

Parachute - by Susan Braley

jellies

ethereal

Jules Verne balloons

afloat in a blue-sky sea

translucent – violet, gold, indigo – they pulse open, closed

unbound tresses stream behind these mobile umbrellas, revelling in their fertile, free-swimming days

named lion's mane, Cassiopeia, corona – or Desmonema Annasethe, whose cascade of ringlets a Victorian biologist painted in memory of his beloved.

or

labelled

*medusae cnidarian*

snake-haired, monstrous

tentacles armed with lightning hypodermics

on the tips of five thousand tiny harpoons

they deliver pain, sear muscles, numb brains, panic lungs, stop hearts, leave long

signatures on skin; though we're not their prey, we leave our marks on them: jellies hacked to death with barbed sticks

sucked

into

garbage scows,

churned into fertilizer,

made into diapers, caramels, cocktails

named prehistoric remnants, warm-water swimmers, rampant terrorists crippling nuclear plants, killing farmed salmon

brash oddities, we say, taking over – breeding – in five hundred dead coastal zones, in high-acid seas  
where no life remains

natural

renovators,

jellies regenerate

their own flesh

after predators bite, shrink when

food is scarce, grow large when it's not

immortal jellies, when old, curl back into polyps, and begin at puberty again

not vacuous at all, a jelly's brain threads through its radial body, its nerve nets nature's early version of  
cloud computing

shall

we

begin to

see that jellies

clear algae bloom, haul carbon

to the ocean floor see blue-lit *Aequorea Victoria*,

whose luminous organs inspired the protein that reveals cancer in our deep tissue,

see in the downward wings of future flying machines the rhythmic thrust of the jelly, see in the jellies'  
unflappable buoyancy

a

parachute

we need?

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