



Place: New Poems

Jorie Graham

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Place: New Poems

Jorie Graham

Place: New Poems Jorie Graham

In *Place*, 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. Throughout, Graham seeks out sites of wakeful resistance and achieved presence. From the natural world to human sensation, the poems test the unstable congeries of the self, and the creative tensions that exist within and between our inner and outer landscapes--particularly as these are shaped by language.

Beginning with a poem dated June 5th, placed on Omaha Beach, in Normandy--the anniversary of the day before the "historical" events of June 6th--*Place* is made up of meditations written in a uneasy lull before an unknowable, potentially drastic change--meditations which enact and explore the role of the human in and on nature. In these poems, time lived is felt to be both incipient, and already posthumous. This is not the same as preparing for a death. It is preparing for a life we know we, and our offspring, shall have no choice but to live. How does one think ethically as well as emotionally in such a predicament? How does one think of one's child--of having brought a person into this condition? How does love continue, and how is it supposed to be transmitted? Does the nature of love change?

Both formally and thematically poems of ec(h)o-location in space/time, Graham's new poems work to discern "aftermath" from "future"--as the two margins of the form ask us to feel the vertiginous "double" position in which we find ourselves, constantly looking back just as we are forced to try to see ahead.

In an era where distrust of human experience and its attendant accountability are pervasive *Place* calls us, in poems of unusual force and beauty, to re-inhabit and make full use of--and even rejoice in--a more responsive and responsible place of the human in the world.

Place: New Poems Details

Date : Published April 24th 2012 by Ecco

ISBN : 9780062190642

Author : Jorie Graham

Format : Paperback 79 pages

Genre : Poetry, The United States Of America, Literature, American

 [Download Place: New Poems ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Place: New Poems ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Place: New Poems Jorie Graham

From Reader Review Place: New Poems for online ebook

Cheryl says

Jorie Graham is brilliant, one of the most innovative poets that makes you work hard. You have to read most of the poems out loud, and you have to concentrate. There is no easy way. I am not usually a fan of what I call "scholarly poetry," the poems poets write to keep their scholarly positions or to maintain their status. I am more interested in the raw, the romantic, the mystical. Graham excels at both, and it is exhilarating. I tried interpreting a few different ways, such as where she takes you in Mother and Child:

Stars

Sky

Mind

Imagination

Years

Grass

Spidery webtrails

Galaxy

Robe

Firstness

Letters home

World

You were free to look with/no sense of/excitement, no song, it is so simple, your lungs afloat, your/shears still there in your right/hand, the hedgerow wild beside you and how you can-yes-hear it/ course up through a million stalks...

Sky variegation and forking and fingery elaboration

The world of the world

Shears

Sun

Words

Phantoms

Stadiums

Satellite

Bed

Stairs

Screaming

Guard

Loved ones

Electricity

Heart

Cruelty

Grasses

Difference

Evening

Guard/prisoner

Grass

Everyone awaits your first word

Terror

Hand

Poppy

Cannibalizing scream
Fist
Seeds
Asphalt
Ground-breeze
Summer solstice
Diamond of energy
Breathe
Love.
(Mother and Child)

*...gnats hovering their tiny solar system round-heads
Bending this way and that in
Unison glowing and not
Showing where they
Are attached to earth or what path has brought them to their
status... (Mother and Child)*

...his hooves returning, as they begin to pass
by,
To the edge of the furling
Break, each tossed-up flake of
Ocean offered into the reddish
Luminosity-sparks-as they made their way,
Boring to clear out
Life, in place where no one
Again is suddenly
Killed-regardless of the "cause"-no one- just this
Gallop forward with
Force through the low waves, seagulls
Scattering all round...

(Sundown)

*And when I shut my eyes now I am not like a blind person/ walking towards the lowering sun,/the water loud
at my right,/but like a seeing person/with her eyes shut/putting her feet down/one at a time/on the earth.
(Sundown)*

*I am the only one who ever lived who remembers
my mother's voice in the particular shadow
cast by the skyfilled Roman archway
which darkens the stones on the down-sloping street
up which she has now come again suddenly.
How the archway and the voice and the shadow
seize the small triangle of my soul
violently...
It was before I knew about knowing.
My mind ran everywhere and was completely still at the center.
And that did not feel uncomfortable.
I sat. I was before I knew walking.
Only my soul walked everywhere without weight...
When my mother's voice got closer it had a body.*

*it had arms and they were holding something
that must have been a basket. My mind now
can go round her, come in front, and wrap her
as her arms wrapped that basket... (Cagnes Sur Mer 1950)*

*Eyes shut I sense I am awakening and then I am/awake but/deciding/to keep eyes shut, look at the inside, in
the long and dark of it/if it were a garden what would I plant/ in it, for now I am/ alive... (Of inner
experience)*

Message from Armagh Cathedral 2011

*How will it be told, this evidence, our life, all the clues missing? she is a tourist in Ireland, everything that
caught our eye-shining-we took. Because it exhibited unexpected movement, quicksilver, we took it by spear.
she is talking about love. Now she has discovered a sculpture that is 3000 years old of an old Irish king. I
crouch down and put my own pale arms round you. No one sees me. No one on planet earth sees us....what
have you seen I say under my breath that I might have seen. Rainbow you say. Blood. Wind. Sky blue- though
maybe not the same as yours now. Next she sees a wedding rehearsal and the sweet repetition soothes her,
and us. Tomorrow they will vow to love for all eternity, or that part of it they inhabit called "as long as you
shall live."The king who is immortalized in the sculpture legendarily had lost his arm in battle, and was seen
as too weak to be king, so a silver arm was fashioned and he held it with his good arm, and the poet holds his
two arms with her one. At this moment on this/ earth mostly in desert many arms are not recovered after the
device goes/ off and the/ limbs sever. The poet continues juxtaposing the wedding rehearsal, the sculpture
and Private Jackson, a victim of an IED hidden in laundry and what it means to be whole. Clean, he thought.
He used to hang it out for his mom, in Indiana, then he realizes, that sound, is feet all running on dirt as fast
as possible from this place. The bride has tomorrow to anticipate, the soldier has no arms, and the sculpture
remains. It is breathtaking and sad, and what makes her so powerful.*

Gabriel Clarke says

Not wholly convinced by some of the transitions but loved the energy and the meticulous cross-referencing of time, space and feeling.

Richard Downey says

Jorie Graham is one of my favorites. Her placement on the page seems designed to make reading more difficult. Whether it is true or not, the extra work makes the depth of her poems more apparent. Beautiful and elegant work.

Ann says

I liked this Jorie Graham. She caught me up in her metaphysical net. I am one of those annoying Graham fans who always takes a look at the new volumes but still likes her second book EROSION the best. It has

always seemed to me that it's almost too easy for Graham to write very well. One imagines that much of the language in her poems is found or gifted to the poet. She writes deep, winding poems with great ease. Examples: "Sometimes the day/ light winces/ behind you and it is/ a great treasure in this case a man on a/ horse in calm full/gallop on Omaha over my/ left shoulder coming on" and "I am the only one who ever lived who remembers /my mother's voice in the particular shadow/ cast by the skyfilled Roman archway/ which darkens the stones on the down-sloping street/ up which she has now come again suddenly." Graham always displays great openness in feeling and form; but I often wish she'd push past the exceptional artistry that is at her fingertips to compose a complete, individual poem--like those poems she chooses and praises in her judicious short anthology, *Earth Took of Earth*. (She wrote such poems in *EROSION*.) I'd like to see some paint and pails and scaffolding--and a little less breathlessness. Graham has always been concerned with the effect of place on the soul (and vice versa). Like all Graham's volumes, this book is beautifully constructed--the poet is, after all, an artist.

Patrick Mcgee says

It is true that readers of poetry have to sometimes put aside their own personal preferences and viewpoints when reading some work in an effort to meet it halfway. For me, this was quite evident when reading Jorie Graham's collection *Place*. She has some beautiful lines and images and can absolutely write with the best poets out there. What held me back--even considering that I put aside many of my thoughts on what I feel the best poetry is--were the extremely lengthy poems page after page after page. Couple the length with most of her poems containing very pronounced leaps from subject to subject and image to image and you have a recipe for a very dense collection that can be hard to follow at times. I also was distracted by her overuse of em dashes as well as lengthy sentences that seemingly went on through the whole of each poem at times. These two elements made it hard to follow the poems in an succinct way. It felt as if I was reading contemporary O'Connor, but someone that extended their stream of consciousness poetry to many pages. I would recommend this collection, but just be aware of what you are getting into if you do check it out.

Kristin says

I enjoyed this book more than I expected to. While I wasn't in love with every poem, the collection felt cohesive, and several poems were touching. I especially liked "Cagnes Sur Mer 1950," "Mother and Child," "Torn Score," "Lull" and "Waking."

Michael Steger says

I read an essay a few years ago, with a title that went something like, "Reading Emily Dickinson after the Holocaust." That article (whose author I cannot recall right now) was, as the title suggests, an examination of the collision of a highly subjective and refined poetic sensibility with dehumanizing social violence on a massive scale. Reading Jorie Graham's profound and deeply moving "Place," had me thinking back to that essay's title--because in a way, reading Graham could be likened to reading Emily Dickinson after the Holocaust. Graham's poems, ostensibly quite unlike Dickinson's, are, like the 19th century poet's, the work of someone who seems to have a natural, unaffected sensibility (Graham's poetry nearly always feel like a natural flow, never forced or contrived). Graham, like Dickinson, turns time and again to specific moments in time (e.g. the memory of a single instant in distant childhood), and to specific objects and places (an oak tree, a field of grass). And, as in much of Dickinson's poetry, the work of the poem itself is to dissolve in the

reader's consciousness the boundaries those moments, objects, and places might seem initially to possess. But whereas Dickinson, who composed a great many of her poems against the backdrop of the Civil War, rarely lets that war emerge distinctly in her poems, Graham shows over and over again how our private lives and our private worlds are invaded constantly by the brutal social world outside. Graham's poems show-- better still, they enact--how that merciless social world colonizes our minds, so that, eventually, there is no longer any boundary between the self and the world, between the singular poetic sensibility and the vast universe that threatens always to extinguish that sensibility.

I think of Hopkins's inscapes...

I think of Maritain's "divination of the spiritual in the things of sense, which expresses itself in the things of sense."

I think of Badiou's notion of an event that creates a rupture in the current circumstances... (e.g. the poet in her garden, her sense of peace devastated by news of torture and killing happening somewhere else)

This is a magisterial book by a magisterial poet, a poet on the scale of Akhmatova, Brodsky, Milosz, Heaney... A Yeatsian poet.

Norb Aikin says

Maybe I'm missing something, but I don't get Jorie Graham. I've tried...this is the third or fourth book of hers I've read, but I don't understand her or what she's going for.

Her poems seem to ramble on at length about everything and nothing rolled into one giant word salad. Her line breaks are arbitrary and random...dare I say, nonsensical (and I can definitely appreciate a good line break). The very end of this collection contains a page explaining the purpose of the book itself, but it's hard to reconcile those thoughts with the actual poems.

I know this might be an unpopular opinion, and while I've read and written a lot of poetry it might be unbecoming of me to talk down on a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, but this...is not good. It's not totally terrible in spots, but man, either I'm missing something bigtime, or she's fooled a whole lot of people (I'm inclined to believe it's me that's the problem, and not you).

Jeca says

At some point, as I read Place, I realized that when Jorie Graham is at her best, she makes me feel like experiencing Terence Malick's Tree of Life on the page. (And in my head.) For me, her poetry hits on the same themes of being - and experiencing time, both finite and infinite- that the film did. (And still does?)

And yet I find her hard to read in the end. I generally feel like I'm in a groove and connecting to what the poem may be said to be about when the lines aren't broken in the middle. Or even at all. I get that what she's doing with the line break is partly what the poem is "about." But, even with that knowledge, I somehow don't enjoy it as much. Of course, and of necessity, some of my favorites in this volume are of the broken type. And as I did with Sea Change, I liked the last section the best. In no particular order, I recommend: The Bird That Begins It, Waking, Earth, Message from Armagh Cathedral 2011, Torn Score.

Karen Silvestri says

What strikes me the most about the poems in Jorie Graham's *Place* is the form. I work to understand why she breaks lines where she does and why she adds white space where she does. I read the poem, "Earth" out loud, allowing for the vast space that Graham uses between lines and noticed the change in pace when read with those spaces. The longer lines rushing forward and the shorter ones slowing down. I found a video of Graham reading her poem, "Later in Life." This was helpful, to hear the poet reading her own work. I find this use of space and line breaks interesting and plan to spend some time researching that.

The content, the message, in these poems was easier for me to understand. Two poems in particular stood out for me - "The Treadmill" and "Although." I can see "the gaze" very clearly in these two poems. Graham begins "The Treadmill" by setting up the image of a road, "the grayish road, hissing" as a metaphor of the world, of life, asking us to participate in life, to live! "...you were to deposit your question—the destination!—the mind is meant to want this, isn't it," is a line that resonated deeply for me. Then she lists all of the death and destruction of the world. This gazing out at this world that we have created allows her to turn her gaze inward to hoping for a better world, "the new brightness, the harvest—the dance—."

In "Although" she continues the theme of displacement from the world that we have created. She uses exterior images - flowers in a vase, trees, buildings in the village, a parade - to examine this interior thought of urgency to do more than simply inhabit the earth. Why are we no longer inhabitants? Because we don't take care of the earth? Because we don't stand still long enough to appreciate it? Graham says, "Nobody is anywhere, not anymore." I think about how this pertains to writing my own poetry. If I am not anywhere, if I am not turning my gaze outward, then how can I hope to participate in the conversation of history?

I love the poem "Lapse." To take such a simple, ordinary task as pushing your child in a swing for the first time and turning it into this incredible meditation on sending that child out into the world is incredible. As a mother, I can empathize with every line of this poem, terrified to send them soaring into the world, hoping they are spared "from anything at all, from everything," yet also praying that they have "large sheets of experience."

Last week in class we talked about how poems should not simply record the terrible and horrific, but that they should also offer some hope, share some beauty as well. I think Graham does this in the poems of this book. While she uses powerful images to discuss "the real," she ends the poems with hope for the future.

Jude Nonesuch says

This is a really extraordinary book. It completely confounded my low hopes not just for it but for writing/literature of any kind, not least as when I got hold of it (from the book stall by Piccadilly station) I was going through a particularly egregiously existentialist spell and had given up on any thought of, I suppose, 'representative power' in art or indeed anything of any kind. But somehow these poems transcended that (see – compare for example the impossibility of transcendence of any kind!) and actually I felt gave me – were an instance of – the literary manifestation of (some) human experience – the experience /made into/ text, somehow truly transmitting or forming, being, the sense of the internal. And I guess maybe it manages this, or feels like it manages, or tricks my lazily existentialist and I guess ultimately complaisant mind into accepting it has managed this, by directly addressing the paradox of its own existence[1]; its topic, mostly, being the impossibility and yet concurrently inescapable fact of the present lived and experienced moment. And that sounds like a crap thing for a book of poems to be about, but myself, I found it really extraordinary, and I guess to some extent it 'restored my faith' or perhaps deferred my incipient lack of faith in the point of having anything being written down at all. Good stuff.

[1] - btw the misuse of the term `paradox' in literary criticism really pisses me off (it sounds so much cooler and weightier than "contradiction!"); here, of course, its usage is wholly accurate.

Kevin Lawrence says

I divide Graham's work into two phases: early Graham (books up to her selected volume that won her the Pulitzer Prize) and later Graham. I prefer the earlier Graham, which began with a highly intelligent young imagination interested in being lyrically engaged and then evolved into a hyper-intelligent imagination interested in narrative and experimentation. Of all her books, *The End of Beauty* stands out as my favorite because it so thrillingly combined a lyrical voice with carefully plaited strands of philosophy, myth, politics, personal narrative and you can feel the excitement as Graham starts to hone her signature breathless cinematic style.

Later Graham is different for me insofar as she takes the thematic focus of her work to extremes and ditches most of the lyricism of her very earliest poems and forces her poems into experimental extremes. So we get volumes with capital letter Themes: Temporality, History, Ecological Concern, Philosophy. *PLACE* has a place in this, but it is my favorite volume Graham has written in a long time. I think as she's grown older, her need to be regarded as experimentally on the cutting edge has thankfully tempered down and she's arrived at a style that takes cinematic short-cuts mixed with long takes/lines (I think she learned/owes a lot from Leslie Scalapino) and manages to make the movement from line to line not so jarring as Scalapino or in some of Graham's middle work. Always there is a risk for Graham to want to slow things down to a still moment so you get a blurring of everything being caught in slow-mo while simultaneously (and seemingly incongruously) Graham wants to get as much detail packed into the poem as possible and so we get extreme close-up details and equally extreme long shots with an almost god-like perspective so that there is an interesting tension inherent in the way the poem unfolds (make everything freeze but then whirl around to capture every angle in that frozen moment). At its worse, her poems can read like a breathless, interminable run-on sentence (and we have poems that actually are run-on sentences in this volume, see "Treadmill"), but at her best Graham achieves a prolonged sensation that you get when Blake writes in *Auguries of Innocence*:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

I particularly like the poems that catch Graham just doing ordinary things: recall swinging her daughter as a child, visiting her father apparently in a retirement home and seeing a fox emerge from the woods, listen to a bird outside her window. These ground the poems in a believable scenario before Graham launches into her dizzying contemplation of trying to locate actual lived experience in an ever-changing temporal/spatial flux. When the poems get too conceptual (e.g., "The Future of Belief," which seems to be about a hanging slab of flesh that the poet can fashion into a human face!?), Graham falls back on tried-and-trusted philosophizing about how historical barbarity defines us as 21st century citizens that seems to take Adorno's famous dictum "there can be no poetry after Auschwitz" as a personal challenge.

But Graham has covered that ground to death in other volumes. It is refreshing to read poems about the life of plants or a galloping horse or just the dawning sun without having to have a layer of historical drama imposed on the overall structure of the poem. Finishing the volume, I still think Graham thinks too much in her poems and sings too little (which might be what appeals to so many of her readers), but every now and

then I felt the lyrical energy that I admired in early Graham peek through in this volume. In a volume exploring how we experience a sureness of place while knowing that sureness cannot hold, it was nice to read a poem end, "...we came to keep living/but to no longer be/inhabitants." ("Although")

BeccaAudra Smith says

A collection made up of five parts, non titled, with life themes shaping the material. Moments of C.D Wrightesque casualness, 'the yellow, which could be a god, why not', (p.18) contrasted with a sense of urgency, 'everything has to be sold'(p.8). There's an underlying depression that comes out, 'the world a place we got use out of' (p.50), particularly with the endings of her pieces, on single words like trap. However she also focuses intensely on moments of love, and suggests genuine emotion, or what we think of as genuine, gives an outlet for humanity in an otherwise inhumane world. The form of broken lines that isolate phrases give a strangeness to the reading, sometimes appearing like odd thoughts. Sean O'Brien says the 'line breaks are hectoring and intrusive' of the introductory poem. And sometimes I did feel this and was alienated by the effect, but then she'll introduce a strand of thought where you are nodding in agreement or emphasizing with the moment. I loved Tread Mill and Employment, Tread Mill made me laugh by it's ending, surprising but fitting.

It is a challenging voice that speaks in the poems, at times it can get intense, 'does free mean anything at all to us?' a stream of questions forcing the reader to question their conscious and think about their collective conscious. At times it is like reading while holding your breath for the next twist.

Spinning off the theme of PLACE, favourite quote: (p.14)

'there are words now
that must take the
place of this
creature'

What do we put into our lived experience, the marks we leave.

Craig says

To be fair to this collection, I believe that I read it at the wrong time in my life. I read it in small stressed chunks in between everything else that life was throwing at me. I don't think I probably was in the right state of mind and therefore I don't feel like I can fairly say too much about it.

One thing, though: The line breaks. With all of this enjambment and tiny lines, it seems... Well, I don't know exactly what it seems, to be honest. If you read these verses aloud, though, allowing the usual pause for line breaks, these poems so much more fractured than the narrative and word flow would allow. Maybe it's just me. Maybe it is intended to cause tension (I'm sure that's at least part of it), but it just seems like the line breaks are arbitrary to me - often just not corresponding to any meaning within the poem. Purely my opinion and I welcome discussion on this...

Jeff says

By 1994 I was startled by the degree to which she had become a kind of culture hero within the poetry world -- one, let it be said, whose seriousness within the scheme of poetry as it makes its cultural way was well-suited to that period's puritanical fixations and its theoretical endgames -- but then a 1997 Stephen Schiff *New Yorker* profile scuttled many another's good will toward her, as it exposed what might be called the literary game's star making machinery, while the ensuing Foetry scandal seemed to reflect, within the poetry world, the inevitable decline in the hope for that work she had seemed capable of doing. Foetry exposed the degree to which Graham had misconstrued how coterie operated within the publishing world in which she had made her ascent: The daughter of a painter-sculptor and a journalist, Graham's husband (at the time she started publishing) Bill Graham (of the Washington Post family) was brother to Stephen Graham, instrumental in the start [and beginning in 1995, publisher] of the Ecco Press, which was to publish all her work starting with the third book, *The End of Beauty* (1987), a book that, not coincidentally, was a stylistic breakthrough for her, as well. In her selecting of prize-winners, she essentially adapted the social networking through which her own career had thrived to the incipient poetry-world contest system as it tried to syncopate itself to her career's rising rhythm. That was her own form of endgame, and indeed the contest system bolted from her absurd use of it, and partially reformed itself. When I heard her read in April 2003, I was struck that she was reading to her St. Louis audience not poems from her most recent 2002 volume, *Never*, nor the new poems she was then trying to finish from what would become 2005's *Overlord*, but rather from *Swarm* (2000) -- as if trying to recover from a kind of hiatus in her relationship with an ongoing, and formerly relied-upon, *readership*. Frankly I'm not entirely certain I understand the degree to which that readership has moved on.

That said: *Place: New Poems*. On first reading, I responded most to the themes of displacement and the ambiguity in power, especially in the simultaneous condition of mother-/daughter-hood, e.g., in "Mother and Child," the title a throwback to the generic panels in the Western Art tradition, a frequent titling practice in Graham's first three books. Here the speaker locates herself within sight of "(The Road at the Edge of the Field)" [the poem's subtitle - parenthesis Graham's), acknowledging the scales of attention that draw one's attention away from an immediate task. The speaker is trimming hedges, and the biotic scales are not crashing, exactly, but seem to be in a moment of "inholding of breath by the whole | world as it is seen to be here, horizon to horizon stilling" into an invisibility like that "stasis" that is a "status": of being a mother, of being a daughter. Thought "kens" the image of those roles "into view . . . or not," and the poem's speaker imagines these skeins of thought as "large spidery webtrails" like Whitman's spider as a thought to "outlive . . . for sure the me in me": the poem can be read, I think, as a poem against Whitman's shoreline crisis ode ("Elementary Drifts," it's sometimes called, or "As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life" with its "real Me, who stands untouch'd altogether unreached"), for here is the opposite of that change Graham was keen to warn us of in "Never" and other crisis odes in her work, here -- invoking a "letters home" in which the speaker admits to having been identificatorily immersed -- "you would | tell this whole story but | *nothing happened*" -- and one achieves a biotic naturalism at extenuating odds with the "immobilism" of earlier Graham work. Is the speaker recipient of the letter? Author of it? Mother? Daughter? The stasis here is "kenned into view" as a status.

Readers familiar with the poems of mother-and-daughter-hood from Sharon Olds, or from Louise Gluck, may well share my fascination with Graham's tarrying in the negative here -- which is no doubt the more humanistic approach.

In "Cagnes Sur Mer" and "Untitled" and "Torn Score" and "The Sure Place," as well as "Lapse," there is an interesting dialogue about motherhood, Darwinian force, and psychic longing emerging in the book's best poems, and it is not a book -- as was, say, *The Errancy* (1997) -- that demands you read it as a sequence, or essentially a long poem. There was an ambition in the sequence that was *The Errancy* or *Swarm*, that has been chastened by the restlessness in her readers' response to her work. "Inner Experience," the poem written

with eyes closed, before one takes in perception's long route, is insisted on here, and with all the formal techniques that have been at her disposal since the early Eighties.
