

This one's skin scatters sun on the floor.
green, white
Purses his lips and dips,
grazing in the shallows
on herring
and froth spit up by the fisherman's boat.
Then breathes out a different sea.
Not pollock.
Not the bluefin tuna

This one moves with evening tide.
push, glide
Tentacles, two blue streamers
whirl with waves,
Inviting the turtles to play.
But stomach bloats, jaw floats,
catch, tangle,
inhales his prey.
Then breathes out a different sea.
Not squid.
Not the man-o-war.

This one crawls in coral beds.
round, flat
Digs with hermits, seals himself,
promising a mine inside his cave.
When lifted by a drift,
no pearl.
He breathes out a different sea.

Not clam.

Not pacific oyster.

Pepsi bottle, Walmart bag, soda cap

Are these the creatures of our seas?

My family vacationed on an Atlantic beach this summer. One morning I was walking along the shore searching for shells. Shiny things always catch my eye, especially in the ocean. It could be sea glass or an impressive shell. But all I picked up was a soda bottle cap. The irony of it struck me—how a plastic object that can look and move like a fish or clam or squid is the very killer and predator of those ocean animals. It inspired me to personify in my poem different pieces of plastic I have seen in the ocean, describing them with the movement and appearance of sea creatures. I used the device to emphasize that plastic “creatures” are replacing our vibrant ocean life, and that they swim into our waters without us noticing. Plastic is an imposter to aquatic life and an invasive species in our seas.