

**الانقطاع الزمني واستمرارية اللغة: أخلاقيات
الشهادة البيئية في شعر Jorie Graham المتأخر**

**Temporal Rupture and Linguistic
Endurance: The Ethics of Ecological
Witnessing in Jorie Graham's Late Poetry**

آية علاوي خلف

Aya Allawi Khalaf

E-mail: aya_alabbasi@yahoo.com

الكلمات المفتاحية: جوري غراهام، الأنثروبوسين، الشهادة البيئية، الانقطاع الزمني، الزمن العميق، استمرارية اللغة، النقد البيئي.

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تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف يتشابك انكسار الزمن مع المسؤولية الاخلاقية في قصائد الشاعرة جوري غراهام، وتحديداً في اعمالها التي تواجه ازمة عصر الانثروبوسين (عصر الهيمنة البشرية على الارض) وتجادل الدراسة بأن الكارثة البيئية العالمية قد حطمت مفهومنا التقليدي للزمن الذي يسير في خط مستقيم، مما دفع غراهام لإعادة ابتكار القصيدة لتصبح مكاناً لما تسميه بـ "الشهادة البيئية". وبالاعتماد على مفاهيم نقدية للنقاد مثل "الاجسام الفائقة" لتيموثي مورتون و"الزمن العميق" لديفيد فارير، يقدم البحث تحليلاً لثلاث قصائد مختارة هي، (Dawn 2040) : (When the End Starts), (When the World Ended) من خلال منهج "النقد البيئي الابوكالسي" (القيامي)، يبين البحث كيف تستخدم الشاعرة الجمل المتقطعة والمنتشبية كأداة للمقاومة والبقاء، فهي لا تصور "نهاية العالم" كحدث سيقع في المستقبل البعيد، بل تراه حالة مستمرة من الخراب نعيشها بالفعل الآن، وهي حالة تجبرنا على اعادة صياغة اخلاقنا البشرية من جديد. يخلص هذا البحث الى النجاة في هذا العصر لا تعني الهروب من الواقع، بل تعني القدرة على الحفاظ على وعي اخلاقي يقظ تجاه الجرح الذي اصاب كوكبنا، وامتلاك القوية اللغوية للاستمرار في الشهادة على هذا الخراب حتى النهاية.

Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of temporal rupture and ethical responsibility in Jorie Graham's Anthropocene poetry, arguing that Graham's late work reconfigures the lyric form as a dynamic site of "ecological witnessing." While global ecological crises destabilize traditional linear temporality, this study contends that Graham's formal innovations specifically her fragmented syntax and respiratory lineation constitute a necessary ethical framework for surviving planetary collapse. Drawing on Timothy Morton's concept of "hyperobjects" and David Farrier's "deep time," the paper provides a rigorous analysis of selected poems from Graham's recent collections, including "Dawn 2040" (2023), "When the End Starts" (2025), and "When the World Ended" (2025). The study asserts that Graham represents the end of the world not as a distant catastrophe, but as an ongoing, banal condition of ruin that demands a radical reconfiguration of human morality. Furthermore, it explores the digital turn in Graham's poetics, where the erasure of nature coincides with the conversion of human experience into surveilled data. By tracing the shift from merely voicing loss to sustaining an active, provisional ethical consciousness, the study concludes that survival in the Anthropocene is



defined by linguistic endurance a persistent, rhythmic awareness required to witness the unmaking of the world.

Introduction

The Anthropocene marks a profound reconfiguration of both planetary time and human ethics. As climate change collapses the boundaries between human history and geological "deep time," humanity is compelled to witness a catastrophe that exceeds traditional scales of perception. In the late poetry of Jorie Graham, this crisis is not merely a thematic backdrop but a formal emergency. This study argues that Graham's recent work specifically her collections spanning from 2023 to 2025 moves beyond representing ecological collapse to enacting a "linguistic endurance." This endurance is necessitated by what can be termed the banality of the Anthropocene, where planetary destruction is integrated into the mundane routines of consumer life, such as shopping lists and administrative procedures.

While existing scholarship has focused on Graham's lyrical engagement with nature, a significant study gap remains in understanding how her fragmented syntax serves as a prosthetic for survival in an era of total digital and ecological surveillance. As the world ends, it does so under a newfangled light (Graham, 2025) that converts the unknowable human soul into calculable data. Drawing on Timothy Morton's (2013) "hyperobjects" and David Farrier's (2019) "deep time," this paper interrogates how Graham's "respiratory poetics" the literal synchronization of the reader's breath with the poem's broken lines constitutes a new moral territory. Through a close reading of "Dawn 2040", "When the End Starts", and "When the World Ended", the following analysis demonstrates that Graham's poetry does not offer salvation; instead, it provides the linguistic oxygen necessary to remain ethically awake amid the ongoing unmaking of the world.

"Dawn 2040" Elegy Beyond the End

The study begins its analysis with "Dawn 2040," a poem that serves as the primary site for Graham's reimagining of the lyric form as an immediate ecological witness. If Graham's other works imagine the approach of catastrophe, "Dawn 2040" envisions what follows the breath that survives illumination.

Soon

now actually



you must hide

from me. (Graham, 2023, lines 3 - 6)

As Christian Wessels (2023) observes, “Dawn 2040” cannot happen any place but now.” The poem collapses future and present into a single unbearable instant where the end is no longer imminent; it is occurring in real time. Time does not progress it erupts.

These tiny sounds

you think you hear

in the house elsewhere

is someone awake, is

someone alive. (Graham, 2023, lines 8 - 12)

The poem begins in near silence “tiny sounds,” “elsewhere” as if consciousness itself is awakening in a post-human world. The “house” becomes a hollowed-out oikos, the Greek root of both “home” and “ecology,” suggesting that the ecosystem of being has been abandoned. The question “is someone awake, is someone alive?” registers what Tremblay (2022) calls the “uneven distribution of breath.” Breath, once an unconscious rhythm, becomes a rare privilege a remnant of life on the verge of extinction.

Just

now, you hear

yourself say. I know

what finished is. (Graham, 2023 lines 13 -16)

The fragmentation of syntax “Just / now,” “the just / gone” embodies the temporal rupture Wessels describes as the reconciliation of “yet” and “now.” Graham performs time as broken intervals, each enjambment a gasp, each caesura a held breath. In this fractured language, existence must be reasserted “I am alive” not as affirmation but as resistance against the silence engulfing it. The act of saying I am alive becomes both prayer and defiance.

The scrub oaks



are dying back.

The white sky

arrives, whitening

further.(v2023, lines 19 - 23)

Here, the landscape undergoes desaturation, color and distinction drain away into a sterile white. This “whiteness,” far from purity, is a whiteness like bone the ossified residue of life. The “white sky” mirrors the bleaching of coral reefs and the suffocation of forests under atmospheric toxins. Graham’s chromatic imagery performs a post-pastoral aesthetic, a world beyond renewal, where the pastoral no longer shelters but suffocates. The whitened sky resembles the radiographic glow of overexposure an x-ray of the Earth’s last breath. The poem becomes a visual elegy for a planet bleached by its own fever.

Did we

survive at the end

of this story, I ask

the sun. I give up on

tenses here. (Graham, 2023, lines 28 - 32)

Here the voice moves from observation to linguistic collapse. (“I give up on tenses”line 32) is not metaphor it is ontological surrender. To relinquish tense is to relinquish narrative continuity, the scaffolding of human temporality. Past, present, and future dissolve into a single temporal dust cloud. As Wessels notes, Dawn 2040 “makes time happen formally.” Graham enacts this through grammatical erosion, verbs no longer move forward; they hover in suspension. The question “Did we survive” becomes futile the syntax of survival itself has expired. Even “freedom” is reconsidered, “What were the things we called freedoms” marks a moral retrospection on the illusions of progress and agency.

But the sun

as it rises is touching

everything less and less



tenderly, reaching

everything,

no matter how u

hide...(Graham, 2023, lines 45 - 51)

The sun, once a shared symbol of life and warmth, becomes in Graham's poem a force of exposure rather than care. Its light no longer supports life but overwhelms it. What was once gentle contact turns harsh, it touches "less and less tenderly." This shift does not suggest revenge or intention, but indifference. The sun is not judging humanity; it is simply excessive, operating beyond human scales of meaning. Graham's use of enjambment reinforces this effect, as each line pushes relentlessly into the next, mirroring the sun's continuous reach. The poem returns to one of Graham's central concerns, the imbalance between vast natural forces and fragile human bodies. Under the same light that once sustained life, breathing becomes difficult, and survival itself feels threatened.

though here, listen,

I make it

for you drip drip

as I admire yr breathing

wherever u are now

reading this. Inhale. (Graham, 2023, lines 52 - 58)

At the poem's heart lies this intersubjective breath. The poet creates water "drip drip" through language alone, invoking an onomatopoeic resurrection. Words substitute for oxygen; poetry becomes the prosthetic of survival. Jean-Thomas Tremblay's *Breathing Aesthetics* (2022) provides a fitting frame, breathing is both a record of injury and a political vernacular. Graham stages this duality the poet as healer and mourner, the reader as participant in a collective respiratory ritual. The imperative "Inhale" collapses the boundary between poem and body, the reader becomes the medium through which the poem breathes.

You. You



beautiful thing, you

human, yr lungs

I can crush with one

inadvertent in-

halation...(Graham, 2023, lines 59 - 64)

The intimacy of address turns terrifying. The “You” once tender becomes the object of annihilation. The sun’s voice personifies planetary agency beyond human comprehension. The hierarchy of existence inverts, the human becomes a thing admired and erased in the same breath. The enjambed break “in- / halation” visually enacts the crushing of lungs under planetary pressure. This is Graham’s syntax of extinction.

all

is building towards

sand’s hard thought, nothing will

change its mind

this dune of the future

as it moves

towards us...(Graham, 2023, lines 68 - 74)

Here the metaphysics of matter culminate. The “dune of the future” embodies geological will “sand’s hard thought.” Nature no longer thinks with us; it thinks against us. The personification of sand dramatizes a new form of planetary cognition, the Earth’s own thought outlives the human one. The lineation mimics the dune’s slow, crushing motion; nothing “changes its mind.” The future, once a realm of possibility, solidifies into fate.

just the earth

revolving, in-

exhaustible, without



purpose, in which

from moment to

moment

even now

change gathers...(Graham, 2023, lines 78 - 85)

After the annihilation of the human voice, what remains is motion. This closing vision rejects both despair and consolation, the Earth continues inexhaustible, purposeless. Neha Mulay (2023) describes this as a “coda of dissolution and resurgence” a return to pure being, stripped of anthropocentric meaning. The repetition “All is. All is.” resembles both prayer and reboot. The poem closes not with mourning but with ontological persistence, existence without witness. Wessels interprets this as the reconciliation of “yet” and “now,” a temporal singularity where poem, reader, and planet share the same breathless instant. The final question, “Do you remember,” becomes an echo addressed to a vanished listener. Memory the ground of human continuity dissolves with the disappearance of the witness. What remains is motion without consciousness, the earth revolving, inexhaustible, purposeless. The true catastrophe, Graham implies, is not extinction itself but the erasure of remembrance.

“When the End Starts”: The Moment of Temporal Rupture

Transitioning from the immediate eruption of time in "Dawn 2040," Graham moves in “When the End Starts” to explore the paradox of living within an apocalypse that has become mundane. While the previous poem focused on the post-human awakening, this work begins not with cataclysm but with a scene of mundane order: shopping, lists, and careful planning.

all of us are shopping.

Our lists are made out carefully.

Don't forget anything a voice calls out. (Graham, 2023, lines 1-3)

Yet this ordinary activity meticulously organizing consumption masks the beginning of the end. Graham immediately conflates apocalypse

with routine, transforming the supermarket into a site of existential reckoning. The syntax is clipped, pragmatic, and collective (“all of us”, line 1), echoing the bureaucratic tone of consumer modernity. Here, the juxtaposition of mundane domesticity with the impending cataclysm serves as a profound critique of what might be termed the "banality of the Anthropocene." Borrowing from Hannah Arendt's (1963) concept of the "banality of evil," Graham suggests that ecological destruction is not carried out through overt malice, but through the thoughtless, bureaucratic routines of consumer life.

The Anthropocene is marked by the coincidence of the everyday and the epochal; in other words, the end of the world is embedded in habit. This everyday repetition extends to the act of making lists. By carefully enumerating items, humans attempt to impose order, but Graham shows that this very act can create disorder a kind of controlled chaos or linguistic fractal. The precision and attention to detail reflect our desire for stability, even as the system around us unravels. In this way, mundane routines like shopping and listing reveal the tension between human attempts at control and the larger, unstoppable forces of environmental collapse.

It feels like the moon has been full for years.

It won't go back down. (Graham, 2023, lines 15-16)

The image of the eternal full moon marks the poem's first temporal rupture. Natural cycles waxing, waning, renewal are arrested; time no longer flows but stagnates in excess. The full moon, conventionally associated with beauty, plenitude, and revelation, assumes in Graham's vision an uncanny stillness. Its prolonged radiance unexpectedly, no longer signifies harmony but dread the horror of an arrested cycle. What should represent a momentary culmination becomes a symbol of paralysis, transforming natural perfection into apocalyptic stasis. In this inversion, Graham converts the lunar sublime into a figure of the Anthropocene itself, a world illuminated beyond redemption, trapped within the permanence of its own ending. However, the line's flat tone underscores paralysis, not revelation.

Acceleration becomes paradoxical in Graham's vision, the faster the world moves, the more it seems to freeze in place, trapped in a momentum that prevents real change, that's why her lines evoke a state of “chaotic stillness,” where time feels simultaneously suspended and on the verge of breaking open. Through this tension, the poem captures a form of temporal paralysis that mirrors the pressures of the Anthropocene.



This moment exemplifies how Graham masterfully translates ecological perception into linguistic structure turning the experience of halted time into a syntax of suspension and imbalance; a phenomenon that mirrors the nonlinearity of natural systems.

All the tree crowns have been razed to stop the spread of the disease,
though the forests of trunks and hacked limbs remain. (Graham,
2023, lines 17 - 18)

The scene extends the vision first glimpsed in Graham's earlier landscapes, where the fallen tree once stood as a figure of endurance and silent witness. Now, that silence could be seen as a mutilation. The effort "to stop the spread of the disease"(line17) in a moment recalls contemporary forestry policies that justify mass cutting under the pretext of management or fire prevention. Commonly, what remains is not renewal but a cemetery of trunks, a world stripped of canopy and breath, It is "forests of trunks and hacked limbs" that mark the next stage in the ecological aftermath. Additionally, what was once a single dead tree now proliferates into an entire landscape of the maimed.

The poem thus continues an ecological chronicle where what once could be elegized or listened to has now decayed into a modern mechanical devastation. In Graham's unfolding Anthropocene vision, the natural world is increasingly presented in a state of advanced ruin, its stillness transformed into a sterile, artificial gleam. The language mirrors this continuity, replacing reverent pauses with bureaucratic justification. Here, the healing gesture of care has mutated into surgical eradication; what was once an ethical virtue has become a mere administrative procedure. In this transformation, Graham exposes how acts of control disguised as environmental protection actually deepen the wound of the Anthropocene, turning ecological care into a form of moral complicity.

but when I throw my words onto the scales nothing moves.

These days the words become real only for the speaker

the air whispers to me

the listener is stealing away... (Graham, 2023, lines 22 - 25)

Here, the breakdown of communication parallels the breakdown of shared reality. The metaphor of weighing words introduces a moral and



linguistic economy now rendered void meaning has lost mass, language no longer tips the scale of ethics. The listener “stealing away” marks the disappearance of the Other, the erasure of communal dialogue. In this void, Graham performs what Afsaneh Heidari (2025, p. 57) calls “poetic consciousness in fracture” the lyric voice confronting its own dissolution. From a chaos-theoretical lens, this moment enacts nonlinearity, small disruptions (a word unheeded) cascade into systemic collapse (a world unspeaking). No wonder, then, that the poem stages the entropy of both ecology and language, making linguistic fragility a mirror of planetary decay.

To explain, the poem’s fractured punctuation Graham’s use of periods and commas mirrors the collapse she describes. Each period halts time for a moment, as if thought freezes before moving on. Commas, by contrast, suggest continuation, even if fragile. Together, they create a rhythm that swings between silence and persistence, reflecting the tension between despair and the drive to keep going in the Anthropocene. In this way, punctuation does more than structure sentences it also captures our breath, hesitation, and struggle to keep going amid the collapse of language. Even the smallest grammatical marks carry the weight of time falling apart.

Then the day for triaging the-imperfect-among-us came.

Everyone was walked out to the field.

They were surrounded.

No one cld look away. (Graham, 2023, lines 50 - 53)

This sudden eruption of political violence fractures the poem’s surface of domestic normalcy. The bureaucratic tone “triaging the-imperfect-among-us” suggests how violence can be carried out through ordinary administrative routines, where harmful acts become embedded in the structure of procedure itself. The ethical witnessing here occurs through the speaker’s refusal to embellish; the understatement is devastating, crystallized in the blunt declarative line (“No one cld look away” line -53), whose stark simplicity withholds descriptive excess and forces both speaker and reader into compulsory moral spectatorship. Graham’s enjambment and minimal punctuation accelerate the scene, creating a chaotic rhythm where moral horror unfolds within procedural language.

The field, the soldiers, the collective blindness these become emblems of a civilization that consumes while annihilating itself. This time, chaos is no longer external but moral, the disintegration of empathy into efficiency.



Through this juxtaposition, Graham converts atrocity into a moral landscape one that exposes the ethical collapse of modernity disguised as order.

Massacres happen during express checkout. (Graham, 2023, line 82)

This line fuses the poem's two central systems commerce and violence into a single mechanism. The juxtaposition of "massacres" and "express checkout" collapses categories of atrocity and consumption, creating an ethical vertigo. The metaphor captures the chaotic simultaneity of late capitalism, the world's end processed through efficiency and convenience. Modern rationality, when combined with unchecked power, can create the conditions for unimaginable violence. When systems built on order and efficiency are detached from ethical limits or human restraint, they become capable of organizing destruction on a vast scale.

Graham's irony reveals how the very systems built for rational order and speed those vehicles of modern action can become mechanisms capable of administering destruction with bureaucratic precision. The register of everyday speech ("express checkout") becomes, in this light, the linguistic vehicle for apocalypse. As noted, in this synthesis of the domestic and the catastrophic, Graham demonstrates how the very language of progress conceals violence, making consumer life complicit in planetary decline.

Self-preservation,

you are measuring my minutes out,

you are weighing my dust. (Graham, 2023, lines 96 - 98)

Here, the speaker addresses self-preservation as a personified mechanism, exposing the moral cost of survival. The act of "measuring" and "weighing" evokes bureaucratic rituals of value but also biblical judgment. In this chaotic moral landscape, self-preservation is not instinct but complicity. The syntax measured, rhythmic, self-aware reveals the paradox of the poem's voice, composed even as it disintegrates. The oscillation between rational diction and emotional collapse enacts what Nawras Ghassan Abdullah (2023) terms "the butterfly effect in poetic consciousness" a micro-level ethical awareness that amplifies into planetary resonance. Each line here is a tremor in moral time, where survival equals accountability.

Last night a wolf walked through my yard...



I watched his bones articulate his gait

into the blazing pool of light. (Graham, 2023, lines 99, 104 -105)

The starving wolf reintroduces the nonhuman as witness. The image fuses death and grace, violence and beauty, a skeletal figure rendered luminous by artificial light. The wolf's exposed bones "articulate" not only movement but language the broken body speaking where human words fail, a corporeal testimony to ecological neglect, habitat depletion, and disrupted food chains that leave the animal emaciated. Appearing within a human "yard" and illuminated by a ("blazing pool of light. "line 105) the wolf bears the material imprint of environmental abandonment. The ecological witness has shifted, nature now observes humanity's ruin. This reversal expresses the essence of the Anthropocene elegy, a mode in which mourning becomes mutual, as our grief for the damaged Earth is mirrored by an imagined grief returning from the world itself. In the chaos of extinction, articulation persists; even bones acquire syntax.

The snow begins again.

the ice maker,

I will wait for it to drop

its incandescent offerings

into the icy tray made to receive them.

Soon one will arrive in it.

Anytime. Now. (Graham, 2023, lines 108, 112 -117)

The atmosphere suggests a domestic stillness, but the comfort is hollow. The "ice maker" ritualizes futility machines producing purity amid corruption. The repetition of waiting ("Soon one will arrive in it. Anytime. Now." line 116) suspends the reader in an eternal present, a temporal stasis emblematic of Anthropocene consciousness. The ("incandescent offerings". Line 111) evoke a hollow, mechanized ritual of production that parodies natural cycles; illumination replaces renewal, and creation is reduced to automated output. This frozen temporality recalls the deterministic attractor of chaos systems perpetual motion within confinement. Graham's ending, therefore, is not resolution but recursion, apocalypse loops endlessly, reconstituting itself in the hum of domestic appliances.



The poem concludes with the word “Now,” a terminal adverb that abolishes future and past. Time collapses into the unbearable immediacy of awareness what Graham elsewhere calls “the frightening away of existence.” This terminal present embodies both ethical witness and existential paralysis. The poet’s role, then, is neither salvation nor prophecy but endurance, to remain conscious, however fractured, amid the unmaking of the world.

In this way, Graham redefines lyric consciousness as a site of ethical vigilance within planetary collapse.

“When the World Ended”: The Aftermath and Moral Continuity

Finally, the study concludes with "When the World Ended," a poem that shifts the focus from the process of ending to the eerie state of its aftermath. While “When the End Starts” portrayed the collapse of the everyday, this poem opens in a radiant exposure that dismantles the traditional imagery of apocalypse.

When the world ended everyone woke up.

It was a gorgeous sunny day.

The lists with our names on them were laid out in the
light.

Someone straightened the pile.

Are they complete I heard a voice ask though

it was awfully far away from the beautiful day. (Graham,
2025, lines 1 - 7)

The “gorgeous sunny day” (line 2) is paradoxically the moment of the world’s collapse. The brilliance of the light does not promise revelation but surveillance; it is a light that sees too much. In this new world, illumination erases privacy, nothing remains unseen, not even thought. Every gesture and every silence is caught within a field of visibility that has become total.



This illumination, as the poem reveals, is not divine but digital the cold fluorescence of algorithmic modernity: systematic, automatic, and coldly precise. The “lists with our names on them” (line 4) stand as emblems of a world where identity is bureaucratized into data, where existence itself becomes a quantifiable entry. Set out “in the light,” these lists signify what Shoshana Zuboff (2019) terms "Surveillance Capitalism," a condition of total exposure and clarity without mercy where nothing remains private. In this luminous aftermath, the self-awakens not to freedom but to a system that already knows it.

The poem’s diction and enjambment perform the tension between awakening and submission. The abrupt syntactic breaks "At first it / didn’t change / much, at first I / didn’t I don’t / change much" (Graham, 2025, lines 9 - 13) reflect a consciousness trying to orient itself in a collapsing world. Each sudden pause mirrors a consciousness trying to understand its place amid disorder. Life continues even as the systems that sustain it break down, and the speaker moves through this landscape as someone actively experiencing and responding to a world increasingly encoded into systems she can barely control.

The millions of years of prehistory hummed,
they looked artificial in this newfangled light...

It’s rocky and does not expand.

It’s earthy.

It will take your gaze into its mastery. (Graham, 2025,
lines 16 - 20)

Here, the ancient and the artificial collide. The geological the “rocky” and the “earthy” is confronted by a technological light that renders even prehistory strangely “artificial.” The poem compresses vast scales of time into the immediacy of a screen, turning deep history into a crisis of perception. The speaker’s longing to “touch it,” to feel “such solidity,” expresses a desire for moral ground in a digital era defined by fluidity and instability. Yet every attempt at contact collapses beneath the force of hyper-visibility, where even the “heart” almost “disappears” under a laughing, indifferent light.

Do not deplete me. Do not empty me.

I want to be more than a proceeding.



Do not calculate me. (Graham, 2025, lines 29 - 31)

This plea forms the ethical heart of the poem. The command “Do not calculate me” (line 31) is a cry against a world that tries to measure feelings and value through cold, systematic logic. Each line break (enjambment) acts like a small glitch in a digital system, interrupting the smooth flow and resisting full control. In this way, Graham asserts a moral right to what Édouard Glissant calls "opacity" the right to remain unknowable and resist the totalizing gaze of clarity. To “remain provisional” (line 46) becomes a deliberate moral choice, aligning with David Farrier’s (2019) notion of "moral time," where ethical action arises from pausing and reflecting rather than immediate reaction. In Graham’s world, the refusal to be fully legible becomes, in itself, a form of moral endurance.

Avoid facial expressions

while being assessed.

Do not accidentally

express yourself. (Graham, 2025, lines 37 - 40)

In these lines, irony is clear. The instructions to hide all expression make language and emotion meaningless, as even a simple smile becomes a piece of data. The system’s voice pretends to care while actually controlling everything, showing how modern networks affect even our thoughts.

We are all breathing here together,

are we not?

We are all leaking our in- formation,

our attentiveness. (Graham, 2025, lines 50 - 53)

Here, breath turns into leakage. Even respiration is surveilled. Yet this moment of collective awareness transforms exposure into consciousness. The fragmented breath mirrors the planetary condition itself, disjointed yet ongoing. Graham’s ecological sensibility emerges here; light and breath, data and air, collapse into one medium of being. The poem ends with a haunting inversion of agency:

I will be yr user.



Connect with me

... My gaze is my gift.

I give it,

I give to you freely. (Graham, 2025, lines 59 - 63)

The speaker becomes both consumer and consumed, offering her “gaze” as currency in the economy of attention. The repetition “I will feel free. I will feel free” (lines 65 - 66) embodies the tragic parody of autonomy in a world where even emotion is algorithmically defined. Through this transformation, Graham stages what Morton (2013) calls “the strangeness of coexistence after the end.” The poem becomes a moral experiment, proving that moral continuity does not arise from doctrine but from the persistence of attention in an overexposed world. apocalypse is not a final event but an ongoing ethical condition, one in which the responsibility to imagine, feel, and witness persists even as the world unravels.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Jorie Graham’s poems do not merely represent the apocalypse; they enact a profound pedagogy of survival within it. By navigating the trajectory from the breathless urgency of “Dawn 2040” to the banal, consumerist routines of “When the End Starts”, and finally to the eerie, overexposed silence of “When the World Ended|”, Graham demonstrates that the ecological crisis is a dual collapse: of the planet and the human soul. This study concludes that Graham’s formal innovations her fragmented syntax and respiratory lineation constitute what this study terms "Linguistic Endurance." This endurance is a vital ethical response to the "banality of the Anthropocene," where destruction is masked by domestic order.

As traditional metrics of progress and linear time fail, Graham suggests a radical reconfiguration of existence one that prioritizes the shared breath of the nonhuman and the "opacity" necessary to shield the inner self from total digital calculation. In this fractured landscape, witnessing is transformed from a passive recording of loss into an active form of persistence. The act of paying attention, maintaining a "provisional" presence, and refusing to be reduced to quantifiable data is what sustains the moral heart of humanity. In the end, Graham’s poetics provide the linguistic oxygen required for a sustained ethical consciousness, proving that even in the aftermath of the world, the



responsibility to witness, to feel, and to remain unknowable remains our most essential act of resistance.

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