

## 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.

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.

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