

Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market

Pablo Neruda

Here,
among the market vegetables,
this torpedo
from the ocean
depths,
a missile
that swam,
now
lying in front of me
dead.

Surrounded
by the earth's green froth
—these lettuces,
bunches of carrots—
only you
lived through
the sea's truth, survived
the unknown, the
unfathomable
darkness, the depths
of the sea,
the great
abyss,
le grand abîme,
only you:

varnished
black-pitched
witness
to that deepest night.

Only you:
dark bullet
barreled
from the depths,
carrying
only
your
one wound,
but resurgent,
always renewed,
locked into the current,
fins fletched
like wings
in the torrent,
in the coursing
of
the
underwater
dark,
like a grieving arrow,
sea-javelin, a nerveless
oiled harpoon.

Dead

in front of me,
catafalqued king
of my own ocean;
once
sappy as a sprung fir
in the green turmoil,
once seed
to sea-quake,
tidal wave, now
simply
dead remains;
in the whole market
yours
was the only shape left
with purpose or direction
in this
jumbled ruin
of nature;
you are
a solitary man of war
among these frail vegetables,
your flanks and prow
black
and slippery
as if you were still
a well-oiled ship of the wind,
the only
true
machine

of the sea: unflawed,
undefiled,
navigating now
the waters of death.