



Sparks from a Nine-Pound Hammer: Poems (Southern Messenger Poets)

Steve Scafidi

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Winner of the Levis Reading Prize "Tell me a story / of speed and tell it to me fast for the light is / gaining and I will wake and with this body / break the barrier between what I dream / and what my dreaming means." Sometimes a fact swings down like a hammer and we are changed. The fact of loss, the fact of desire, and all the wild, unruly facts of history hammer down and sparks fly up. This, then, is a collection of facts. In a rushing, rolling style, poems sweep to the edge of falling apart, take great delight in defying that dissolution, and come upon a thing redemptive and clarifying: the fact of love. In a world that "doesn't really care / whether we live or die," Steve Scafidi writes, "tell it you do and why." Against the harrowing fact of death, Scafidi celebrates dream and desire and the sweet erotics of springtime. Witnessing the budding of muscle trees, the nakedness of a lover, and the furious plowing of a river in the month of April amounts to a sensual equivalent of hope. And yet, the facts of history - from Troy to Rome to Montgomery, Alabama - arouse a great dread of our own cruelties. The truth of the South, the poems show, is often a brutal mix of ignorance and force that America learned from the great classical civilizations. From the unthinkable to the quietly heroic, somehow we have emerged. Sparks from a Nine-Pound Hammer celebrates that fact most of all.

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