

ما بعد الحداثة والصوت المجزأ في الشعر الأمريكي المعاصر: جوري غراهام وآن كارسون

**Postmodernism and the Fragmented Voice in Contemporary American Poetry:  
Jorie Graham and Anne Carson**

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### الملخص

كان مفهوم ما بعد الحداثة وسماته المميزة في الأدب موضوعاً لكثير من النقاش عبر التاريخ. يمكن إرجاع جذور ما بعد الحداثة إلى اليونان القديمة، وكان تأثيرها محسوساً في مختلف جوانب الثقافة والتاريخ والسياسة وأسلوب الحياة. إن العلاقة التاريخية بين الفلسفة اليونانية القديمة والفكر الغربي تعكس افتراضاً يدعو إلى التأمل. إن الاعتقاد بأن كل شيء قابل للتغيير بشكل مستمر له مركزية معرفية وعملية، مما يؤثر على طريقة بناء المعرفة وفهمها. في حين أنه لا يمكن للجميع التعرف علانية على ما بعد الحداثة، فإن الممارسات اللفظية غير الرسمية والمتنوعة في المجتمع غالباً ما تعكس مبادئها. إن فهم الخلفية التاريخية، والخصائص الرئيسية، والتقنيات في الأدب، والموضوعات الرئيسية، والشخصيات الرئيسية في أدب ما بعد الحداثة يمكن أن يوفر نظرة ثاقبة لأولئك الذين يسعون إلى فهم مكانهم في العالم. لقد اتسم مفهوم ما بعد الحداثة في الشعر الأمريكي المعاصر باستكشاف الأصوات والهويات المجزأة، مما يعكس تحولاً ثقافياً أوسع في فهم الذات واللغة والسرد. تعتبر التجزئة في شعر ما بعد الحداثة بمثابة تقنية أدبية وبيان موضوعي، مما يؤكد على عدم استقرار المعنى وتعدد وجهات النظر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الذات، اللغة، المعنى، التجزئة، التأثير.

## Abstract

The concept and defining features of postmodernism in literature have been a topic of much discussion throughout history. The roots of postmodernism can be traced back to ancient Greece, and its impact has been felt across various aspects of culture, history, politics, and lifestyle. The historical connection between ancient Greek philosophy and Western thought reflects an assumption that invites reflection. The belief that everything is continuously mutable has cognitive and pragmatic centrality, influencing the way knowledge is built and understood. While not everyone may openly identify with postmodernism, the informal and multifarious verbal practices in society often reflect its principles. Understanding the historical background, key characteristics, techniques in literature, major themes, and key figures in postmodern literature can provide insight for those seeking to understand their place in the world. The concept of *postmodernism* in contemporary American poetry has been marked by an exploration of fragmented voices and identities, reflecting a broader cultural shift in understanding selfhood, language, and narrative. Fragmentation in postmodern poetry serves as both a literary technique and a thematic statement, emphasizing the instability of meaning and the plurality of perspectives.

**Keywords:** Selfhood, language, meaning, fragmentation, impact.

### 1.1 Preliminary Overview of Postmodernism in Poetry

Postmodernism, an intellectual and cultural movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, has significantly influenced various arts, including poetry. This movement is characterized by its skepticism toward grand narratives, acceptance of fragmentation, and playful challenge to traditional forms, creating a distinctive voice in contemporary American poetry. Postmodern poets often use fragmented voices to question traditional ideas of identity, authorship, and the very nature of language. A key feature of postmodern poetry is its rejection of a unified, coherent self; it often presents fragmented and multiple voices, mirroring the disjointed nature of the postmodern self. This fragmentation appears in forms like multiple narrators, shifting perspectives, and disjointed narrative structures, creating a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity that encourages readers to participate in constructing meaning.

Additionally, postmodern poetry frequently employs intertextuality, drawing from a wide range of cultural references and literary traditions. By blending high and low culture, canonical and popular texts, postmodern poets create a collage-like effect that

challenges the boundaries between genres and disciplines. This intertextuality reflects the postmodern condition, characterized by fragmented and dispersed information across various media.

In essence, postmodernism has had a profound impact on contemporary American poetry. Through fragmentation and multiple voices, postmodern poets have questioned traditional notions of authorship, identity, and language itself, offering a more nuanced and complex view of the human experience in the postmodern era.

Postmodern American poetry is an exploration and deconstruction of fragmented voices and identities, exploring epistemological, existential, and ontological questions. It grapples with environmental issues and critiques post-industrial technology, in addition to blurring established generic boundaries. Theory is shown not to be a stable formulation of knowledge, but rather poetic meditations and discussions. It relocates the center as the margin and the margin as a center, and investigates silence and ellipsis, celebrating spirituality, granting the physical world a spiritual depth and eternity. It is rooted in tradition as well, since the poetic tradition is a living tradition that needs to be continually revisited, revised, and rewritten. Postmodern American poetry is an ongoing journey, which challenges, develops, and reconfigures the poetic landscape. The exploration of voices and identities in postmodern American poetry is not merely textual manipulation, mind games, and empty gesticulation, but a serious pursuit. Not only is the notion of an authentic self irretrievably lost; the boundaries between being and pretending are blurred, and one does not know for certain if one is experienced or simulated, leading to pretense and fabrication. The study of identity is a poetics of the abyss, representing the very quest for our center and our origin, since the loss of an authentic living center raises a fundamental question of grounding human subjectivity. It is this question against which postmodern American poetry rebels in unity and terror, in self-destruction, and in a dogged will to survive. These defined otherness and fragmentariness in postmodern American poetry are resonances of profound epistemological, existential, and ontological dilemmas. Self-fragmentation in postmodern American poetry is not unique; we must also examine its rootedness in literary influences. (Zona, 2005)

The Western highbrow tradition of self-fragmentation and its accompanying sense of loss of the authentic center have not developed merely in the latter half of the twentieth century; they have their roots deep in history, in a lengthy archaeological layer reaching back to the very beginnings of philosophical thought in the Western world. Two of the most important prophets of self-fragmentation and self-alienation are Plato and Socrates, from whose hands Western literature has accepted integral self-representation. It is neither the first time a human subjectivity has found itself looking

into abysmal self-mirrors from ancient times right up to the present; our problems suggest a lack of a proper perspective on these ancient objects of contemplation. After the tangible rise of the spoken word, there is a distinct feeling of a dramatic cultural shift: poetry no longer expresses the dimensions of human happiness; it no longer socializes the individual into institutions; it no longer preserves the living bond between the human or divine speaker and the human or divine hearer. (Grmusa & Oklopcic, 2022)

In *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, it is argued that each poet goes through a series of decisions about how to write poetry; that is, he must decide with whom to identify and how to make struggle to create his own voice. This process is likened to the notion that the method of learning is a dialectical process. Individual poets will find that such decisions will depend upon the other works of literature that lie in their experience, and upon the attitudes, culture, and economic conditions of their time. In the United States, we find, during the 20th century, that poets are more likely to associate themselves with those political and social conditions, holding that the poet's art is indeed that of his contemporary struggles over social identifications. As a consequence, then, we observe that the subject matter changes from nature's representation to the action of man on man. (Bloom, 1973)

However, as poets assume the role of prophets, the divergence of the prophet/poet increases and causes a problem inherent in the new program in terms of how to properly represent the concerns of the disjunction in the linguistic and social conditions. To make things worse, linguistic philosophy creates a disjunction in the act of representation, and postmodern poets find themselves adhering to this paradigm while at the same time discussing issues such as the failure of the modern and the fragmented nature of the works. (Kitching, 2020)

In the realm of contemporary American poetry, the echoes of fragmented voices resonate with a profound urgency. As readers traverse the disjointed landscapes of verse crafted by poets like Jorie Graham, and Anne Carson, they encounter a tapestry woven from the threads of postmodernism. This era in literature, characterized by its skepticism toward grand narratives and its embrace of multiplicity, finds fertile ground in poetry's capacity to reflect the complexities of modern existence. Postmodernism is not merely a backdrop; it is an active force that shapes the fragmented soundscapes of today's poets, who challenge traditional forms and explore the intersections of identity, memory, and perception.

The historical trajectory of literary fragmentation can be traced back to the disillusionment of the 20th century, when traditional structures began to crumble under

the weight of existential inquiry. Such fragmentation becomes a powerful tool for poets who seek to echo the chaos of human experience. Jorie Graham emerges as a poetic innovator, utilizing her personal and philosophical insights to manipulate language and form. Her notable works reveal a keen awareness of environmental and existential themes, while her background as a poet steeped in academia informs her experimental approach. (Deely, 2001)

In contrast, Anne Carson's interdisciplinary perspective melds classic influences with contemporary sensibilities, creating poetry that defies categorization. Her unique structures compel readers to reconsider the boundaries of poetic form, merging poetry with philosophy, dance, and visual art. Meanwhile, Jorie Graham confronts pressing social and political issues through her exploration of race and identity, employing a multimodal expression that speaks to the pervasive complexities of contemporary life. Her work challenges readers to engage with the uncomfortable truths of intersectionality, fostering a dialogue that resonates beyond the page. (Zona, 2005)

## 1.2 The Fragmented Voice in Poetry

The term "fragmented voice" signifies a profound philosophical conflict witnessed in postmodern poetry. The conflict, which is by no means static, has wrestled for cohesive identity with contemporary Western society, whose present manifestation has emerged as "postmodernism." Postmodern culture is popularly associated with conventional and prescriptive codes of aesthetic production, dissemination, and mode of reception. In contrast, contemporary texts of postmodernism often celebrate conventional cultural values while at the same time deconstructing elitist, historicist accounting, and imperialist overreaching, thereby pointing to the problem inherent in postmodernism as class-divided and normative. The claim here is that a culture encompassing diverse peoples, languages, and customs does not strictly exclude extravagant aesthetic writing practices. On the contrary, "fragmented voice," as it occurs in various shapes and forms within the modern and postmodern poem, allows diverse, previously muted, and unsung voices to penetrate right into center stage. (McFarlane, 2021)

In the passage from modern to postmodern, it is not the literary structure that undergoes the most radical transformation; rather, it is perception and thought that restructure or, more precisely, decenter linear logic to allow for multiple perspectives, genres, disciplines, voices, marginalizations, and intertexts. Indeed, to dismiss the fragmented voice as truant only reconfirms the modernist poser versus populist dichotomy that current postmodernism so desperately wishes to transcend. Furthermore, within the embrace of postmodernism grow texts that not only hasten to

decenter and expand the autonomy, tradition, and medium of literature but also structure and narrate experiences that enable analyses of the increasingly eclectic traits by which "poverty associates, intersection races." And to the sort of pointed structural question for the recursive backer who, while patiently sitting out narrative structure, loses all that. (Flax, 2023)

As the 20th century drew to a close, the once authoritative and clear traditional poetic voice began to lose its persuasiveness. The instability of meaning, particularly the concept of a unified self, disrupted the straightforward and uncontested use of language. There is an increasing awareness that language itself is ideological and influenced by various factors, leading to a lack of control or transparency. This has resulted in gaps and inconsistencies in the prevailing code, allowing the poetic voice to slip into these gaps or be constrained. In response to this dominant voice, more writers are experimenting with breaking the traditional voice, reflecting the growing concern about the limitations of the human psyche as a tool for expression and communication with others and the world. (Harris, 2023)

Two contemporary strategies have proved effective for preventing this danger; they refuse either to be didactic and give voice to silence by exposing a void, or refuse expressive gestures and expose a parody of their absence. Both express the impotence of the more confident, homogeneous voices. The fragmented voice develops from the post-disheartening of man's interaction with the world and its language; it has in most poetry of the second half of the twentieth century nearly dominated the consistent lyric voice. The fragmented narrative voice, long a part of fiction, begins to sprout in the poetry of while other poets have begun other fragmented voices responding better to the queasy submissiveness, the freedom in parlor ballads, and missed Mass; by manipulating the story, voice, and sometimes song. (Newbon, 2020)

But before turning to how poetry has recently experimented with narrative voice, it is helpful to suggest the poetic treatments of the lyric. I have obscured fragmented voices bleeding into the lyric here to invoke this idea of the disheartening of man with his world and its language; such exposed fragmentation in the rest of the part with this brief prelude to the ways fragmented voice interacts with narrative. ( Goldhill & Greensmith, 2024)

No wonder, then, that fragmentation has become the keyword by which innovative poetic works are often understood. Even despite the heightened female speaker's presence in poetry, the voice is dissected and dismantled to such a degree that it is frequently treated as just one among a plethora of eccentric characters given voice by multiple and diverse poetic strategies. It might also be argued that being a woman

reduces the status of highly unorthodox assimilations of other voices and voices of talking animals from a high poetic transcendence to a foolish poetic cacophony. The thinking woman's Laurence Sterne is not. Such is the critical effect of extreme and unorthodox formal experimentation upon a female poet who is already struggling with the problem of possibilities of poetic voice in a postmodern world. Immediately, the work appears disturbing and uncomfortable, and its challenges to gender identity may be seen as positive, as for instance one interpreter does when seeking to connect fragmentative poetics with feminist psychoanalytic conceptions of identity as multiple, permeable, and changing. Other interpreters, however, appear very negative, as if frightened by chaos into reacting against the work and banning such challenges from the canon of serious poetry. (Muhammad, Hussain, & Bashir, 2024) ( Khajieva & Rakhimova , 2023) ( <sup>1</sup> )

Postmodern literature often employs fragmented and disjointed narratives, rejecting traditional plot structures. Events may appear out of sequence or be told from multiple perspectives, highlighting the instability of reality. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the fragmented voice in contemporary American poetry, highlighting the contributions of Graham, and Carson within the postmodern literary framework. By contrasting their styles and thematic concerns, this study will illuminate the diverse methodologies through which these poets articulate the intricacies of human experience. Additionally, the reception and criticism of their work will be examined, providing insight into the broader implications of postmodern poetics within the cultural landscape.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the use of fragmented elements, such as lists, visual pieces, and dwarf stories, all methods of the avant-garde and postmodern art worlds, can display and further disciplines and formation in the lyric poem. The important question this study will investigate is whether fragmentation can create unique ways to embody or perform interdisciplinarity and exploration, and thus transgress disciplinary boundary-making in Carson's work. This is important because disciplinary barriers must be crossed because thinking should not be restricted to a given mode of action, an institution, a material, or a category.

Ultimately, this exploration seeks to affirm the enduring legacy of postmodernism in American poetry, revealing how its fragmented voices not only reflect but also forge new understandings of identity, existence, and artistic expression. The journey into the

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<sup>1</sup> Khajieva, F., & Rakhimova, S. (2023). Explaining Literary Innovations: A Classification of Fragmented Forms in Belles-Letres Text International Journal Of Literature And Languages, 3(11), 47-53.

intricate world of contemporary verse promises to uncover layers of meaning that challenge, provoke, and inspire—inviting readers to reconsider the power of poetry in articulating the complexities of our time. Jorie Graham, often hailed as a poetic innovator, blends personal narrative with philosophical inquiry, crafting works that question the nature of existence and the intricacies of human emotion. Her biographical background, steeped in a blend of American and European influences, informs her distinctive key themes and techniques, which are evident in her notable works. Similarly, Anne Carson employs interdisciplinary poetics, drawing on her academic background and a myriad of cultural influences to create experimental forms that defy traditional poetic boundaries

### 1.3 Fragmentation in Jorie Graham's Poetry: A Stylistic and Thematic Exploration

Fragmentation is more than a literal characteristic of poetry; it is a stylistic device as well as a means of representing the fragmentation that characterizes contemporary life. Stylistically, fragmentation is a way of collating disparate elements ranging from mythology to scientific and mathematical formulas and of contrasting abstraction with material detail. It captures the fractured experience of modern life in which loss and dislocation have led to a shattered sense of identity, combined with technological advances to reshape life in innumerable ways. Fragmentation is present in verse form—the torn line of juxtaposed utterance rather than the continuous line of syntax. It is present in syntax; in the use of ellipses, jumps, unfinished thoughts, and fractured sentence lines. It is manifest in the way the poems move in quick starts and stops; how they begin and end abruptly or shift perspectives suddenly or slip into the voices or perspectives of other characters—real or imagined. (Yang, 2023)

Regardless of these and many other advantages and disadvantages, however, the formal representation of fragmentation still interests poets. Many poets write in a fragmented style, and given that we have to respond to the poet's own choice consciously to do so, studying that style remains useful. This part discusses fragmentary poetry as both a thematic and a stylistic device. For the poet, fragmentation is not just a formal choice or a way of representing the modern world. The fractured, jagged, reference-strewn, and often jagged poems have a specific function: they embody the narrators' experiences with, perhaps their responses to, the fragments of the Western tradition. (Fischer, et al., 2021)

In her recent book on *landscape and literature*, referring to the alterations that occur when land is parceled, writes: "Political divisions on the surface of the earth physically altered the earth's surface." Similar concerns about parcels, divorce, and fragmentation



have occupied in her poetry over the last decade. In her two previous books, she has emerged as a poet of split view looking to bridge what has torn by speaking it out. It is like an obsession in a lower key at first, the focus not so much on a harmonic containment as on defining the ground for it. Brings us her scrubbed lyricism, a celebration of fragments. In both books, the need for wholeness undergirds her search. The quest and prayer for that wholeness and the theme of those precious kept moments are pronounced, if not central. Yet in her most recent book, the lyric persona does not turn outward for nature as much as it reverts to a pet childhood memory. (Baker, 2022)

Deep in the sleight of hand  
 is where you whipped  
 my mother  
 for a stolen pencil box  
 till they thought  
 she was dead. And there is her sister,  
 the one who's never cut her hair,  
 and they're the ones who died leaving  
 a freezer full  
 of meals twenty years old  
 or more. Maybe (Graham J. , 1993)

Hardly looks beyond the remembered valley more than once or twice in the book. Rather, she brings nature back to her. Part of this exploration of childhood might be in response to the rural nature of a European setting, other land political disputes, or world-centered events, yet the retreats into the natural world of childhood present her with a derived security, a sort of centeredness when the Utopian view wanes. These internal political boundaries also ardor geographic ones that seem conducive to what is called a "political self." A developing sense of identity could encompass this self and by no means refuse it if it is enlarged, as argued, by self-alienation. As evident by reconstructing the scene of a house going up in flames, this sort of boundary staking

not only aids in memory, but in gathering tension, resolving crises, and creating a dwelling point for the poem, that location set in the remembered years of personal time. (Armstrong, 2022) ( Narvaez & Bradshaw, 2023)

Jorie Graham's poem shows that fragmentation can be a stylistic and thematic device that is often used in writing. Her oeuvre pushes the limits of poetic form; fragmentation is at the heart of this exploration.

You showed me how only a tree  
can steal (through sap and leaves)  
the minerals of the parent rock  
and feed them by the leaf rot) to  
the soil.  
  
How that delay (you drew a fountain  
in the dirt) is all we ever  
are. Who wants a handout anyhow,  
you say? Family hours (Graham J. , 1993)

Jorie Graham's work is destined, more than perhaps any other poet of her generation, for its fragmentation and complex themes that reflect her great preoccupation with the intricacies of time, perception, and the self's interaction to natural and metaphysical worlds. The fragmentation in her work functions at stylistic and thematic levels, as a vehicle for exploring the dissonances and multiplicities of modern experience.

The use of the word "fragmentation" to describe not only a literal characteristic but also a stylistic device establishes that the poet is not only representing the world in it but also manipulating the fragments to mold them into differing shapes. To put it otherwise, the poet is not only an observer of the fragments but an artist who is also a part of the fragments. The frequent use of and reliance on fragments is thus the trademark of an explorative style and distinguishes the poet from others as much or more than the size of the poems or the choice of topics. (Bardey, Booth, Heger, & Larsson, 2022)

Graham's utilization of fragmented syntax (break phrases, enjambment, along with interruptions) reflects the shattered character of mind and perception. Within poems like *"Fast"* (from her 2017 collection *Fast*), fragmented words recreate the feeling of struggling with mortality, the technological era, and the velocity of contemporary existence: *"Yes, you can have it all / and then again / the dogs like questions in the snow ... / Memory, don't fail me."* Disjointed wording reflects the speaker's fragmented consciousness.

"In the rear-view mirror, I saw the veil of leaves

suctioned up by a change in the current

and how they stayed up, for the allotted time,

in absolute fidelity to the force behind,

magenta, hovering, a thing that happens,

slowly up swirling above the driveway

I was preparing to back clear out of—

and three young pine trees at the end of that view" (Graham J. , 1993)

She frequently uses brackets and ellipses for introducing concurrent or digressive ideas, providing levels of significance. In *"Prayer"* (from *Never*), the ellipses produce an echoing effect, implying an inadequate knowledge of the sublime or ineffable: *"Over a flower the invisible / humming/floats....."*

Graham artistically represents fragmentation using white space on the page, fragmented text, and an unorthodox layout. The spatial fragmentation on the page of her poem *"The Taken-Down God"* (from *Place*) emphasizes the major idea of dislocation.

The majority of Graham's poems explore the tension between humans and the environment, reflecting the two's broken relationships. Throughout *"Sea Change"* (from the collection *Sea Change*), the fragmentary story reflects the ecological and existential crisis: *"You are pre-tendered, you are tethered / even now, how long now—what— / what now will you do..."*. (Graham J. , 1993)

Graham's broken structures reflect a broader philosophical investigation into the possibilities of significance in a fragmented universe. The variety of voices and views in her poems exemplifies the postmodernist approach to truth and understanding.

#### 1.4 Fragmentation and Temporality Reflect Modern Experiences.

Jorie Graham is one of the most intellectually rigorous contemporary American poets. She has a fascination with the stylistic fragmentation of the poem, and this fragmentation is also evident in her handling of concepts such as time, narrative, the gods, and the self. Graham's poetry is largely about the process of perception. Since she insists that the self functions as the reception rather than the expression point for experience, consciousness is complex and shifting and is often synonymous with perception.

For decades, both scholars and poets have debated the benefits and drawbacks of fragmented lyric forms. On the one hand, fragmentation can symbolize the disordered nature of the modern world. The poetic use of broken lines and snatched phrases can voice, perhaps more effectively than conventional poetic forms, a range of painful emotions such as disorientation, desperation, and alienation. On the other hand, fragmentation can exaggerate those modern conditions it had first only aimed to express. It can make a complex matter oversimplified, suffering trivial, by breaking it into smaller parts. Such an argument is often supported by pointing out that lengthy, complex philosophical arguments were unraveled in long, carefully articulated lines. (Stanghellini, 2024) (Kohlert, et al., 2023)

Graham's broken-down style reflects the complexity of modern life. She often breaks normal sentences and storylines to show how people feel things differently when they try to discover new things. *"The End of Beauty"* (1987). In the poem *"Self-Portrait as the Gesture Between Them,"* Graham shows us through fragmentation that our perceptions are unstable. Lines cut off, sentences drift, and odd snapshots tumble around and jostle, which fractures and disturbs the reading experience: *"If it had words, it would / rise, it would gather / itself from the air around your face, you'd see / yourself."* (Graham., 1987)

These disjunctions and enjambments make the reader pause and piece things together, making the experience more like communication breakdowns and authentic fracturing of identity.

Graham's poetry often sees time as something that isn't fixed. The structure reminds the reader of the way in which memories and time operate. The sentence is too short to paraphrase. In the poem, fragmented lines and the moving sun capture the

understanding of the passing moment. Here fragmentation evokes the fleeting and contradictory nature of perception and memory. It compels us to live in the transient instability that defines humans.

Fragmentation also symbolizes the fractured experience of time, which is a common motif in her writing. In "*The End of Beauty*" (from the collection *The End of Beauty*), Graham interrupts linear narrative frameworks to investigate the breakdown of temporal boundaries: "*The ripped / ones the torn ones...*". (Graham,, 1987)

Graham's poetry is fragmented, which coincides with postmodern literary approaches that emphasize uncertainty and multiplicity. Nonetheless, it is highly personal and relevant, acting as a vehicle for confronting significant problems like climate change, mortality, and the advent of technology. Graham breaks down traditional patterns to allow her readers to actively participate in recreating meaning, mirroring the shattered character of contemporary living.

So that I had to look up just now to see them

sinking—black storks—

sky disappearing as they ease down,

each body like a prey the wings have seized. . .

Something that was a whole story once,

unparaphrased by shadows,

something that was whole cloth floating in a wide  
sky rippling, studded with wingbeats,

something like light grazing on the back of the light,

now getting sucked back down

into the watching eye, flapping, black

hysterical applause,

claws out now looking for a foothold (Graham J. , 1993)

Graham's insistence on the decentralization of the self evokes the notion that there is no essence waiting to be discovered irrespective of the contingent language that conveys it. Since Graham explores ways of freeing the self from the burden of selection, the poem might be seen as a model or testing ground for such a self. Her sense of the connections between minds and with the cosmos is bound up with her understanding of language and the way in which it has evolved the unique human mind. The poems revel in the self-reflexivity that has evolved, the continual feedback between minds, both during communication and when we remember the conversation later. Inflections of the language have helped us learn how to perform the unusual tricks of continuous tensing, memory, and foresight that define and sustain our peculiar ability to permeate change. But it is as though these almost unique capabilities are oblique corollaries of the intricate relationships that we, as speaking, suffering beings, already enter into with intelligible contents. (Graham N. , 2022)

### 1.5 Fragmentation in Anne Carson: Interdisciplinary Poetics

Anne Carson is one of the most important poets working in the English language today. Canadian by birth, she now lives in the northeast corner of the United States, where she is an extraordinary figure, serving countless disciplines and colleges, and pursuing an eerie, remote voice in her poetry that is out of touch with contemporary American literature. Carson is a classicist and a philologist of impeccable training, both as a student and faculty of some of the major universities in the US and Canada. She has mastered Latin, Greek, and French. She is a poet who has turned her back on the lyric tradition and on the poet's voice, adopting a remote, distancing, fractured, and frankly bizarre storytelling mode. (Callanan, 2023)

She has published ten works and has a half dozen more in the works. Some of her works are puzzlingly labeled and exist as mixtures of genres of poetry, criticism, narrative fiction, and essay. Regardless, this study wants to argue that Carson is at the forefront of contemporary American poetry and embodies the current progress of poetry in our society better than any other current poet. Her poetry is carefully paced, wrenched, and filled with amazement at an object's whole self-articulation. Carson invents genres, recycles theories, invents characters, sculpts language, experiments with narrative, and suggests new passages through classical texts. Her work is

characterized by an extensive use of fragments, which in a certain fashion challenges the modern notion of a fragmented world. This aesthetic embracing of fragmentation places her in a long line of innovators, and poets who speak of pieces and wholes. (Joseph, 2024)

The Canadian poet, classics professor, and connoisseur of Greek, Anne Carson, has developed an unmistakably recognizable voice in contemporary poetry. Her literary style, at times awkward and hard to follow, has garnered her an international reputation for combining various types of literature in her works. Anne Carson is a leading specialist in the long and persistent tradition of avoiding traditional genre definitions, finding in her works prose fragments, poetry essays, or hybrid pieces locating her as an outstanding example of the contemporary scene, unified within a tendency of transcending traditional genre boundaries. Her own words address this relentless, conscious avoidance of conventions. Anne Carson's interference within traditional structures encompasses as well the very conception of literary art, which Carson has evoked by merging various disciplines such as the visual arts, music, drama, and, most notably, classics. (Skade, 2021)

Anne Carson's interdisciplinary work also draws attention to another aspect of her poetry essays: the role of fragmentation in her poems. Critics have almost unanimously agreed that all of Anne Carson's works are essentially fragmented in one way or another. The origin is a bit dubious, but most agree to place the burden of fragmentation on the shoulders of the Greek poet Sappho, who has become the epitome of incomplete or fragmentary poetry. Nevertheless, the evocation of Sappho cannot be merely accidental or fortuitous. Instead, it is here evoked to serve a solid argument. The reconsideration of Sappho's role as the principal poet to address not only the romantic or lyric side of these fragments but their essential literary elements, their deep reverberations of melody, of lost music, and of silence all make Sappho not only the principal exemplar of incomplete text, but invigorate Anne Carson's poetics. (Coles, 2023)

Anne Carson is a leading and perhaps the most widely read contemporary experimental poet today. She is also an esteemed classics and comparative literature scholar, former fellow, and multiple prize-winning author who teaches in the MFA program. This study argues that her work is fragmented and interdisciplinary, drawing upon disciplines and modes including poetry, literary criticism, theatre, classics, visual art, installation, engendering, and myth. (Anderson C. , 2020)

In "*The Beauty of the Husband*", unlike in her previous books, Anne Carson fragments her texts into sections. These short prose pieces are highly poetic: moving, sustained,

and memorable. They emanate and investigate longing. The poetry in Carson's practice deepens her texts, making her poetry a secret weapon of her criticism. This fact made me think that "*The Beauty of the Husband*" was a highly self-critical book. In some ways, its acerbic narrators are also subtly refuting the other Carsonian speaker with whom I started, the one who contrasted between the self and artifice. It seems to suggest that artifice is the rhetorical resolution by which the self idealizes itself, and it announces that artifice exposes the self to longing. It must be noted here that none of the characters who have this insight into artifice has any positive associations with it. Nevertheless, Carson's work is an ever-forming entity, so my work here is no mandate for a definitive critical view on this subject. ( Van Praet, 2023)

"Why did nature give me to this creature-- don't call it my choice, I was ventured:

by some pure gravity of existence itself,

conspiracy of being!

We were fifteen.

It was Latin class, late spring, late afternoon, the passive periphrastic,

for some reason, I turned my seat

and there he was.

You know how they say a Zen butcher makes one correct cut and the whole ox

falls apart

like a puzzle. Yes, a cliché." (Carson, 2021)

The sonnet cycle "*The Beauty of the Husband*" pits a speaker who is direct, urgent, desperate, and contemporary against a speaker who sees herself as learned, temperate, ancient, and enduring. The first speaker relates a failed marriage with a mode of direct, one-sided address, close to a passionate diary. She is an activist, charismatic, and larger than life, although other people are heard of rather than heard from. Such a life inevitably entails its silences, and I suggest that her need to escape or condemn them is



what drives her weaving in and out of her disparate experiences with her former husband, who shouts and ignores in these gaps, and her engagement with Sappho, who only has things to say about love, desire, grief, loss, absence, presence, joy, and sorrow through aphoristic folk songs. Carrying a very different authority, though, the inset voice of Sappho is made to define the contemporary definer. The Beauty of the Husband compresses this aspect of Carson's characterization of her poetry into a focus on two vocal registers and two different ways to tell time. (Bethell, 2021) (Woolner, 2022)

"A wound gives off its own light

surgeons say.

If all the lamps in the house were turned out

you could dress this wound

by what shines from it" (Carson, 2021)

A renowned writer and expert in the field of Classics, Anne Carson uses the very same characteristics of this area to create unique literature that has won her many awards and gained her a large number of followers. Considering that she is a professional essayist and poet, the focus of this study is on her most famous and recent works which are the main sources in which it is mainly possible to observe both the awakening of pleasure in a "pessimistic landscape" and the theme of fragility and sought-after values. In the plot presentation of the works, it is clear that the intertwining of themes of timeless pain from the lack of Eros intertwine with the representation of the contemporary, controlled by the permanent risk of decay (the environment, the human being, and human relationships), represented by the feeling of angst. (Ruprecht, 2021)

"You used to say. "Desire doubled is love and love doubled is madness".

Madness doubled is marriage

I added

when the caustic was cool, not intending to produce

a golden rule." (Carson, 2021)

So, in *"Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay,"* Carson discussed the myth of Eros and Psyche and the connections between eros, relationships, desire, and literature. "Tzvóyra" is a book with typologies from 1998, which explores a version of the ancient Greek narrator Hesiod in its work of the caesuras program. Last and perhaps best known of her works in contemporary poetry, *"The Beauty of the Husband"* from 2001, and her other two poetic elements, "Men in the Off Hours" from 2000 and "Decreation" from 2005 – in this connection, it is worth mentioning that "Men in the Off Hours" contains the title poem in a bilingual edition – in them, the author talks about her feelings since, at that time, she was with her husband, who suddenly becomes a "duration" after thirteen years of marriage. This lover, with whom she lived certain happy moments, is later transformed by the same man into a "detraction" because she does not love him; she uses it to be able to escape the literary crisis in which she lives, since it has consequences not only on her relationship with him. However, *"The Beauty of the Husband"* repeats and extends these themes further by having, as one of the main subjects, an account of marriage into the psyche and the different roles that individuals internalize in it. In the poem, taken from the myth, Greeks allegorize human feelings, taking on different aspects of fragmented love. (Saldanha, 2022) (Skade, 2021)

"Repression speaks about sex better than any other form of discourse / or so the modern experts maintain. How do people / get power over one another? is an algebraic question". (Carson, 2021)

Anne Carson's works are known for their fractured nature, and her innovative formal experimentations have been closely discussed both in general and with regard to the theory and practice of their interplay with the issue of gender. This essay explores the effects of Carson's formal fragmentation from a nongender perspective owing to Carson's complexity as well as her works' multifaceted "fractured" character. Carson's innovative experimental character and the importance she attaches to subjectivity, on the other hand, call for a variety of approaches to her formidable corpus to be developed, including those that refuse simple generalizations based just on the thematic and ideological levels of her works. (Bell, 2021)

The fragmented quality of Carson's works has been widely discussed, and her texts have been read as displaying a "serrated" or "fractured" quality with the resultant structure through which different strands of thought are intertwined. It has also been demonstrated that in her work the issue of language is closely interrelated with that of gender, and the outcome is that studies of Carson often engage with theories of lacunae or nonidentity as formulated in relation to gender and feminist practices. Here the focus addresses the matter of form that informs the corpus of her works from a nongender perspective. Despite thematic heterogeneity and an approach that could

seem disparate, many if not most of Carson's works are marked by a fragmented and multilayered textual character. (Bell, 2021)

Anne Carson has made significant contributions to the fields of poetry, classics, and feminist critical theory. She is known for her groundbreaking book, *Eros the Bittersweet*, which combines philosophy and literary criticism. Carson's work also includes translations, reimaginings, and performance pieces of texts by Sappho, Euripides, and ancient Greek lyric poets. She has expanded her interests to include popular topics such as beauty, writing, and the French symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé. Carson's work has been praised for its interdisciplinary approach and has inspired collections of essays and scholarly works. Her unique style embraces fragmentation and has been described as an "interdisciplinary poetics." (Singer & Walker, 2022)

Critics argue that while some of these renewals preserve ancient forms (such as *the letters in Epistulae: Helen to Stesichorus* or *the lyrics in If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*), Carson's more experimental works, from *Nox* to *The Beauty of the Husband*, break apart and redefine modern forms, such as elegy and lyric. Beyond simply enacting these changes, however, the disruptions specific to each type of poem undermine the intellectual efforts that rely on the connections between exploration and explanation. In Carson's approach, the new form becomes the distinct substance, and the intricacies of the text provoke more inquiries than they are anticipated to resolve. (Anderson B. , 2020)

## Conclusion

Jorie Graham and Anne Carson are among the most frequently cited contemporary poets working in the critical field of literature. They have resurrected both classical and modern texts in an attempt to challenge the conventions of poetry and the nature of written history. Moving away from confessional narratives, they have fragmented texts to encourage new and open readings by critics and readers. Unlike others, who felt that poetry makes nothing happen, Carson teaches poetry at a university, and Graham is a full-time professor in a renowned writers' workshop. Both poets have been influenced by the critical field of New Formalism. The New Formalist poets share with Graham the belief that modern poetry must regard the world historically and that both life and poetry are more complex than free verse has indicated. They see the fragmentation of the modern world as something representing only disjointedness, not revelation.

Just as the New Formalists did not directly attack other poets for falling short of the poets of the past, Graham and Carson use their poetry to explore, more by trial and error than through direct encounter, the poetics and the meaning-making process involved in producing evocative and accurate fragments. Their voices are not

antagonistic to others but offer a new and open reading of the work. Both issues not only engage in themes we hide by referencing classical characters and making them present with us but also question humanity in this fragmented world. Their voices, fragmented, are unique but have a common source with a distinct point of view. They use fragments as their voices to express a general human concern in the contemporary world's stream of consciousness.

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