



Interview with a Ghost: Essays

Tom Sleight

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The first book of inventive prose by a poet whose writing "refuses to cut emotional corners and yet achieves a sense of lyric absolution" (Seamus Heaney)

I: What do the dead think about, anyway?

G: For me, it's questions of realism, I mean what's more real than the body once you don't have one? ?from "Interview with a Ghost"

In *Interview with a Ghost*, poet Tom Sleigh investigates poetry from his conviction that "while art and life are separable, they aren't separate." These essays explore issues of selfhood that are often assumed but not adequately confronted by contemporary poetry?namely, subjectivity and its limits, what it means to employ the first person in a poem, the elusive "I" with all of its freighted aesthetic and psychological implications. The works of poets such as Anne Bradstreet, Sir Walter Raleigh, Robert Lowell, Thom Gunn, and Frank Bidart are examined, as are Sleigh's own poems in the contexts of history and private life, disease and health, the realm of the spirit and the realm of the day to day.

One essay imagines the poet delivering a lecture, followed by a reception full of jokes and asides; another essay becomes a wild extended parable about the avant-garde; the title piece, in the form of an interview, interrogates the poetic soul, after the body has passed on. In a style that suits the subject of the multiplicity of the self, *Interview with a Ghost* establishes a new way for thinking and writing about poetry.

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