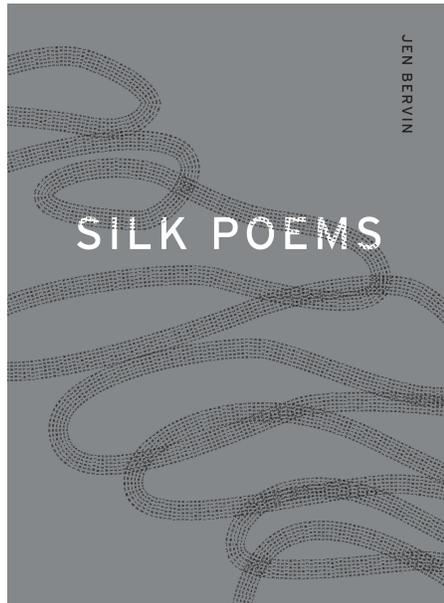


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**Silk Poems**

Jen Bervin

Poetry

Paperback, 200 pages, 5 x 7 in

Nightboat Books, Dist. UPNE

\$15.95 trade paper

Publication Date: October 3, 2017

ISBN: 978-1-937-65872-4

**Nightboat Books is please to announce the publication of *Silk Poems* by Jen Bervin.**

Silk is compatible with body tissues; our immune system accepts it on surfaces as sensitive as the human brain. In conjunction with Tufts University's cutting edge research on liquefied silk, Jen Bervin mixes poetry with medical technology in the form of a silk bio-sensor. *Silk Poems* explores the cultural, scientific, and linguistic complexities of silk written nanoscale inside the body.

Bervin's poem stems from the belief that reading such a sensor inside the body is not a neutral context, rather one pre-inscribed with concern, written in a material with a 5,000 year old international history. In her research, Bervin consulted over thirty international bioengineering labs, textile archives, medical libraries, and sericulture sites in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. *Silk Poems* premiered at MASS MoCA in the yearlong exhibition *Explode Every Day: An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder* and is supported by a grant from Creative Capital.

★ **Starred Review from 8/18/2017 *Publisher's Weekly***

In this skillfully constructed and conceptually arresting book-length poem, poet and artist Bervin (editor, with Marta Werner, of *The Gorgeous Nothings*) probes the intersections of language and biological form. The poem's form and structure is modeled on silk's DNA structure. Narrated from the perspective of a silkworm, Bervin's sardonic lines challenge the artificial distinctions between text and the material world: "AREYOUSURPRISED/ IQUOTEPOET// DONTBE/ WEINVENTEDLANGUAGE." For Bervin, the "MULBERRYLEAF" and its "NECTARFLOOD" represent the original language, as their luminous particles cannot exist without a framework, a grammar, to give them order. Bervin reminds readers that, to understand these careful and intricate constructions, one must learn to see on a smaller scale: "THEEGGS/ STARTINCUBATING// WHENTHEBUDS/ ONTHEMULBERRY/ ARETWO/ CENTIMETERSLONG." The work also operates as an exercise in listening and measurement; given the close

proximity of the words, readers must discover the divisions between concepts and cadences for themselves. Yet the sparseness, brevity, and economy of the lines create a textual terrain filled with silence. Bervin's inspired interdisciplinary work is one of her finest achievements. (Oct.)

**Advance Praise for *Silk Poems*:**

*Silk Poems* seem to unspool magically from ancient burial practice and philosophy into the future of emerging nanotechnology. This beautiful multi-disciplinary text becomes a meditation on desire and embodiment, on cultural and personal transformation, on the genetic coding of language and the enduring connection of poetic practice to other forms of making. —**Elizabeth Willis**

Two filaments of silk combine to form a single thread. In poems of delicate beauty Bervin inventories multiple strands of a 5,000-year legacy spun from the carapace of a silkworm. To read is to inhabit the continuous reeling of an ancient insect / human tale and to emerge forever changed. —**Ann Hamilton**

Read Jen Bervin's fascinating *Silk Poems* one hundred times and you will be given one hundred gifts. A first reading draws the mother silkworm as a metaphor for creativity and resilience. Another reading reveals an elegant letter to Infinity. This sensational book addresses both the past and the future; art and science; the earth and the stars. Everywhere *Silk Poems* is in incomparable conversation with us. —**Terrance Hayes**

So what have we here? We have an artist who takes everything a woman ever did and turns it into an example of the world.

She makes ordinary poems written on paper seem mundane and archaic, as if they were scratching the surface which, literally, they are. Her work—all of it—engages the eye, the hand, the ear, and the mind. Her artistry is vast and inclusive, by finesse and intelligence, by curiosity, forbearance, and vision. She knows the unexpected wonder of pattern is everywhere, and that the smallest detail contains enough energy to spawn a universe. I think they should send her into space, if it were not for the fact her work has already sent us there.

Her poems in themselves, those exhilarated fragments, are the purest form of the art itself—they contain the innate inner gradients of whatever takes our breath away. She makes me shiver. I don't know how she does it but she does, and I feel privileged to have been alive on earth while she was doing it. —**Mary Ruefle**

**Jen Bervin** is an artist and poet whose research-driven interdisciplinary works weave together art, writing, science and life in a complex, elegant way. She has published ten books, including *Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems* with Marta Werner. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including The Rauschenberg Residency (2016), Asian Cultural Council Fellowship (2016), and a Creative Capital Grant (2013). Her work has been covered in media outlets such as *Huffington Post*, *NPR*, *The Nation*, *LA Times*, *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *Hyperallergic*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*, and can be found in more than thirty international collections.

**Nightboat Books**, a nonprofit organization, seeks to develop audiences for writers whose work resists convention and transcends boundaries, by publishing books rich with poignancy, intelligence and risk.

Media: Jen Bervin's *Silk Poems* by Charlotte Lagarde

<https://vimeo.com/187955041>

Media: Jen Bervin Mixes Poetry with Cutting-Edge Silk Technology by Creative Capital

<https://vimeo.com/167124493>

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