

## Susie



You taught me all there was to know  
In your day:  
How to embroider words on pillowslips,  
how key lime pie  
and butter tarts are made,  
how to thread a hook  
through a loop of wool,  
how seams are measured,  
and darts are sewn,  
how women must endure "the curse."

You were grain while I was yeast,  
a feastful metaphor, the love we shared.  
My idiom was fantasy,  
yours was spare,  
prose-straight, tidy, non-discursive,  
a recipe of practicality and care,  
small emoluments of a life  
well-measured, sifted.

Stout matriarch of meal and matter,  
in you I found

my root and season,  
grew to adulthood  
forgot your lore, but not your love.

Elderly, but never old,  
I thought you indestructible,  
sturdy as the Victorian stock  
from which you sprang,  
ineluctable  
as seasons, perennial  
as those hollyhocks  
that reigned by your garden wall.

Until that day you let me down,  
when, bringing  
my newborn daughter  
for your blessing, I found you  
lying on your day bed,  
wan and wasted,  
cancer had made a  
a cardboard copy of yourself.

~Sheila Collins