



Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Ph.D., is an award-winning writer, professor, and the author of five books, including three collections of poetry: *Animals in the House* (Woodley Memorial Press), *Reading the Body* (Mammoth Press), and *Lot's Wife* (Woodley Memorial Press). She is also the author of the award-winning *Write Where You Are*. Additionally, her poetry and prose have been published in dozens of literary journals and anthologies, and she has given poetry readings and workshops in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Caryn coordinates the Transformative Language Arts concentration at Goddard College, where she teaches. She also facilitates writing workshops for people of many backgrounds, including for people living with cancer and other serious illness, for low-income women, and for adults in transition. A certified poetry therapist, Caryn serves on the executive board of the National Association for Poetry Therapy, and on the steering committee of the Transformative Language Arts Network.

Caryn is recipient of numerous awards, including the 2006-08 Kansas Arts Fellowship in Poetry, the 2005 Rocky Mountain National Park artist-in-residency, the City of Lawrence Phoenix Award for Artistic Achievement, and the National Association for Poetry Therapy education award. She also gives frequent presentations, including a reading in early 2006 in Cuernavaca, Mexico with poet Ekiwah Adler-Belendez.

Also See

- www.writewhereyouare.org for updates on Caryn's workshops, readings, and retreats.
- [150 Kansas Poems](#)

Landed

Here everything is a list of its details:
the surface of crow feather where it bows,
or echo of whippoorwill through the closed window
over the bed. The chiggers and the slow-creeping
cedar trees, milkweed webbed with spittlebug,
and the grass above and below ground,
mirroring out from a single point
of root and longing.

I'm landed here, in the center of something
not my own doing, and although I keep thinking
I'm alone, I'm dying, I'm afraid,
I'm making all that up.

The man I love is coming out of the woods,
the long crescent of his body closer, bowing to touch
something, say its name.

When he stands back up, he walks slowly to show me
whatever we think of love is just the aerial view
that tells you nothing compared to the soft green stems
that curl and fall with the wind, compared to how each step
across the grass is a form of falling
out of and into what losses make life possible.

The quick flashes, like the sun balancing
on the lip of the horizon right before
it goes out, like that moment the field golds
everything opaque, like how love strips us
out of the stories we have for love..

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Magnolia Tree in Kansas

This is the tree that breaks
into blossom too early each March,
killing its flowers. This is the tree
that hums anyway in its pool of fallen
petals, pink as moonlight. Not a bouquet
on a stick. Not a lost mammal in the clearing
although it looks like both with its explosions
of rosy boats – illuminated, red-edged.
Not a human thing but closer to what we might be
than the careful cedar or snakeskin sycamore.
It cries. It opens. It submits. In the pinnacle
of its stem and the pits of its fruitless fruit,
it knows how a song can break the singer.
In the brass of its wind, it sings anyway.
Tree of all breaking. Tree of all upsidedown.
Tree that hurts in its bones and doesn't care.
Tree of the first exhalation
landing and swaying, perfume and death,
all arms and no legs. Tree that never
learns to hold back.

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What Would Happen If You Walked Here?

What would happen if you opened to something so totally beyond human that it dissolved your borders into bluestem? What if it rained and you got wet? What if you understood not just that the earth tilted but that it tilted right through your spine and that's why you occasionally fall over?

Nothing prepares you for the real.
There's no journey out of this except the one that separates your bones from your thoughts, your tendons from the lines of your desire.

In the giant mouth of the dark,
in the opening screen of the dark,
in the bottom of the pot of the dark,
is the dark that isn't so dark.

In the myriad call of meadowlark layered on siren of coyote upon clanging of wind in cottonwood tree is also the sound of no sound, too.
Nothing can prepare you for the speed of the universe. Nothing can steady you enough to absorb even the fact that light travels millions of years to get to your eyes, that the dissolved dust of stars are your thoughts and your thinking, that the sky is so big, that the dirt is made of bones and breath, that there's nothing heavier than the ocean, that there's no such thing as exact replicas in the seasons, and that seasons pour through us like rain or dust whether we're paying attention or not, that a rabbit can outrun you in your prime, that language is only partially made of words, that the earth cannot help but to keep recycling you into something better.

Coordinates

I live just south of the poetic,
where the glaciers stopped short, sloped down to nothing. Now low-flying catfish line the brown rivers while the valleys go flat as clavicles edging into erosion and horizon. The grass, obsessive as always, runs itself oblivious, and the cedar trees wave, one arm, then another, as if under water.

I live where the sky, dense and exhausted, complains all smug and blue that nothing ever happens here, and leans asleep on its elbows in the corner. It dreams what we mean: that we can only locate ourselves in the weather that maps us but can't be mapped ahead of itself.

Here there's no way to know what's coming, or what's gone, the big bluestem being as tall as it is. The wind comes. The wind goes. The sun climbs around the corner and returns at its appointed time. The windows shake in the storm that can pick up a field, undress it, place it back down.

When I try to say where I am, I can only point to the rushing everywhere the mind tries to be still, and in that wind, the stillness that holds a single glance of switchgrass up to the light before letting it go.

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