

## INSIDE THE MONEY MACHINE

MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

Carolina Wren Press

REVIEW BY JOY PARKS

In 1981, Minnie Bruce Pratt, then a founding member of the feminist literary journal *Feminary*, published her first poetry collection, *The Sound of One Fork*. This slender chapbook introduced readers to a clear and honest voice that relied on highly readable but deeply moving language to explore the

experience of otherness—specifically, the experience of being southern, lesbian and female. Thirty years and several volumes of poetry later, with *Inside the Money Machine*, Pratt is still dealing with issues of otherness, this time with being on the economic periphery. But today, being out of work, losing one's home and fearing the future has crept beyond the poor and the working class. She tells us it's getting harder to be mainstream in America.

This collection is so much a part of its time; the events that shape these poems could have been ripped from today's newspapers. Too, Pratt's voice has grown even more self-assured; she speaks straight to the matter at hand. In "All That Work No One Knows," she writes:

*We're not machines, you know. There's  
only so much we can take,  
always more than we can, until we can't.  
Today I hold the weight  
low in my belly and back, guts coiled tight  
from work at my desk.*

But there's hope here, too, that people are strong and resourceful, that we are more than the work we do, that we owe it to each other to stay compassionate, to dream. In "Waking to Work," Pratt is clear on a remedy:

*How do we go on? Longing for something  
bigger than us.  
But not this now, not this buying and selling.  
If we could each  
make what we can, take what we need,  
and that be enough—*

There's greatness here. Like Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* or Cor Sandburg's Chicago poems, Minnie Bruce Pratt has captured a time and place, setting before us stories of the losses and triumphs of the victims/survivors of this economic war and questioning how we move on from here.

