

Flyover Country

Austin Smith

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Inspired by his childhood on a dairy farm in Illinois, tales of rural life lead the way in this Austin Smith collection focused on family, violence, and memories. Smith left the Midwest to live in California, where he teaches at Stanford. He's the author of three poetry chapbooks and a collection.

THE SPIDER

*It is loneliness that makes me
Tie little bows of silk to leaf,
Branch, blade and blossom.
I build my web for the company,
Not the blood. O I love
The blood, of course: a vintage
In which you taste a year
Your ancestors knew.
But it isn't blood
That sustains me: it is
The shiver through the web
Like a doorbell tripping
Up the stairs of an empty manse.
I hurry over as if to help them,
But before they can beg me
For mercy I am turning them
Like a spindle on a lathe,
Their cries growing
Softer with each orbit,
Until I can hardly
Hear them hum.
Then I am lonely again,
A poet between poems.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (University Press 2018)

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