



Visits from the Seventh

Sarah Arvio

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Visits from the Seventh is a highly original debut. Arvio's wry, uncanny poems take the form of conversations between a woman and a throng of invisible presences--visitors, as she calls them--who counsel, challenge, cajole and comfort her. Together they murmur about destiny, the moon, a walk on Park Avenue, sex, ambition, dreams.

"Poets," writes Richard Howard, "find remarkable ways to talk to themselves, to divide and triumph, to split the speech-atom--'the journal of my other self,' Rilke called it. For women poets, (Christina Rossetti, say, or Virginia Woolf) voices from 'outside' are minatory; for men they are merely the Muse. Arvio has listened hard and heedfully to these hauntings of hers, certainly the most 'convincing' visitations since Merrill's Ouija-board transcriptions, and has arranged her overhearing in the readiest manner for her own listeners: the careful, shapely stanzas; the clear conundrum of spirit possession, which is Arvio's poetic incarnation. The whole series is an articulation of what we used to call 'the inner life': one woman's passionate questioning of her sources, and their equally passionate (if often derisive) answers. She has forged her own dialogue of the dead, somehow managing to be funny and erotic at once, pursued and in possession. I love hearing her persuasive voices; they are the woman herself."

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From reader reviews:

Charles Stephens:

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