

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

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'A lawyer looks for the tiny rock of guilt in a sea of innocence. A lawyer looks for the tiny rock of innocence in a sea of guilt. That's their trade.'

In John Fraser's latest novel, after a convulsive war that rumbles on for thirty years, a disparate group search amongst the metal skeletons, detritus and urban wreckage of a shattered land for a new life, a new start, and some kind of normality.

The group, comprising therapists and entrepreneurs, including the novel's narrator – a cross between a mercenary and a pacifier – generate between them complicated and sometimes fantastic responses to the challenges facing them.

The war continues to reverberate, on an individual basis, but also in the wider context of economic recovery, religious radicalism, and commodity speculation.

Death and trauma continue, social and ideological cleavages deepen, but ultimately there is a hint that once the Thirty Years are up, the surviving characters may continue their lives back where it all began.

Thirty Years has echoes of the Thirty Years War, and of Brecht's *Mother Courage*. As Fraser's characters continue to commit crimes, financial and physical, the novel questions and reframes the essential issues of crime and punishment that have concerned humanity from the Bible and Koran, to Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and onwards into the future.

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Layla and Majnun.

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The Earthly Paradise, Vietri (Italy)
1950, by Giuseppe Cassetta.



THIRTY YEARS John Fraser

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Modern
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'There's nothing to be done about anything...'

Thirty Years

John Fraser

'the most original novelist of our time'

*John Fuller, poet, Whitbread Award winner,
and Booker Prize nominee*

AESOP Modern

'You rave about the modern humans – they're just following their destiny, the history all laid out – those cosmic forces... They're not benevolent, they're complementary: one is mathematics – your long gun, the pointing finger, like on the ceiling – winkles you out from every corner. Mathematicians, artillerymen – they made your world. Magic is the mother of science. Knowledge is always – to know God. The force behind it all. Then – there's the cosmic force that you can't see. What we know – is magic, gods and demons, algorithms. What we don't know, is what we reason out, our secret weapon: science, our purity. Hypothesis is stronger than the faith. It's the ladder that reaches to the stars, beyond. That is the quest. Not by boat, but with a spade. The eggs, the chocolate eggs by Fabergé, buried in the garden! The first force that made us modern – it's the design, the divinity we know, the rules self-evident. And what we look for ... well, we know in the long and short term – we shall find it. It must be there. Everything is.'

from *Thirty Years*

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