



# Artesian Well

*C. Malcolm Ellsworth*

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## Artesian Well C. Malcolm Ellsworth

With tenderness and clarity, C. Malcolm Ellsworth documents what lies above and below the surface. Using the Midwestern landscape, she fearlessly navigates a topography of love, violence, regret, and forgiveness – and unearths whatever it is that seeks to be revealed.

In life, we live with what has passed. In art, we make the past the present. We make it a gift. In *Artesian Well*, C. Malcolm Ellsworth presents us with love, lost love, regret, hope and strength. Farm girls write “on rocks / with rocks,” write on “wood / with ashes.” Like the poet, they use the material to make the material. In “Chocolate Cake,” Ellsworth bakes up a domestic “sheet.” By the end, the poem, like the cake, “splits, just a little / in the middle, and feels springy like flesh, / and a toothpick stuck in the center / comes out clean.” These artful poems, fleshed with the particulars of ordinary life, come out clean. – Thomas Fox Averill, author of *rode* and *Secrets of the Tsil Cafe*

The poems in *Artesian Well* wander with a dark elegance through a grainy rural terrain, where the burden of memory and a collective grief are characteristics of Midwestern legacy. This is a place where girls shoot guns and ride horses bareback, where recipes are passed down for generations, where “Sometimes in winter / they throw the dead away.” Ellsworth reveals with subtlety the ways our memories can play tricks on us and the illusion of a comforting nostalgia. This is a book about family and the bonds between sisters and mothers and daughters, about forgiveness and aging, about how to learn that “the only way home / is through each other.” – Mary Stone Dockery, author of *One Last Cigarette*

Ellsworth’s *Artesian Well* reveals the dirt, both emotional and physical, of country living – the volatile, abusive husbands; the killers; the preachers. But here also is a book of beauty – of horses, of maidenhood, of desire blossoming like a chrysanthemum. Full of vivid insider details and stark images, this is a collection you won’t want to put down. – Kevin Rabas, author of *Sonny Kenner’s Red Guitar*

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