

John Fraser has lived in Rome since 1980. Previously, he worked in England and Canada.

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John Fraser's latest work of fiction comprises two thematically linked stories. In the first, *Candice*, echoing both Voltaire's *Candide* – a disillusioned idealist and world traveller – and *Zadig*, the last wise, just king of Babylon – Candice sets out to find power and wisdom. Her reason is dwarfed by a huge powerless electronic brain, functioning without purpose or control. She is compelled by office politics to flee, through the natural park she herself created. Managing to evade pursuit, regaining her autonomy and mobility, she finds the people she meets along the reservation's edge have neither power nor wisdom, but they do illuminate. Eventually she finds solace and refuge in a bar, *The Truce*.

In the second tale, *Friends*, Danièle, after adventures in the catering trade and estrangement from her friends and lovers, realises that it is in Law that wisdom and justice must reside. Wisdom is everywhere, law is precarious, but in the end she finds the latest king of Babylon, in his vast, near-deserted residence. She waits for people to arrive, to benefit from this enlightened rule, but will she wait alone...?

About John Fraser:

One of the most extraordinary publishing events of the past few years has been the rapid, indeed insistent, appearance of the novels of John Fraser. There are few parallels in literary history to this almost simultaneous and largely belated appearance of a mature oeuvre, sprung like Athena from Zeus's forehead; and the novels in themselves are extraordinary. I can think of nothing much like them in fiction. Fraser maintains a masterfully ironic distance from the extreme conditions in which his characters find themselves. There are strikingly beautiful descriptions, veiled allusions to rooted traditions, unlikely events half-glimpsed, abrupt narratives, surreal but somehow apposite social customs. Fraser's work is conceived on a heroic scale in terms both of its ideas and its situational metaphors. If he were to be filmed, it would need the combined talents of a Bunuel, a Cameron, a Gilliam, a Thomas Pynchon, whom in some ways he resembles, Fraser is a deep and serious fantasist, wildly inventive. The reader rides as on a switchback or luge of impetuous attention, with effects flashing by at virtuoso speeds. The characters seem to be unwitting agents of chaos, however much wise reflection the author bestows upon them. They move with shrugging self-assurance through circumstances as richly-detailed and as without reliable compass-points as a Chinese scroll.

John Fuller, Whitbread Award winning poet and Booker Prize nominee

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The Future's Coming Everywhere John Fraser

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THE FUTURE'S COMING EVERYWHERE JOHN FRASER

'the most original novelist of our time'

John Fuller

AESOP MODERN FICTION

'Everything will have fallen down,' says Balthazar. 'We'll see how they'll build new pictures up. Will it seem catastrophe? Or will everything be denied? Shall we speak one language? Or none? Think these things through, Danièle. what's happened, and what will – these aren't situations you can see: two years to go? Two hundred? Did it all already happen, there is nothing left – except the scrub here, the few birds that flutter down – what's happened in the sky? You have to take it into your account. They'll say it's speculation, about a future that there'll never be, and then they say the opposite....'

The Babylon she's going to – it's not the Babylon there is. She's right to get off the bus. There's no book, no lexicon, no morphology. The city Voltaire evoked – did not exist. A joke – everybody knew: no one expects to laugh. The original, that did exist: but it's been rocketed, don't bother seeking it.

They say the future's coming here – well, it comes everywhere, and then it is the past, but no place is identical to anywhere, when it's been.

Whether the future comes or not – this is a difficult place.

The Future's Coming Everywhere

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