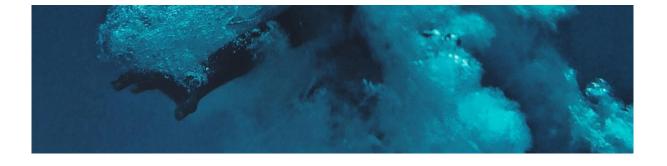
Women of Pearling: Bedford Park

By CE Collins



Look how she bursts-willing Neriad Like Venus from the waves-oyster Shell cupping fertility, holding love, Oyster shell opened, cupped, Offering, Her hands-offering Black Venus offering aphrodisiac Aphrodite, rippling like Waves blown blue and black Springing up, Madonna rising Her hair, buoyed up, sculpted above her back Too high Blooming on the air She's holding, ascending, lifting on a stone Plume, floating spray sculpted, Long arms, supple, stretching, sculpted, Offering, Reaching like an arrow pointed At heaven, at God's teeth, offering Pure pearls heavy with stones And nitrogen.

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Her womb, heavy, Her womb, swollen, full, offering Its breath, its lungs, its life, its Pearl Her hair, sculpted blooming, foaming Her mouth-foaming Not sculpted Her eyes-rolling Not sculpted Her throat-choking Not sculpted Her child-starving on airless blood Her breath-uncaught and drowned Her breasts-buoyed and bloated Not sculpted Her body-dragged out in the rip, weighed down by Slow, heavy blood bubbles And mother of pearl Loaded on another dead mother.