



Fredy Neptune: A Novel In Verse

Les Murray

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A riveting, beautiful novel in verse by Australia's greatest contemporary poet, winner of the 1996 T. S. Eliot Prize.

I never learned the old top ropes,
I was always in steam.
Less capstan, less climbing,
more re-stowing cargo.
Which could be hard and slow
as farming- but to say

Why this is Valparaiso!

Or: I'm in Singapore and know my way about
takes a long time to get stale
.-from Book I, "The Middle Sea"

When German-Australian sailor Friedrich "Fredy" Boettcher is shanghaied aboard a German Navy battleship at the outbreak of World War I, the sight of frenzied mobs burning Armenian women to death in Turkey causes him, through moral shock, to lose his sense of touch. This mysterious disability, which he knows he must hide, is both protection and curse, as he orbits the high horror and low humor of a catastrophic age. Told in a blue-collar English that regains freshness by eschewing the mind-set of literary language, Fredy's picaresque life-as, perhaps, the only Nordic Superman ever-is deep-dyed in layers of irony and attains a mind-inverting resolution.

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