

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

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Three Beauties is John Fraser's latest tour de force in speculative fiction

Beauty is an idea of perfection, moral, physical, social, political – and these three tales, with their beautiful questing characters, exemplify the search for the best there is.

In the first tale, the heroine aspires to perfection in sex, sport and literature. Genetic improvement too is tried – but in the end she runs foul of the classical link between beauty, judgement and the struggle to be top. Afrodite, the acme of beauty, notoriously had her champions, and intervened – unfairly – to have them score in battle.

In the second tale, Afrodite is absent or indifferent, as the characters tangle with high politics, and seek in vain a measure of social improvement.

In the final tale, the beauty, the heroine, settles for a precarious terrestrial satisfaction.

The search for perfection, now concentrated on the combat this involves, can only be continued – precariously – high in the sky.

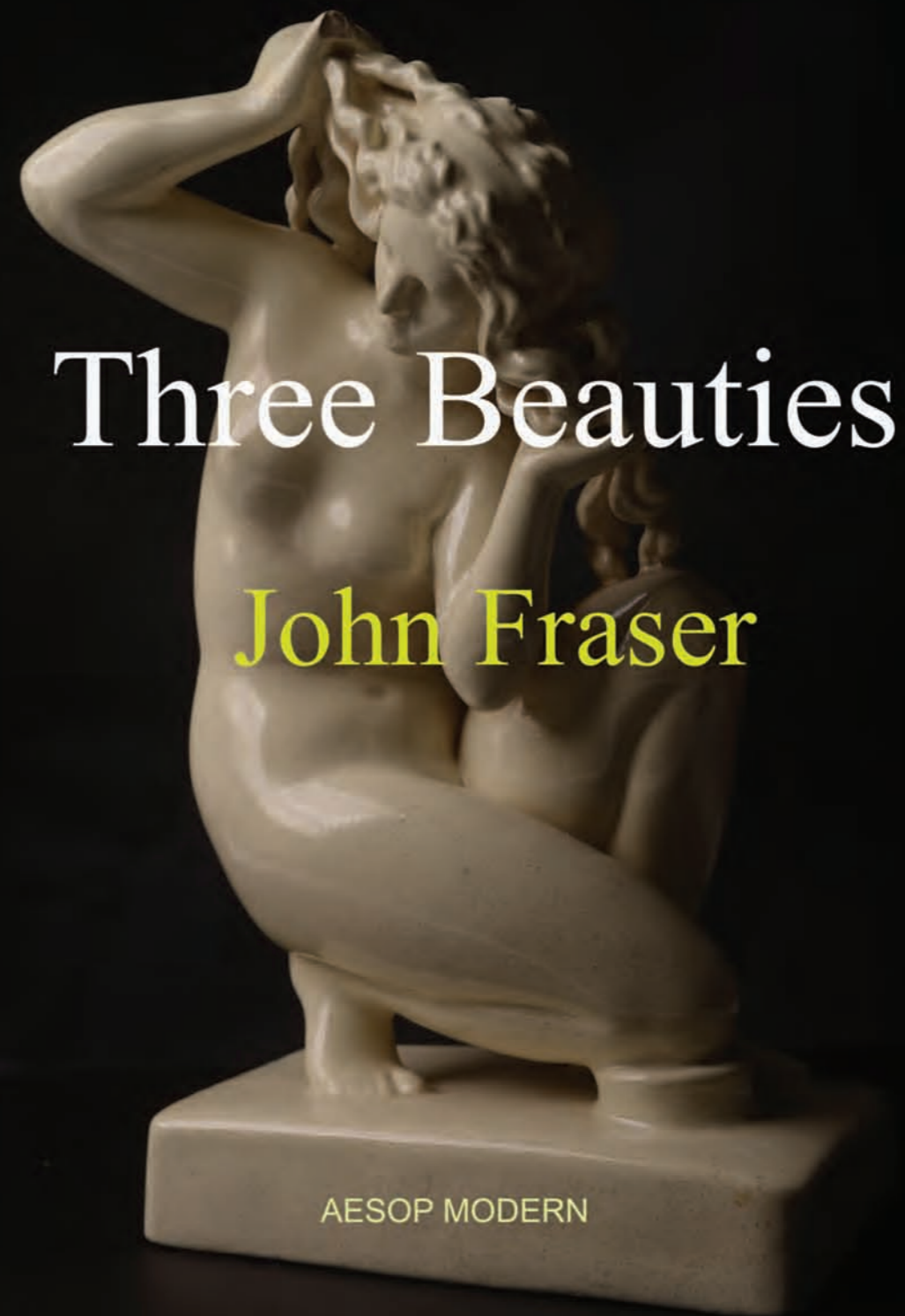
Front and back cover: Aphrodite. Icaro, Rodi.



John Fraser

Three Beauties

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'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 Gilliam, a Cameron. Like 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, English poet and author,
Whitbread Prize winner, Booker Prize nominee
and Fellow Emeritus at Magdalen College, Oxford*

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