

Night Fishing

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every creature has an Achilles heel
reptiles of the sea are fascinated
by light at night
powerful crocodiles draw involuntarily
to a flashlight as do turtles
and other protected species

it was a clear night at cape tribulation
campers gathered around small fires
enjoying the natural surroundings
one local had brought a dinghy,
armed only with a flashlight
he launched it into the sea,
few paid any attention

we could see the light as he shone it into
the water just beyond the breakers
after a while violent water agitation
and banging on the aluminium hull
of the small craft echoed along
the water to the shore

the fisherman began to row
to the shore and landed with
a thrashing sea-turtle in his boat

most knew it was illegal to
catch turtles, a privilege
reserved only for the indigenous population
which were few at the cape
tho none were present among the white
unwelcome intruders on this night

the fisherman landed the defenceless turtle
and slaughtered it on the beach, its life-blood
soaking into the sand

he butchered the animal and gave pieces of fresh
white flesh to the others on the beach,
involving them in his crime

the beer, always present, flowed as the white meat

sizzled in pans, barbecues and pots
a drunken feast ensued

the morning dawn starkly revealed
the slaughter the night before,
the exquisite shell
of a protected turtle that fell victim
to a bright artificial light which it couldn't resist

returning to town troubled by our previous
activities we passed by
a huge television transmission tower

<http://jungledrum.hopto.org/news/story-3261.html>

Underground Oz Poetry. <http://ozpoetry.lingama.net/news/poem-835.html>