



## CRIME AGAINST NATURE

POEMS BY MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

SAPPHIC CLASSIC  
FROM A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S PRESS  
& SINISTER WISDOM

PUBLICATION DATE: APRIL 1, 2013

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Minnie Bruce Pratt's *Crime Against Nature* Reissued as First "Sapphic Classic" from A Midsummer Night's Press & Sinister Wisdom**

A Midsummer Night's Press and *Sinister Wisdom* are pleased to announce the reissue of Minnie Bruce Pratt's *Crime Against Nature* in a new edition with an introduction by Julie R. Enszer, a new afterword by Pratt, a reprint of Pratt's speech at the Lamont award ceremony, photographs of Pratt and her family, and a bibliography.

*Crime Against Nature* was the 1989 Lamont Poetry Selection from the Academy of American Poets, which recognizes a poet's second collection of poetry, and has been long out of print, until now.

Enszer, co-editor of *Sinister Wisdom*, noted, "It is an extraordinary privilege for *Sinister Wisdom* to inaugurate this series with Minnie Bruce Pratt's timeless and important collection of poetry. A new generation of readers can now enjoy these urgent poems."

*Crime Against Nature* is the first title in the **Sapphic Classics Series**, reprint edition of iconic works of lesbian poetry, co-published by A Midsummer Night's Press and Sinister Wisdom. Lawrence Schimel, publisher of A Midsummer Night's Press, said, "This is independent publishing at its best: collaborative, creative, and compelling, making sure that important and necessary voices get heard."

#### **About Minnie Bruce Pratt**

Poet, essayist, activist and teacher Minnie **Bruce Pratt** was born in 1946 in Selma, Alabama, and grew up in her hometown of Centreville. She received her academic education at the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her activist education began in grassroots organizing with women in the army-base town of Fayetteville, North Carolina, and through teaching at historically Black universities. For five years she was a member of the North Carolina collective that edited *Feminary: A Feminist Journal for the South, Emphasizing*

*Lesbian Visions*. She was later a member of LIPS, a Washington, D.C. action group that was the first affinity group arrested for civil disobedience at the 1987 U.S. Supreme Court protest of the anti-gay Bowers vs. Hardwick sodomy law decision.

Pratt's most recent book, *Inside the Money Machine*, described by one reviewer as "anti-capitalist poetics in action," received the 2012 Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry from The Publishing Triangle. Her previous book, *The Dirt She Ate: Selected and New Poems*, received a Lambda Literary Award. *Crime Against Nature*, her second book of poetry, was chosen as the Lamont Poetry Selection by the Academy of American Poets and as the Gay and Lesbian Book Award of the American Library Association. After being targeted by right-wing forces for writing about her relationship to her sons as a lesbian mother, Pratt received the Dashiell Hammett-Lillian Hellman Award from the Fund for Free Expression.

In addition to her work with the National Writers Union/UAW Local 1981, Pratt also does anti-racist and anti-imperialist organizing as a member of the International Action Center and Workers World Party. After forty years of adjunct teaching, she has been more recently a part-time Professor of Writing & Rhetoric and Women's & Gender Studies at Syracuse University. In 2012, she and transgender lesbian activist Leslie Feinberg celebrated their twentieth anniversary together. Still the lesbian mother of her two beloved sons, Pratt is now the lesbian grandmother of five cherished grandchildren.

### **About A Midsummer Night's Press**

A Midsummer Night's Press was founded by Lawrence Schimel in New Haven, CT in 1991. Using a letterpress, it published broadsides of poems by Nancy Willard, Joe Haldeman, and Jane Yolen, among others, in signed, limited editions of 126 copies, numbered 1-100 and lettered A-Z. In 1993, the publisher moved to New York and the press went on hiatus until 2007, when it began publishing perfect-bound, commercially-printed books, primarily under two imprints: 1) Fabula Rasa: devoted to works inspired by mythology, folklore, and fairy tales, and 2) Body Language: devoted to texts exploring questions of gender and sexual identity. For more information: [www.amidsummernightspress.com](http://www.amidsummernightspress.com)

### **About Sinister Wisdom**

*Sinister Wisdom* is a multicultural lesbian literary & art journal that publishes three issues each year. Publishing since 1976, *Sinister Wisdom* works to create a multicultural, multi-class lesbian space. *Sinister Wisdom* seeks to open, consider and advance the exploration of community issues. *Sinister Wisdom* recognizes the power of language to reflect our diverse experiences and to enhance our ability to develop critical judgment, as lesbians evaluating our community and our world. Julie R. Enszer and Merry Gangemi are the current co-editors of the journal. For more information: [www.sinisterwisdom.org](http://www.sinisterwisdom.org).

### ***Crime Against Nature***

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### **Praise for *Crime Against Nature***

In spare and forceful language Minnie Bruce Pratt tells a moving story of loss and recuperation, discovering linkages between her own disenfranchisement and the condition of other minorities. She makes it plain, in this masterful sequence of poems, that the real crime against nature is violence and oppression.

—From the Judges' Statement, Lamont Poetry Selection 1989, *Crime Against Nature*

Minnie Bruce Pratt's *Crime Against Nature* is, for a number of reasons, a work at the poetic crossroads. It extends the subject of love poetry; it extends the subject of feminist and lesbian poetry; it looks in several directions through the lens of a strong, sensuous poetics, through that fusion of experience with imagination that is the core of poetry, and through cadences founded in the music of speech, tightened and drawn to an individual pitch.

—Adrienne Rich, *What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics*, 1993: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

*Crime Against Nature* is a publishing event...because it is original, startling in the beauty of its unadorned voice. What authenticates the imagination at work here is...an eroticism that is new and fearless in describing women's love for women. Pratt's experience transforms itself into a pure obsession that is Antigone-like: the trauma of separation from her young sons (the result of her husband's refusal to accept her lesbianism) flows directly into poetry, first as fixated grief, then as a gradually evolving awareness that becomes a fearless moral stand.

—Carol Muske-Dukes in *The New York Times*