



Prosper: A Voyage at Sea (Short Black)

Simon Leys

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A big liner, brightly lit, passes us one or two cable-lengths ahead. 'Ow! They are guzzling champagne but cannot see what's in front of them!' grumbles Etienne, who has the helm and puts Prosper back on course. Our wooden boat, which one long wave can carry, is a mere cork in the wake of that ship, which crushes three dozen such waves under her uncaring steel plates. How many hundreds of men does she carry? Up there, people laugh, play, dream, eat and sleep ... while we, a few feet above the water, surrounded by dancing lights, keep watch till dawn.

One summer, Simon Leys joined the crew of a tuna-fishing boat in Brittany, one of the last boats working under sail. In this exceptionally beautiful and elegiac essay, he evokes the traditions, hardships and dangers of the oldest and finest form of seamanship.

Simon Leys' many books include *The Hall of Uselessness*, *Chinese Shadows*, *The Death of Napoleon* and *Other People's Thoughts*. He was a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro Littéraire*.

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