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T S. Eliot, Elizabeth Bishop, John Ashbery -- and Jorie Graham. *The New Yorker* places Ms. Graham in this distinguished line of poets, heralding the Pulitzer Prize winner as a profound voice in American poetry. Now, in her eighth collection, she further enhances her reputation with a book-length sequence of verse that is a stunning work of grandeur.

The New Republic writes, "for 'swarm,' in other words...read 'be born again.' Graham is writing about a spiritual turning point, a new beginning.... Beauty -- that is, the pure sense-perception which has long been a concern for Graham -- is no longer the most important criterion. Now goodness is...[and] the idea of submission, of obedience, without understanding: one must 'yield' before 'hearing the reason' for yielding."

Swarm Details

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Author : Jorie Graham

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From Reader Review Swarm for online ebook

Carole says

Yes, I've read this one too and own it.

Russel says

Love your suit.

Pewterbreath says

This is the most depressing book I've read in a long time. Graham's poetry is extremely fragmented in this volume in a sort of scattered reflection of the human/diety connection. For some reason it depresses it in the same way that philosophy books used to depress me---it equals a sort of common denominator of life that is so simplified and logical (despite the large amount of subjectivity in the voice of these poems) that it kind of erases all of the variations and joys of life. The style reminds me of Robert Duncan (another voice of the fragmented) but unlike Duncan, Graham does not wander---her focus is squarely on the individual's desire for knowledge and the impossibility to have any certain knowledge of any kind. In metaphor after metaphor she continues, unwaveringly, on this focus in an almost nihilistic desire to shed all illusions away. I'm not sure that this is brilliant or suicidal---I just know that this is one painful read. I admire it; but I cannot enjoy it--it is not to be enjoyed.

Mark Desrosiers says

Sure, I was disappointed by her crafty dissembling and rewarding incompetent lovers and asskissers (underscored later by Foetry). And I distrust anyone associated with the Iowa Workshop. But this is great poetry: semi-autistic, eternal, trance-like, simultaneously hilarious and solemn. Like an oracle. I'll never read another book of her poetry because she's obviously a nest-baked cougar crone with useless privileges, but this is good. Her peak.

C says

Some stellar lines, but a fragmented mess of a book that refuses to make meaning out of its many disparate parts.

Harry A says

I've enjoyed reading Graham's poetry for many years, but while I always feel she's doing something

interesting, I almost never fully understand it.

I do see that she's praising the transitory, the particular, the short-lived, against the universal unchangeable permanent ideal of the classical neoplatonists and many since. That's especially clear in my favorite poem of hers, "Erosion", which is my favorite because I at least think I *do* understand it! And how many poems attacking neoplatonism are there? (I keep thinking of Goethe's Faust, who's supposed to say "Verweile doch, du bist so schön" when he encounters the perfect moment, but never does.)

And I assume her fracturing language is supposed to communicate something about the transitory particular moment that a more standard use of language misses. But how it's supposed to communicate that, and what it's supposed to communicate, is still obscure to me. I found *_Place_* much clearer, and so went back to *_Swarm_*, hoping I'd understand it better this time. And I do see more clearly that her language is expressing the fractured nature of our ordinary consciousness. So I've made progress. But I'm afraid I still have a long way to go to understand what each of her poems is conveying.

I like her poetry, and am glad that I'm coming closer to understanding it, and look forward to continued progress.

Erin Miller says

Completely cryptic. Maybe it's just not my style?

Tony says

Flawed but essential.

Kent says

This is the book to follow *Errancy*? I'm not sure where the turn was, nor why the "Underneath" needs to be so reticent, considering how voluble it had been in previous book. I feel in the trap of judging this Graham in light of the others, and I find it difficult to find the same enthusiasm. If I frame it as a book written at the time of serious personal crisis (is this a chronicle of her split with James Galvin?), then I follow along. Otherwise I find the air part of the swarm more a dispersion of sense.

Jude Nonesuch says

It's a bit pretentious..

Abraham says

Will somebody please please tell me how to enjoy Jorie Graham's poetry?

Jennifer says

One of Graham's best collections, she does a total 180 and strives for minimalism, emphasizing fragments and the importance of silent spacing on the page. Very sharp interpretations of Sappho's fragments, Lear and the meaning of kingship, the Oresteia. Very large influence from Anne Carson.

Mary says

How disappointing!! I just couldn't appreciate this at all...and I tried. It was frustrating because there would be little snippets of glowing lines that would just dissipate into single words with disconnected meanings. Just not for me...
