

Swarm not story

Swarm, not story: when a heroine in Elena Ferrante's work loses the plot or floats free from it, it is that very word she reaches for—"swarm." "Frantumaglia"—a jumble of fragments—is what Ferrante titled a collection of her nonfiction writing, deploying an expression that her mother would use to describe being "racked by contradictory sensations that were tearing her apart." A swarm possesses its own discipline but moves untethered. Nothing about the notion of a swarm comforts or consoles. It doesn't contain, like a story. It allows—contradiction, dissonance, doubt, pure immanence, movement, an open destiny, an open road.

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