



DRINK

Poetry

by Laura Madeline Wiseman

There are mermaids in our midst. They couple with sailors. They regard great cities from their floating vantage points in the water. They are “concerned about the female body.” And through their eyes, we rediscover our own losses, how we’ve been damaged, how anxious we are for myths and other narratives, so that our lives won’t seem “written in water, already gone.” Part fairytale, part intimate meditation on a California girlhood, Laura Madeline Wiseman’s *Drink* transforms messages into *massages*; language is made physical, a letter stoppered in a bottle, insisting—despite every storm and shipwreck—in the possibility of speech.

—Jehanne Dubrow

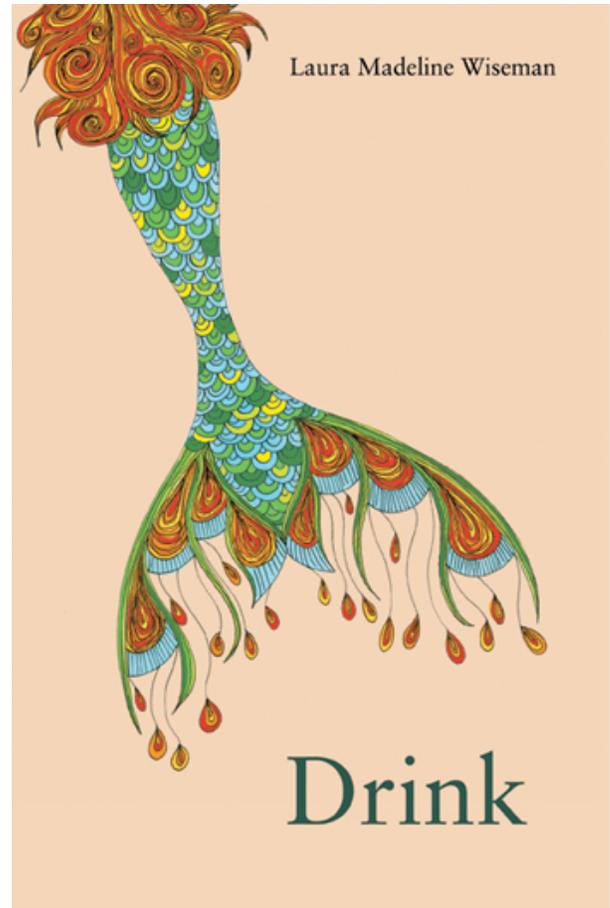
Witty, sad, tragic, and magical, the poems in *Drink* both rewrite myths of the sea and present a harrowing vision of a childhood fraught with abuse, alcoholism, and poverty. The result is a collection of poems that shimmer with revelatory beauty, longing, and honesty.

Clearly Wiseman is one of the more unique and inspired new voices on the American poetry scene today.

—Nin Andrews

In her beautiful new collection, *Drink*, Laura Madeline Wiseman guides us to the bottom of the ocean, where mermaids collect stones among crashed planes and sunken ships. As the book progresses, bottles and bodies become vessels for the persistent memory of trauma. In poems that converse with everything from Homer’s *Odyssey* to *Peter Pan*, Wiseman stunningly depicts the instability of home, navigating issues of poverty, gendered violence, and “manmade” disasters in strikingly intimate lines that throw us headfirst into the high school gym pool with her mermaids. “Note how the roads refuse the grid,” Wiseman writes. “Note how the ocean is taking back the coast. Note how every path ends in drink.” Wiseman’s raw and elegant *Drink* plunges the depths of the ocean, of love, and of memory to search the wreckage of all that is lost, and the life that brims beneath it. “The problem with memory is fact,” Wiseman reminds us, but through these poems, we can search “for some other place, some magic code to save us.”

—Alyse Knorr



Marcel had his madeleine; Laura Madeline Wiseman, her mermaids. A child's toy, a tattoo on an ankle, and the past floods back like messages in bottles: a devastating childhood told with honesty and clear-eyed bravery. I am reminded how poetry can save us, how, in the hands of such a talented writer as Wiseman, it can raise us from the depths to a cove of still water where, perhaps, who knows, the mermaids are.

—Alice Friman

Wiseman deftly handles both free verse and prose poems in this engaging collection. She weaves together a tight fabric of related motifs—drinking and a bottle collection, writing and tattoos, mermaids and human sisters, a negligent mother and unreliable men. Her gaze goes wide as she covers history and myth. Then she zooms in on family and a personal love story. Contraries abound in this richly complex and memorable tapestry of poems.

—Diane Lockward

Laura Madeline Wiseman is the author of more than a dozen books and chapbooks and the editor of *Women Write Resistance: Poets Resist Gender Violence* (Hyacinth Girl Press, 2013). Her books are *Wake* (Aldrich Press, 2015), *American Galactic* (Martian Lit Books, 2014), *Some Fatal Effects of Curiosity and Disobedience* (Lavender Ink, 2014), *Queen of the Platform* (Anaphora Literary Press, 2013), and *Sprung* (San Francisco Bay Press, 2012). Her newest collaborative book is *The Hunger of the Cheeky Sisters: Ten Tales* (Les Femmes Folles Books, 2015) with artist Lauren Rinaldi. She holds a doctorate from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and has received an Academy of American Poets Award, a Mari Sandoz/Prairie Schooner Award, and the Wurlitzer Foundation Fellowship. Her work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Margie*, *Mid-American Review*, *Arts & Letters*, and *Feminist Studies*. Currently, she teaches English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Nebraska.

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