PORTUGUESE MAN O’ WAR

Full sail, a feat
of stylized rigging,
amored frigate, eating machine
whose armadas blow ashore
through warming currents,
to cooler coasts off Amagansett,
up the Atlantic as far north as the Bay of Fundy,
The Isle of Man—and I
who envisioned your technicolor
rays only in Our Amazing World’s
slick pages, centerpiece of
danger and display—how you swim
up unbidden, struck chord
like the wail of sirens, the warning
and the all-clear, the stark list
of grocery stash guaranteeing
post-atomic household survival. So you drop
that fine-spun glass pane
at the first sign of surface threat
to submerge or travel dark, lucent pools—
O blue bottle, spilled ink—
Even dead you deliver a sting.