**Cephalopod**

John Muro

Difficult to discern at first, but

the abscess of enflamed flesh

blossomed into a plume of color

that stood apart from the pink

crevice of coral, like a cloud

that’s suddenly sun-washed

as it passes overhead towards

a farther horizon. Its haversack

head most resembled a gullet

or some strange moon that fell

from its axis and had its sphere

distended. Propelled towards

open water, weighted with three

hearts, it transformed into a sudden

flourish of howl, appendages adrift

in helix whorl, tortured tentacles

like free-flowing tongues or frayed

strands of rope unfurling and

contracting in sensuous undulation.

Shape-shifting its plush boil of body,

its blistered fingers balancing clusters

of oval nests, it easily achieves thrust

with a kind of unstudied elegance,

carrying it away in a backwash of

jeweled ripple from tidal appetites

towards some elusive pastures of

sea grass and porous stone. A forebear

of Scylla and gruesome leviathans,

its vulnerable, pebble-dashed form

now provides for little more than a

canard of watery ink blot – a lachrymal

of dark dew spilled from its bright

blue blood into a slip stream of water.