

Jorie Graham

Incarnation: 9:30 am to 9:36 am

She sits on the straightback chair in the room.
A ray of sun is calling across the slatwood floor.
I say *she* because my body is so still
in the folds of daylight
through which the one beam slants.
I say *calling* because it lays itself down
with a twang and a licking monosyllable

across the pine floor-boards –
making a meaning like a wide sharp thought –
an unrobed thing we can see the inside of –
less place than time –

less time than the shedding skin of time, the thought
of time,

the yellow swath it cuts
on the continuum –
now to the continuum
what she is to me,
a ceremonial form, an intransigent puissant corridor
nothing will intersect,

and yet nothing really
– dust, a little heat ...

She waits.

Her leg extended, she waits for it –
foot, instep, calf –
the I, the beam
of sun –
the *now* and *now* –

it moving like a destiny across,
neither lured-on nor pushed-forward,
without architecture,
without
beginning,
over the book lying in the dust,

Incarnation:
9:30 am to
9:36 am

over the cracked plank – down into the crack – across –

not animal
nothing that can be deduced-from or built-upon,
aswarm with dust and yet
not entered by the dust,

not *touched* –
smearing everything with a small warm gaiety –

over the pillow-seam over the water glass –

cracking and bending but not cracking or bending –

over the instep now, holding the foot –

her waiting to feel the warmth then beginning
to feel it –
the motion of it and the warmth of it not identical –
the one-way-motion of it, the slow sweep,
approaching her as a fate approaches, inhuman but
resembling

feeling,

without deviation,
turning each instant a notch deeper towards
the only forwards,
but without beginning,
and never – not ever –
not moving
forwards ...

Meanwhile the knowledge of things lies round,
over which the beam –
Meanwhile the transparent air
through or into which the beam –
over the virtual and the material –
over the world and over the world of the beholder –
glides:

it does not change, crawler, but things are
changed –
the mantle, the cotton-denim bunched at
the knees –

diamonds appearing on the tips of things then disappearing –
each edge voluble with the plushnesses of silence –

now up to her folded arms – warm under the elbow –
almost a sad smell in the honeyed yellow –
(the ridge of the collarbone) (the tuck of the neck)
till suddenly (as if by
accident)

she is inside – (ear, cheek) – the slice of time

now on the chin, now on
the lips, making her rise up into me,
forcing me to close my eyes,
the whole of the rest feeling broken off,

it all being my face, my being inside the beam of sun,

and the sensation of how it falls unevenly,

how the wholeness I felt in the shadow is lifted,
broken, this tip *lit*, this other *dark* – and stratified,
analysed, chosen-round, formed –

Jorie Graham, a Fellow of the American Academy since 1999, is Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard University. She has published numerous collections of poetry, including “Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts” (1980), “The End of Beauty” (1987), “The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974 – 1994” (1995), which won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, “Never” (2002), and, most recently, “Overlord” (2005). She has also edited two anthologies, “Earth Took of Earth: 100 Great Poems of the English Language” (1996) and “The Best American Poetry 1990.” Graham served as a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets from 1997 to 2003.

© 2006 by Jorie Graham