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John Fraser was born in London. He wrote on and taught social and political theory (especially Marxism) in the UK, Canada and, after 1980, in Rome and Ferrara.

Since 1982 he has lived in Rome. He has also worked as a musician.

Also by John Fraser and published by AESOP Modern:

- Black Masks
- The Magnificent Wurlitzer
- Medusa
- The Other Shore
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John Fraser's *The Observatory* is a novel about political commitment and liberation. Set in 1968, it reflects the high season of Guevara in Bolivia, and the attempts to insert a revolutionary 'foco' in places where objective conditions are politically ripe, but where the subjective element, and the most rudimentary organisation, are absent.

Guerilla intellectuals, loaded with visionary enthusiasm, arrive like space travellers, igniting the revolutionary straw and engaging armies, but too respectful to damage the traditions and culture of those who are to be liberated ...

'In Fraser's fiction 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 Fraser 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



john fraser
the observatory

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'Sadik and Curzon spent most of their time in the underground section of a medieval observatory – perched on a marble and obsidian sextant. Lizards came in there for a rest, and on the walls were sequences from "the dreams of Uluk", "Woodrow Wilson as a winged victory" and "how the tiger helps the sun rise". It was a good place to discuss the dialectic, and they found the girls from les tribus who worked as couriers quick at differentiating between dialectical modes – and scented with mace and apples.'

from *The Observatory*

'I enjoyed *The Observatory* very much. The limbo of putative activity and endless self-analysis that Fraser's characters arrive at is somehow wonderfully absorbing and exciting. I can think of nothing like it in fiction. I feel that this is pretty much due to Fraser's sleight-of-hand with the fantastic conditions in which they find themselves: beautiful descriptions, veiled allusions to rooted traditions, unlikely events half-glimpsed, abrupt narratives, surreal but somehow apposite social customs, but perhaps above all the involved textures of life: the colours, the animals, the architecture, all richly imagined, very strange but believable. The book is simpler than later ones, the familiar matrix and structure (the hero and associates, the failed quest, the tentative relationship with women, the way in which all adventure is really a backdrop to philosophical discussion) more telling for being in a purer form. It is a very finely written book, with much characteristic humour and irony. I found the scope of its imagination invigorating.'

John Fuller

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