FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Conversations During Sleep
Michele Wolf
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Conversations During Sleep is Michele Wolf's debut book, but it has none of the raw feel of a typical first book. Wolf has clearly waited a long time for this book; substantial as it is, it might almost be taken for a "new and selected." Plainly the poems were written over a considerable time period, and one senses the effort to sum up, to consolidate the poet's life in a single volume.

These closely observed and emotionally resonant poems range over the art world, family, relationships, world events—the life they present is one lived with attention and empathy. "The Blind Spot" (a searing rape poem) and a series of poems on Jewish themes enrich the volume, but its real center is in personal and familial relationships. The figure of the poet's dead sister haunts a number of poems, a "beautiful swimmer,/ Drowned not by a watery absence of air/ But by blood in the brain."

The other dominant motif, as the title suggests, is the dream life and what it might have to tell us. One poem insists that it is all "Solved in Sleep," that "What/ I need to know is/ Dense, pliant, dark." Another muses that "Lovemaking is private, true, but/ It's not sleep,/ the deepest secret of all." Wolf wonders if her lover will "Understand [her] need to speak in the dark"; those of us who are drawn to read poems will understand that need all too well. The lucid, passionate poems that Wolf speaks out of her darkness are a welcome contribution to the words that pass among us.