

## Self-Mutilators

*Laura Madeline Wiseman*

Who first shattered a mirror to get to the shards?  
Who went to the butcher's block for a knife  
to ease between mattress and bedspring? Who scratched?  
Who unscrewed a ballpoint pen, who invented the lies—  
a jagged kitchen cupboard, road rash, a fall?  
Who wore the first long sleeves and dug a thumb  
through seams to hook the cuff mid-palm to hide?  
Who turned off the lights, lit a candle and wrote  
that the truth was none of us would eat  
or should? Who wanted our blood  
seeping into books—dark red proof of what?

Who left scars, white, pink, slashes on wrist, ankle,  
forearm? What were their names? What did they carve  
until the blood was too much, until it scabbed?  
How did they learn the physical release, to knife the flesh,  
to press against the bedroom door, to listen—  
which of her men were in the house and which were gone?

Who wrote this down? Is the book dead,  
or alive? Is she, or almost?

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 recent books are *The Bottle Opener* (Red Dashboard, 2014), *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 chapbook is *Threnody* (Porkbelly Press, 2014). 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*, and *Feminist Studies*. Currently, she teaches English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. [www.lauramadelinewiseman.com](http://www.lauramadelinewiseman.com)