot of tripe
butter and bread
dawn comes red
don't put me in
an orphanage
don't put me in
a magic cage**

**aus: die ausnehmend schönen
lieder des edlen caspar oder
gemeinhin hans wurstel
genannt**

**tintenhorn
pfefferkorn
balsamhorn
hirsekorn
noch ist polen
hint und voren
alte liebe
früh ins grab
gibt mir einen
groschen ab
hünengrab
wald am laab
noch ist rom
aus stein aus bein
kühl muß es
in kirchen sein
lerche
amsel
wiederhopf
lichtmeß und
kaldaunentopf
abendbrod
morgenrot
gebt mich nicht
ins findelhaus
will nicht in
ein zauberhaus**

evil gout
goes about
I want out:
one two
robinson
telegram from
oregon
hans and gretel
in fine fettle
don't lay
hands on
babylon

schon erwacht
die böse gicht
spricht frei:
eins zwei
robinson
du telegramm
alle tage
amsterdam
auf dem zettel
hans und gretel
babylon
laß nicht
deine hand
daran

FOUR WORD™ TRANSLATIONS OF PAUL VERLAINE

translated by Winston Daniels

The following four Verlaine poems have been translated with the help of Microsoft Word™. The original text was pasted into a Word document. Most of the French words were identified as spelling errors. These words were replaced only by one of the five suggestions offered when said words were right-clicked. French words with no offered spelling suggestions, or that Word failed to identify as mis-spelled, were translated semantically. Punctuation has been freely changed, and occasional liberties have been taken with prepositions and articles; otherwise, this stricture was rigorously maintained. -W.D.

Claim of Line

Winston Daniels

**Voters are set a passage choice:
Queen vents, chairman masques and berg masques;
Joan du Lithe and Vansant and quasi-
Trustees; souse liars, beguilements, antiques.**

**All, chanting, slur the minor mode,
Glamour victorious and life opportune,
Ills don't knot lairs to cruise a lemur bonehead
And lemur songs are male to clear the line.**

**The calm chair of lone trustee and beau,
Who makes osseous dons revere the barbers
And sandlot deities: the dead fountains,
The grand dead fountains, svelte perm marred.**

Clair de Lune

Paul Verlaine

**Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantastiques.**

**Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,**

**Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.**

Femme and Chatty

Winston Daniels

***Elle jurist with sad chatter
And certain, servile void:
The white hand and the white patter
Embitter dins, lowbred do stir.***

***Elle cachet – accelerated ! –
Sour cues, litanies of black film:
Sis marries Dongles D'Amato,
Occupants and claries come a razor.***

***Laughter abuse, falsity the screen,
And restraint as rife acreage.
Maids disable any pedant reign...
And dawns, the boudoir of snores.
Titanic, its rite arisen:
Brilliant quartet points of phosphor.***

Femme et Chatte

Paul Verlaine

***Elle jouait avec sa chatte,
Et c'était merveille de voir
La main blanche et la blanche patte
S' ébattre dans l'ombre du soir.***

***Elle cachait – la scélérate ! –
Sous ces mitaines de fil noir
Ses meurtriers ongles d'agate,
Coupants et clairs comme un rasoir.***

***L'autre aussi faisait la sucrée
Et rentrait sa griffe acérée,
Mais le diable n'y perdait rien...
Et dans le boudoir où, sonore,
Tintait son rire aérien,
Brillaient quatre points de phosphore.***

Lahore Dud Shepherd

Winston Daniels

The line, set red to brume horizon,
Dams a boulevard that dines; the prairie
Sensors fume (use); and the Greeneville crime
By the junks averts our circle. A shiver;

The flexures of *beaux*. Deferment lures Corollas.
Some people's profile in the mountains:
Druids and sores; liars, specters; uncertain
Verse; the Benisons, errant locals.

The cat-hunt's violent, and noiseless.
Lament the black air with liars, ailed lords,
And the zenith exploit of luaus soured.
White venues emerge, and chests unite.

L'Heure du Berger

Paul Verlaine

La lune est rouge au brumeux horizon;
Dans un brouillard qui danse, la prairie
S'endort fumeuse, et la grenouille crie
Par les joncs verts où circule un frisson;

Les fleurs des eaux referment leurs corolles,
Des peupliers profilent aux lointains,
Droits et serrés, leurs spectres incertains;
Vers les buissons errent les lucioles;

Les chats-huants s'éveillent, et sans bruit
Rament l'air noir avec leurs ailes lourdes,
Et le zénith s'emplit de lueurs sourdes.
Blanche, Vénus émerge, et c'est la Nuit.

In Souring

Winston Daniels

Clams dam the deli-day
Queue, the stalks make sautés,
Petersons bier, niter lover
Of ice, profound silence.

Fondues—no, acmes: nosh course
And nosh sins, ecstasies,
Parma. The vaguest lagers
Of pines and of arousers.

Ferment teas, you at Deli
Crosier, teas! Arms slur your sin,
And your heart, endorsing
The hunt, as jam is all deceit.

Liaisons' onus, persuade
Of soufflés, barer and dour,
That viand at test pie's ripples,
The nods of gazing roux.

And quid, solemnly, the stir
Of black changes, timbered
Void of niter disrepair,
The resigned chanter.

En Sourdine

Paul Verlaine

Calmes dans le demi-jour
Que les branches hautes font,
Pénétrons bien notre amour
De ce silence profond.

Fondons nos âmes, nos coeurs
Et nos sens extasiés,
Parmi les vagues langueurs
Des pins et des arbousiers.

Ferme tes yeux à demi,
Croise tes bras sur ton sein,
Et de ton coeur endormi
Chasse à jamais tout dessein.

Laissons-nous persuader
Au souffle berceur et doux
Qui vient à tes pieds rider
Les ondes de gazon roux.

Et quand, solennel, le soir
Des chênes noirs tombera,
Voix de notre désespoir,
Le rossignol chantera.