An Elegy for Our Prince of Troy, New York

Conceive a thread, unspooling all day permanent black, before as the woolly-haired flock, roosting amidst the smoky mountains above an aquamarine desert, now a jagged granite fissure marooned in Penelope’s perfect pattern.

I first encounter the master of collage in Ithaca. A Cornell poet kept as currency the barest sketch, a doodled dreamscape of a ship in full, black sail the hero strung, like the stealth slave in Melville’s mutiny, above the ballast, bartered for a heroic crown. How to connect the clichéd cutout greeting card, scraps of homespun primitivism, a found practice, of a woman bathing, her silhouette folded into a tinfoil tub in a Southern kitchen, paper and paste, mildew and marmosets, hook-hung in the dry cellar, deceptive, until you note the surgical precision.

Sirens swim abundant in his rapacious watercolor where only the deaf dare to dive. Bearden’s wife too was a water sign, born on the slapdash side of St. Martin, far-flung from the Sargasso’s sway. In his drowned miniatures, canvas the royal reunion through an hourglass, a prescription too strong for mortals but just the right aperture for a sea nymph’s single eye.

© Cherene Sherrard 2013