

Unlike some of your other books, you have resisted providing online links to enhance this one. Why?

When I was 5 my grandmother gave my sister and me a poem book that contained the following verse by John Farrar:

Serious Omission

I know that there are dragons,
St. George's, Jason's, too,
And many modern dragons
With scales of green and blue;

But though I've been there many times
And carefully looked through,
I cannot find a dragon
In the cages at the zoo!

Accompanying this rhyme is a vaguely ampersand-shaped quite jolly dragon blowing bubbles of smoke around a small boy, hands crossed behind his back, peering through a set of bars at what appears to be a monkey posed as Rodin's *The Thinker*. The visual references escaped me, of course, but apparently the sound of this poem stuck in my mind forever. What is the serious omission? To not be able to find that dragon? To fail to discriminate the hugely many implicate orders of life?

Since the dragons in this book do slip through potentially infinite virtual spaces, it seemed wise to confine them, in Chris Ware's term, inside the "considered finitude" and tactility of the book.

I also wanted to work with print pages—where words persist as a score for the poem resonantly heard—because that mode itself is under attack and facing rebirth. I quote the digital artist, Jhave: "Poetry is crossing an ontological membrane from being an abstract printed system to becoming a system of quasi-entities: words and phrases that are dimensional, kinetic, interactive, code-full, context-aware and tactile."

Can you explain how all these dragons, both in the title and the titled sections as well as woven through the poems, bring the electronic world alive?

Dragons are mythical and abstract—mythic embodiments of abstract power, from the snake in Eden, to devouring sea monsters, to the latest special FX apocalyptic creation from Hollywood. The dragon hunt that matters for me is tracking the beast as it slips, dizzyingly, from real to configurational (electronically generated) space, always aware that where we live, in either case, is the belly of this beast.

Does a math theorem inspire a poem or do you search for metaphorical connections in the subject matter?

Dragon Maps, the majorly math-y section, evokes abstractions that, hugely masked, control the electric and electronic world. I don't attempt to convey the mathematics of the math or the code of the code, but rather to give some sense, in natural language, of what might be happening there. Throughout the book, there is a constant refocusing—on conversions, transformations, and shifting registers. These, as well as recalibration and the use of a multidimensional language, act to turn math into metaphor and vice-versa.

How did you arrive at the shape of the book?

The book is a flow of active layering that hums along from one untitled poem to the next, interrupted by a few titled poems, raising their heads like islands, and by two poems that sink to the very bottom of the page, including the reverse invocation for erasure at the end.

There is a consciousness of streams and algorithmicity and an appreciation of classical Islamic aesthetics: baroque counterpoint and Islamic arabesques were some of the earliest tractable subjects for computation.

The voice of these poems invites interpretation and challenge, reaching out in many modes to include the reader. Is there any specialized knowledge your ideal reader would possess?

No, not really. Each reader brings individual riches. As Jhave says, “Very few people actually read fluently either poetry or programming languages. Even fewer understand their total reach. Each . . . requires a biological proclivity for extreme semantic condensation within a formalized language structure. Poetry reveals the semantic tunneling between apparent contradictions.”

Do I read the index/list poem, “Codemakers,” first, for a sense of the players? Or is it meant to complement and enrich the other poems after their reading?

The tiny hollow circle leads you there whenever—and if—you care to go; some might want to read it first, but I had not anticipated that, as I just plunge along trusting that things will become clear, or shouldn't.

How are the ecological concerns married with the technological, especially later in the book when Pan arrives?

The Critical Engineering Manifesto calls engineering, not art, the most transformative language of our time, shaping the way we move, communicate, trade, and think. If you control the engineered infrastructure, you control what's understood to be fact, and this infrastructure is extraordinarily abstract and also actively kept hidden. Living without leaving digital traces is now impossible, a reality untrue for most of my own lifetime as well as all lifetimes on earth preceding mine. The boundaries between digital and physical are porous, dissolved, and press toward becoming non-existent.

A digital system must erase what is specific in order to generalize a mathematical pattern that functions as a reliable network. Do people become more silent (and less specific) as technology finds its own voice? My poems engage science, computation, and mathematics as human creations; mythic language and diagram are, in turn, used to elicit the bias of knowledge and to allude to a history of science that has excluded women, as well as many others, and thus skewed our present state of knowledge.

Today invisible abstractions threaten the material earth. When pagan gods like Pan were felt, seen, and known, this capability allowed us to identify with the great intuited unknown of the living and non-living world; Pan has long been felt to be gone and has not been replaced by any myth or argument or strategy that changes ravaging behavior. As Isabelle Stengers says, our abstractions are achievements with a price. Whitehead would say that one must use writing against writing's authority: each abstraction mutely appealing for an imaginative leap.

Do you see readers linking the poems into a narrative or finding discrete connections that resonate?

No narrative can compass the abstractions—they act in too many dimensions at once. The eye can be guided by fancy online interactive tools, applets, to see more than it can grasp on a page, but the ear is our most discriminating native resource. Finding resonant connections is possible, even as explanation-stories fail and fade.

How important is sense to the reading of some of the exuberantly sonic poems?

Sound is sense—semantic meaning is always also found, not only impossible to shut out but intended multiply along various channels. We are woven into the mesh, fabric, harpstrings of a world newly stretched between subatomics and cosmic reach, a new instantiation of the wind harp, the Aeolian harp, the Huracanic harp on which aliveness is woven.