

# Jorie Graham



*“What poetry can, must,  
and will always do for  
us: it complicates us, it  
doesn’t “soothe”.”*

# Biography



Jorie Graham was born in New York City in 1950, the daughter of a journalist and a sculptor. She was raised in Rome, Italy and educated in French schools. She studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris before attending New York University as an undergraduate, where she studied filmmaking. She received an MFA in poetry from the University of Iowa.

Graham is the author of numerous collections of poetry, most recently *Sea Change* (Ecco, 2008), *Never* (2002), *Swarm* (2000), and *The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems*

1974-1994, which won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

Graham has also edited two anthologies, *Earth Took of Earth: 100 Great Poems of the English Language* (1996) and *The Best American Poetry 1990*.

She has taught at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop and is currently the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard University. She served as a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets from 1997 to 2003.

# Bibliography

## Poetry collections

- From The New World. Ecco Press. 2015.
- P L A C E. Ecco Press. 2012.
- Sea Change. HarperCollins. 2008.
- Overlord. HarperCollins. 2005.
- Never. HarperCollins. 2002.
- Swarm. HarperCollins. 2000.
- Photographs and Poems. Photographs Jeannette Montgomery Barron. Scalo. 1998.
- The Errancy. Ecco Press. 1997.
- The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974-1994. HarperCollins. 1995.
- Materialism. Ecco. 1993.
- Region of Unlikeness. Ecco Press. 1991.
- The End of Beauty. Ecco Press. 1987.
- Erosion. Princeton University Press. 1983.
- Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts. Princeton University Press. 1980.

## Edited anthologies

- Earth Took of Earth: 100 Great Poems of the English Language. Ecco Press. 1996.
- Jorie Graham, David Lehman, eds. (1990). The Best American Poetry 1990. Collier Books.

## Selected scholarship

- Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry; Edited by Thomas Gardner (2005)
- No Image There and the Gaze Remains: The Visual in the Work of Jorie Graham; by Catherine Karaguezian (2005)
- Regions of Unlikeness: Explaining Contemporary Poetry; by Thomas Gardner (1999)
- The Breaking of Style: Hopkins, Heaney, Graham; by Helen Vendler (1995)

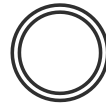
# Books and Awards



Jorie Graham is the author of numerous collections of poetry, including notable volumes like *The End of Beauty*, *The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974-1994*, and *P L A C E*. She has also edited two anthologies, *Earth Took of Earth: 100 Great Poems of the English Language* (1996) and *The Best American Poetry 1990*. She is widely anthologized and her poetry is the subject of many essays, including *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry* (2005). The Poetry Foundation considers Graham's third book, *The End of Beauty* (1987), to have been a "watershed" book in which Graham first used the longer verse line for which she is best known. Graham's many honors include a Whiting Award (1985), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship, an Ingram Merrill Fellowship, and The Morton Dauwen Zabel Award from The American

Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. *The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974-1994* won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Her collection of poetry *P L A C E* won the 2012 Forward Poetry Prize for best collection, becoming the first American woman ever to win one of the UK's most prestigious poetry accolades. *P L A C E* was also shortlisted for the 2012 T S Eliot Prize. In 2013, Graham became only the third American to win the International Nonino Prize. In 2015, *From the New World: Selected Poems 1976-2014*—a collection from all prior eleven volumes plus new work—was published by HarperCollins/Ecco Press. She served as a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets from 1997 to 2003, and she currently sits on the contributing editorial board to the literary journal *Conjunctions*.

# Poetics



Graham is known for her deep interest in history, language, and perception.

Visual art, mythology, history, and philosophy are central to Graham's work. The influences of her mother, a sculptor, and father, a journalist, her trilingual upbringing, and her early immersion in European culture are all evident in her poetry. Her influences are predominantly modernists—William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens, among others—and help explain the shape and flow of her poetry, which is marked by a reliance on line as a unit of sense and perception. Using long and short lines, indentation and spacing, Graham's forms explore the dualities and polarities of life, of the creative and destructive tensions that exist between spirit and flesh, the real and the mythical, stillness and motion, the

interior and exterior existence. While Graham's first two books received high praise, her third, *The End of Beauty*, is generally acknowledged as a watershed. Several of the poems are broken into numbered sections, often of seemingly unrelated fragments that are pieces of a larger collage; at times, the poet offers a kind of "close" reading which requires readers both to participate in the poem by filling in the blank and for Graham to present her own inability to express the not-yet-conceivable.

Through her collections of poetry, Graham's distinctive style has evolved to accommodate both new kinds of experience and new kinds of reading.

# International award “Il Ceppo - Bigongiari”



Thanks to her poems Jorie Graham won the Bigongiari Year Award 2014 Prize in Pistoia.

She gave a lectio magistralis to Tuscany high schools students in which she read “Il corvo bianco” by Piero Bigongiari, who was very important for her.



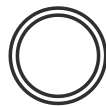
P L A C E

NEW POEMS

Jorie Graham

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

# The “Place”



In *P L A C E*, Graham explores the ways in which our imagination, intuition, and experience—increasingly devalued by a culture that regards them as “mere” subjectivity—aid us in navigating a world moving blindly towards its own annihilation and a political reality where the human person and its dignity are increasingly disposable.

The opening poem in *P L A C E*, “Sundown”, is set on Omaha Beach a day before the 75th anniversary of the Normandy landings (June 6th).

In a later poem, called “Untitled”, an arguing couple crash their car into two dogs, creating a “dark spot near the front / fender”.

This small tragedy leads Graham to reflect on larger disasters: the last century’s “187 million perished in wars, massacre, persecution, famine,” all the while we, as it

were, continue our bickering in the car.

Private and public tragedies commingle, sometimes in ways the poet acknowledges is not completely comfortable.

The best poem in the collection, “Lapse”, describes the poet pushing her child on a swing, “the grace that I feel at the center of my palms”.

She tries to push the “accurate amount, a right fraction, of my strength” – which is exactly how parents feel about raising children: give them a start, but don’t be too insistent.

*P L A C E* is made up of meditations written in a uneasy lull before an unknowable and potentially drastic change—meditations which enact and explore the role of the human in and on nature. In these poems, all time lived is felt to be both incipient, and already posthumous.

# Interview



The  
New York  
Times

About her work, James Longenbach wrote in the New York Times: "For 30 years Jorie Graham has engaged the whole human contraption — intellectual, global, domestic, apocalyptic — rather than the narrow emotional slice of it most often reserved for poems. She thinks of the poet not as a recorder but as a constructor of experience. Like Rilke or Yeats, she imagines the hermetic poet as a public figure, someone who addresses the most urgent philosophical and political issues of the time simply by writing poems."



*“The storm: I close my eyes and,  
standing in it, try to make it  
mine.”*