2

John Fowles and Creative Non-fiction

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Introduction: 'creative non-fiction'

The term 'creative non-fiction' refers in the first instance to the writing experiments of the 1960s that involved combining fiction with non-fiction. Two well-known examples are Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966), which introduces elements of fiction into the account of an actual multiple murder, and Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* (1968), where the author's concept of writing 'faction' is reflected in the subtitle, *History as a Novel/The Novel as History*. John Fowles, too, was combining fiction and non-fiction in the late 1960s when he wrote *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.[1] In Chapter 13 he teases his reader with the comment that 'perhaps I am trying to pass off a concealed book of essays on you' (*FLW*, 85), and goes on to provide essayistic digressions on life in Victorian England, an extended passage from a German medical treatise, and critical evaluations of excerpts from an eighteenth-century novel and a nineteenth-century poem.[2] The same narrating 'I' who writes essays disguised as fiction also fictionalizes his narrator, allowing him to enter the story as a character in Chapters 55 and 61. This creation of a hybrid form of fiction and non-fiction is the kind of avant-garde experimental writing that would lead Linda Hutcheon a decade later to cite *The French Lieutenant's Woman* several times as an early example of the new practices of postmodernism.[3] Fowles's mode of early postmodern writing incorporated bits of history, philosophy, biography and other literature into narrative – as if his impulse was as much to inform as to tell a story. Fowles's evident impulse to experiment with form probably had more to do with his interest in the French avant-garde of the 1960s than with the New Journalism of Capote or Mailer, as one might infer from his reference to Alain Robbe-Grillet

and Roland Barthes in Chapter 13 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.[4] The term 'postmodern' was not yet widely in use when Fowles was writing in the late 1960s, but in a 1999 interview he would acknowledge that he considered himself to be a postmodern writer.[5] By the late 1970s Fowles would be working in another hybrid form, not the essayistic novel this time, but a different kind of postmodern experiment combining prose and photography, fact and opinion. Five publications are particularly illustrative: *Shipwreck* (1974), *Islands* (1978), *The Tree* (1979), *The Enigma of Stonehenge* (1980) and *Land* (1985).[6] These books point to Fowles's turn as a writer away from the hybrid novel form and towards a different kind of creative non-fiction – the postmodern hybrid essay.

In the essay written as a preface to *Land*, with photos by Fay Godwin, Fowles comments that if we have come to the book believing that photography is always factual and objective, we are mistaken. 'Some theorists have maintained that photography has ... allowed its practitioners to exorcise the demon Subjectivity from their work' (*L*, xvii), says Fowles, but photography is less objective than they imagine, providing us only with 'glimpses' (*L*, x) of objective reality, and it can be subjective even though the photographer is unaware of it. Thus, although Fay Godwin describes herself as a 'documentary photographer' (*L*, xii), Fowles finds in her work a special blend of objectivity and subjectivity, a unique and intriguing 'creative honesty' (*L*, x). She is creative in that 'she has ... discovered that essential something else, beyond the capacity to take beautiful photographs; a feeling, an intuition, a personal philosophy – whatever it is that converts the good technician into the true artist' (*L*, xii), and she is honest in that she presents us not with a 'Beautiful Britain' picture of the landscape that she photographs, 'that trite Tourist Board dream of how Britain ought to look, which so manifestly travesties how it does look' (*L*, xix). To this Fowles adds that there is a 'particularly feminine kind of honesty' evident in her work. 'It lacks that eternal besottedness of my own sex with traditions and myths of a more perfect world (or art), and with our often rather stereotyped ideas of how it is to be reached' (*L*, xix). Her 'creative honesty' is, then, a blend of objective and subjective, personal and impersonal, the broadly human and the more specifically gendered. A similar creative honesty is to be found in Fowles's preface to her collection of photographs, for although it is partly a factual account of the hundred-odd photos in the collection, it is also an essay in praise of Godwin's ability to take the kind of photos he most admires.

Significantly, Fowles's earlier essays – the ones in *Shipwreck*, *Islands*, *The Tree* and *The Enigma of Stonehenge* – are likewise a blend of

objective and subjective, fact and opinion. The photos in *Shipwreck* are by John Gibson and his descendants, who lived on the Isles of Scilly and over the years photographed nineteenth- and twentieth-century ships foundering there and on the coast of south-west England. Fowles's contributions are a nine-page introduction, a two-page account of the Gibson family photographers, and a brief comment on each of the thirty-six black-and-white photographs. Each photo except the one on the title page has a caption explaining briefly what happened, and Fowles's comments on them are detached and objective, though he occasionally includes a wry remark on the folly of the captain or mate who caused the ship to come to grief. Some of the photos are carefully staged, like the one of the *Granite State*, for example, a sailing ship that struck the Runnel Stone, three miles south-east of Land's End. Here the photographer, Alexander Gibson, arranged a group of people on a cliff overlooking the ship, and although Fowles notes that the pose is 'not natural', he finds something in it 'that no unstaged scene could suggest'. Gibson's 'improving' of this photo and others 'is done with such charm, and often with such striking effect, that it lends his technical skills, his instinctive eye for angle, a very individual flavour' (*S*, 11). Like Fay Godwin's photos, those taken by the Gibson family are an intriguing combination of objective and subjective; like his preface to *Land*, Fowles's preface to *Shipwreck* is a blend of fact and opinion.

The substance of *Shipwreck* is 'why the spectacle of the shipwreck is so pleasing' (*S*, 7). An Aristotelian explanation, he says, would involve purgation of emotions in response to the spectacle of tragedy, in life rather than in art. A Christian explanation might involve pity for the victims. Cynics might feel *Schadenfreude*, the pleasure felt when other people experience some kind of mishap. Fowles even invokes Freudian psychoanalysis with the observation that our fascination with a stormy sea is more than just a matter of marvelling at the extraordinary: it goes deeper, into a kind of Freudian double identification, in which the wrath of the sea is interpreted both as *id* and as *super-ego*; on the one hand a thing without restraint, a giant bull in a salt ring; on the other it is the great punisher of presumption, the patriarch who cuts that green stripling, man, down to size (*S*, 8). Man is no more than a frail ship in an all-powerful sea, and that analogy is similar to the one Matthew Arnold draws in a poem that Fowles quotes in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 'To Marguerite – Continued'; the comparison is given additional emphasis by its reiteration in the last sentence of the novel.[7] To Fowles the sea is a convenient metaphor for what individuals are not, a watery image of the Other. Each of his subsequent,

combined works of essay and photography resonates with this idea, as the metaphorical ship/individual becomes an island, or a tree, or an outcropping such as a cliff or a mesa. The sea becomes the contrasting, surrounding landscape.

On the first page of the 1978 book *Islands*, Fowles refers to his earlier *Shipwreck* as 'a very different book on the Scillies', emphasizing that *Islands* will be about the psychology of islands, that is, about 'the Scillies of a novelist's mind' (*I*, 2). Here Fowles presents these islands more from a literary and symbolic, than from a literal and scientific point of view: he pursues his purpose with the aid of photos by Fay Godwin that he says are visually 'poetic' (*I*, 2). Fowles provides verbal, and Godwin visual material on nearly every other page; by existing together but not referring to each other, these materials create a post-modernist collage of intertexts. Godwin's photos contain no humans, whereas Fowles's descriptions are constantly personalized, starting with his observation that the Scillies are visible on a clear day from Land's End but are mirage-like in the late afternoon. Like Nicholas in *The Magus* or Charles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the reader is being invited into the presence of a mystery.

This mystery resides not just in the Scillies, but in islands more generally. From the Scillies, with their shipwrecks, Fowles moves to *The Odyssey*, whose islands are inhabited by mysterious, hostile creatures that kill off most of Odysseus' men. They have been to Troy at the invitation of the sea, 'an invitation to the unknown' (*I*, 56), and have fought against the Trojans, driven by masculine greed, bloodlust and aggression. What *The Odyssey* shows is that they ought to have stayed at home with their wives; men on their own are brutish creatures who become civilized only under the influence of women. This is Homer's overall message, says Fowles, and in his view, it is one of the main reasons for believing that the author of *The Odyssey* was female rather than male. Significantly, the women characters in Fowles's novels seek to influence the men in their lives, though with varying degrees of success. Miranda in *The Collector*, for example, tries but fails to persuade her captor, Clegg, to adopt the humane values that she observes as a young woman of her class and background; Alison has greater success in *The Magus* in getting Nicholas to treat members of the opposite sex less callously. Time and again in Fowles's novels, women characters try to help their men see that there are peaceful, civilized alternatives to masculine aggression and insensitive exploitation. Though the women can at times appear to be Sirens luring men to their doom – and this is particularly true of Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – all of them help men to discover something in their lives that they lack.

Fowles explains this lack with reference to a favoured metaphor: 'In terms of consciousness, and self-consciousness, every individual human *is* an island, in spite of Donne's famous preaching to the contrary' (*I*, 12). Every island harbours some sort of treasure, and it is part of being human for us to yearn for what other 'islands' – and more particularly, other members of the opposite sex – have to offer. On the same page, Fowles's phrase the 'enisling sea' to describe individuals as islands echoes Arnold's formulation in 'To Marguerite – Continued' about how we are all 'in the sea of life enisled', which appears in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as we have seen. Though it is clearly best for human 'islands' to have commerce with one another, it is an unfortunate fact that they sometimes remain separated and mutually unenriched.

Here, as elsewhere in the essay, Fowles writes at a remove from his ostensible subject, the Isles of Scilly. An objective account of life on the Scillies forms part of his discussion, but for the most part, Fowles either uses islands as a metaphor for individual human beings, or discusses islands in literature, and presents us with some surprising observations. Victorian clergyman Francis Kilvert's diary entry about bathing in the nude at Lyme Regis anticipates Nabokov's *Lolita*, says Fowles, and he refers to sunbathers today as the 'turned-round siren[s] installed on every beach' (*I*, 25) to tempt those of us who are landward. This idea that Lyme is like the alluring island of Homer's Sirens prompts Fowles to reflect on the town's most famous visitor, Jane Austen, and to comment on the 'lift, the *allegro* that takes place in *Persuasion* when the action moves to Lyme' (*I*, 25).

We must bear in mind, however, that the islanded Sirens in *The Odyssey* lured men to their death, and that it is on an island that Odysseus' crew are transformed into swine. It is not surprising, says Fowles, that Thomas Hardy's most self-revealing novel, *The Well-Beloved*, is 'set on the quasi-island of Portland. It is a story full of incest, of repressed eroticism, of narcissistic guilt in its tortured author' (*I*, 30), who makes it very clear that illicitness inhabits Portland (and Hardy's own complicated psyche) precisely because of its detachment from the mainland, both physically and psychologically. Similarly, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* shows us that isolation can be self-destructive when there is an abandonment of the usual restraints on human behaviour, a significant 'loss of mainland law' (*I*, 30).

The last thirty pages of *Islands*, including eighteen photos, are an embedded essay on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, for Fowles the most profound of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's other plays may be for the world, Fowles comments, but *The Tempest* is for each of us

as individuals, for its islanded situation literalizes Arnold's 'sea of life' metaphor of the human condition. It is 'a parable', he says, 'about the human imagination, and thus finally about Shakespeare's view of his own imagination: its powers, its hopes, its limits – above all, its limits. The play's true island is our planet, in its oceanic sea of space' (*I*, 84). Fowles's *The Collector*, with its own Miranda, is on one level a retelling of *The Tempest*, and Fowles presents it, similarly, as a parable of limits. The triumph of Clegg, the Caliban character in the novel, implies a serious limitation of the human imagination, and if the novel's true island is our planet, the implications for non-human nature are as ominous as Fowles would further describe them in his 1965 essay 'Swan Song of the European Wild'.[8] The central metaphor of *Islands*, however, remains that of the individual as island, and the fascination of islands, for Fowles, is partly the fascination of self-exploration.

Nature, loss and *The Tree* (1979)

The Tree is another photo-essay, published in 1979 in a large-format, unpaginated book, with colour photos taken by Frank Horvat of trees in the USA, the UK, France and Switzerland. Subsequently recognized to be an important piece of nature writing, *The Tree* has been excerpted or republished in various forms without the photos, but the first edition, like *Shipwreck* and *Islands*, is another instance of John Fowles's attraction to working simultaneously in visual and verbal modes of thought. Indeed, at one point in *The Tree* itself, Fowles confirms that he is aware of the importance of the confluence of these two media: 'the word and the camera', he points out, are 'the two great contemporary modes of reproducing reality' (*T*, 72).

The Tree begins as an essay about fear of untamed nature, symbolized by the carefully cultivated apple trees in the back garden of the suburban house where John Fowles grew up. Fowles meditates on the nature of nature, and expresses a preference for the untamed wilderness as opposed to the carefully organized garden. He says, provocatively, 'The key to my fiction, for what it is worth, lies in my relationship with nature' (*T*, 36). Wild places to explore in worlds of external nature parallel opportunities to explore fictional worlds that are not real in the scientific sense. To see only domesticated, objective realities, as a scientist might, is to lose potentially fertile relationships with worlds experienced by an unscientific participant or as imagined by an artist. Fowles values wild nature over cultivated nature for its correspondences to the freely roaming mind of the fiction writer: he enjoys seeking refuge in worlds of both nature and fiction, and

his walk to Wistman's Wood at the end of the essay is an affirmation that there remain some wild, natural places even in civilized England, places that can serve as a kind of antidote to the over-cultivated, espaliered apple trees of his father's suburban garden wall.

The Tree is not anti-science, but Fowles does question the limits of strictly positivistic attitudes to nature, uncomplemented by the individual imagination. He explains that once, in Sweden, he insisted on visiting the house of Carl Linné, or Linnaeus, the historical categorizer of natural forms whom Fowles discounts in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a man driven mad by the urge to isolate and classify creatures that are always in flux, evolving. This scientific impulse to see nature selectively instead of whole is what Fowles resists, preferring instead a Zen-like refusal to select, classify and label what is ultimately other than oneself. A more holistic view of nature is what Fowles admires in other historical figures he mentions, from Wordsworth and Thoreau to Pisanello, the Italian Renaissance painter whose *Vision of St Eustace* is invoked in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as an analogue to Charles Smithson's vision of whole nature in the wild, wooded Undercliff east of Lyme Regis.[9] Another Pisanello painting, *Night Hunt*, similarly represents an idealized interaction between humans and nature in 'The Ebony Tower'; neither the intellectual artist Williams nor the anti-intellectual artist Breasley seems to have the comprehensive vision that Pisanello had. In his 1965 essay 'On Being English but not British', Fowles invokes the folklore of Robin Hood to explain the tendency of English people to think and act rebelliously from behind a concealing social façade, but in *The Tree* Robin Hood's forest of Nottingham came to represent green nature and Robin became the Green Man, a more generalized, even archetypal, symbol of the intersection between man and the natural environment.[10] In both essays, however, the Robin Hood figure represents the individual as distinct from human nature or from other-than-human nature. Fowles further develops this idea in *Daniel Martin* to show how nature could be lived with, even loved rather than feared – a regressive attitude to nature that Fowles believed was being encouraged at the time by the film *Jaws*.[11]

At the end of *The Tree*, after describing his return to Wistman's Wood, Fowles again mentions that he first 'came to writing through nature' (*T*, 110). He likens the process of being in a wood to being in a state of mental freedom from the normal world, feeling the mysterious solitude of being surrounded by trees (*T*, 75–7).[12] The last word of *The Tree* is 'leaves', which is also the last word of Fowles's early novel, *The Magus*. In *The Tree* the leaves are 'retting', and in *The Magus* they are 'burning', but either description constitutes a possible double pun, on 'leaves,' or pages, and on 'leaving' a text behind at publication, with both meanings serving as a reminder of the analogy between being and writing. In addition, this final word and the initial title of the essay evoke the presence of trees in nature in order to frame Fowles in his own text like a Green Man half hidden by the forest – an idea reinforced by the back-cover picture of the Ecco Press edition that shows Fowles's face behind a screen of branches and shadows from branches like the classic Robin of the greenwood.

Fowles's interest in nature, and his preoccupation with objective and subjective, fact and fiction, needs to be seen in a larger context. As early in his career as the 1964 essay entitled 'I Write Therefore I Am', Fowles expressed a preference for being called a writer rather than a novelist.[13] That same year he published a book of non-fiction, *The Aristos*, following his first, successful novel, *The Collector*.[14] Fowles's second novel, *The Magus*, has an essayistic, even didactic tendency that his wife was still trying to help him restrain in 1968 when she annotated a page in the typescript of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: 'Give up lecture. Spoils magic.'[15] In subsequent interviews Fowles often describes fiction writing as a kind of escapist adventure, pleasurable and important to him, but at odds with the social responsibilities that he was increasingly assuming. Near the end of his career, in his 1995 essay 'The Nature of Nature', later published in *Wormholes*, he identified himself as 'by trade an inventor of fiction, almost a professional liar', thus granting a higher status to non-fictional writing than to the writing of fiction.[16] In the late 1970s his interest in writing fiction gave way to creative non-fiction, and the publication of *Shipwreck* in 1974 anticipated this development. Fowles's last two novels, *Mantissa* in 1982 and *A Maggot* in 1985, were both begun more than a decade before their publication.[17]

It would seem that Fowles spent most of his time and energy in the late 1970s and 1980s working on essays about his immediate social context. He took on the curatorship of the Lyme Regis Museum in 1979 and wrote annual curator's reports over the next decade. Between 1980 and 1982 he wrote *A Short History of Lyme Regis* and edited *Monumenta Britannica*, by John Aubrey (1626–97), a book containing drawings of various antique structures, including Stonehenge.[18] Between 1984 and 1990 Fowles contributed to other collections of photographs, namely *Thomas Hardy's England*, *Land*, *Open Skies* and *Lyme Regis Camera*.[19] For the heavily illustrated book *Coastline* in 1987 Fowles took the word 'wrecking' as a verb referring to shipwrecks and applied it to the deliberate destruction, for profit,

of England's coastal environment.[20] And in 1989 Fowles contributed a foreword to *The Undercliff*, a book of colour sketches by naturalist Elaine Franks of the wooded area near Lyme Regis that features in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.[21] Here he offers an elegiac note about the correspondence between individuals and the natural landscape: 'The Undercliff is indeed a lost place; but most profoundly, the lost place is in ourselves.'[22] With such works in the 1980s Fowles showed more interest in writing about the natural environment than in escaping from society into some fictional world, and these essays often employ visual as well as verbal art.

Art, science and *The Enigma of Stonehenge* (1980)

In 1980 Fowles collaborated with the American photographer, Barry Brukoff, on a book entitled *The Enigma of Stonehenge*. In his earlier essays, he presents us with a body of fact about some aspect of nature, in conjunction with some more general subject – what *The Odyssey* reveals about the civilizing influence of women, for example, what *The Tempest* tells us about the limits of the human imagination, or why Fowles considers his love of nature to be the key to his fiction. Fowles's discussion of *The Odyssey* and *The Tempest* is largely subjective, but is at the same time based on a large body of research, enabling him to present an informed account of the fictional world that each work creates. In the case of Stonehenge, so little is known about the circumstances under which it was constructed that it is impossible for him to provide us with any more than a limited account of it. From the 'decayed teeth, poorly mended bone-fractures and signs of rickets in a Neolithic skeleton', it is possible to draw some conclusions about the health and longevity of life of the people who built Stonehenge, but 'to discover a joy in dancing, a skill at fowling, a sense of humour, is impossible. We know not one single thing of the physical and emotional capacities, the thought-processes and sensitivities of these lost ancestors of ours. ... It is forever secret, undiggable, unpierceable' (*ES*, 19). The problem is that Neolithic man left no written records, and with this in mind, Fowles is careful to offer as objective fact only what has been established securely in the scholarly literature, and as subjective comment only carefully qualified statements, in acknowledgement of how little is known.

The photos often illustrate particular aspects of the essay, producing a combined visual and verbal text designed to evoke a sense of the otherness, the mysteriousness of the place called Stonehenge. In both the British and American editions, the first photograph of the

monument extends across two pages, with the title and authors' names above the stones on the right-hand page. Above the stones on the left side of the page is an unidentified quotation in archaic language describing English historians as 'Seniors' and declaring that 'Stoneage did astonish them, and did amaze them. ... [H]ow shall we sillie freshmen unlock this Closet?' Thus both the visual and the verbal features of the opening two pages resonate with the word 'enigma' in the title, and the final page of this essay complements the book's opening frame with another combination of verbal and visual art. A Siegfried Sassoon poem is quoted, which begins, 'What is Stonehenge?' Sassoon's answer includes the lines 'Man's ruinous myth; his uninterred adoring / Of the unknown in sunrise cold and red' (*ES*, 127). Fowles clearly liked this acknowledgement of Stonehenge's enigmatic properties, and the rest of the essay's final page further endorses open meaning by way of an ironic image of closed meaning, a non-verbal illustration from William Blake's *Jerusalem* that depicts the Stonehenge circle behind a drawing compass, one of Blake's symbols for unwise restraint on the imagination.

Why Fowles concludes his essay this way is evident only if we pay careful attention to the preceding hundred-odd pages of text and photographs, and especially to the sections entitled 'Beyond the Monument' and 'The Moon Mirror'. Here he speculates on the motives of the builders. They might have undertaken its construction as propitiation, he says, but he believes that on a less conscious level they were erecting a permanent memorial to themselves, to the fact that they existed and to the dream that they always would. In 'The Moon Mirror' Fowles discusses the astronomical functions of Stonehenge, remarkable for the complex mathematics involved, based on an obscure moon cycle of '18.61 years' (*ES*, 81). He makes the sensible observation that the alignments of stone and sun at the winter solstice may have been more important than at the still-celebrated summer solstice, since the winter solstice would indicate that it is too early to plant precious seed and risk the loss of a year's harvest and even possible starvation.

It is the history of the non-physical '[Stonehenge] in the mind' (*ES*, 11) that particularly interests Fowles. Geoffrey of Monmouth thought that Stonehenge was Celtic, brought from Ireland by Merlin. Renaissance architect Inigo Jones believed that Stonehenge was Roman. John Dryden's physician thought it must have been a Danish royal court. Antiquarian John Aubrey speculated that it might have been a Druidical temple, and a later seventeenth-century writer accounted for its partial demolition as the revenge of an

angry Christian God upon such heathenism. Even though there is no evidence that the Celtic Druids ever used Stonehenge, Aubrey's idea was picked up by eighteenth-century antiquarian William Stukeley, who developed an elaborate theory that supposed that the Druid occupants were the lost tribe of Israel (thus making the British God's chosen people). And although Fowles calls the Druid theory 'totally false', he recognizes that it was humanist in its intent and had some value in colouring the movement of religious dissent and related political history in eighteenth-century England (*ES*, 110–11).

The last section is called 'Blake's Bolt', a reference to the book's epigraph, which describes speculations about the meaning of Stonehenge as foolishly-directed crossbow bolts. Fowles points out the irony that Stukeley's erroneous theory that the monument was Druidic was an important contribution to debates about Stonehenge, for he inspired William Blake to use the Druids to represent what he called 'priesthood', that is, religious systems that enslave the mind.[23] Fowles aligns himself with the scientists, against Stukeley and the romantic or religious views, without dismissing the Romantics: 'the other Stonehenge, this vast labyrinth of words, pictures, speculations, feelings, impressions, may never be quite so important as the scientists' Stonehenge, but it is no less real in any deep or sane sense of human history' (*ES*, 126). Fowles wishes to remind readers that there is a valuable kind of unknowing that professors of scientific knowledge lose sight of, views that Fowles associates with the terms 'humanist' (*ES*, 112) and 'individual' (*ES*, 125). Fowles admires Blake for having recognized the limitations of scientific knowledge, and uses him against pseudo-Romantics such as Stukeley by calling Blake a true mystic, with a relatively complete vision of the world that includes missing knowledge. Fowles is grateful to Blake for showing that Stonehenge was not, and is still not, fully explicable in scientific terms. The 'brooding enigma' of Stonehenge has human survival value, Fowles believes, as an embodiment of mystery, a place that even today cannot be fully appreciated with either scientific or mystical knowledge: 'the one Stonehenge is made incomplete by the ravages of time; the other, because something in it has yet to be finished' (*ES*, 126).

It is worth noting that Fowles says something more about Stonehenge, not in another non-fiction essay but in his last novel, *A Maggot*, published in 1985, five years after *The Enigma of Stonehenge*. Like *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *A Maggot* is a fictional narrative set in a realistic England of the past, in this case 1736, with its

dialogue deriving from Fowles's interest in the writing of the period. As in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the narrator is a contemporary figure who is conversant with twentieth-century thought – with, for example, Stephen J. Gould's scientific theory of punctuated equilibrium.[24] The two novels are also similar in that Fowles sometimes excerpts real documents from the period, but in *A Maggot* the excerpts appear as pictures of actual pages from *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 1736, with its now archaic typefaces and spellings, as well as its primary-source historical content. Thus *A Maggot* is, like Fowles's late non-fiction, a hybrid of text and illustration, of verbal and visual. *A Maggot* is, furthermore, a hybrid in terms of genre, for it is part science fiction, part detective fiction, part travelogue, part epistolary novel and part history. Stonehenge as Stukeley would have known it figures as the setting of what seems to be a UFO encounter, followed by an even more extravagant episode with strange beings in a cavern on nearby Exmoor. Although later accounts of the characters vary from one another, the nobleman in disguise may have been abducted by aliens in an encounter that leads to the founding of the Shaker religion. Such features make *A Maggot* a quintessentially postmodern novel.

Fowles's last work of significant length was not a novel but another piece of nature writing, the non-fiction essay 'The Nature of Nature', where he continued to philosophize along some of the same lines he had set down in *The Enigma of Stonehenge*: '*Marrying feeling and knowing, that is the problem*', he begins, and ends advocating 'an oscillation between art and science' (*W*, 410, 427). Here Fowles reveals his own blend of the analytical mind of a scientist and the emotional sensitivity of an artist – the perfect mentality for a writer of creative non-fiction. Just as his novels reflect the new hybridity of creative non-fiction and fiction forms in the 1960s, Fowles's essays reflect the hybridization of verbal and visual art in the 1970s and anticipate later forms of writing such as the graphic essay of the early twenty-first century.[25] Thus Fowles's photo-essay collaborations in the late 1970s not only marked a turning point in his career, but also a turn in the direction of postmodernism in the history of the essay form.

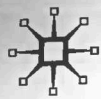
Notes

1. Capote's *In Cold Blood* was published in 1966 (New York: Random House), and Mailer's *Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History* in 1968 (New York: New American Library).

2. John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969; rpt. London: Panther, 1972), pp. 85, 231–4, 201–4, 263–5, 365–6. All quotations are from this edition; further references will be given parenthetically in the text, preceded by *FLW*.
3. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 5, 28, 44–6, 59, 88, 160, 189, 206. Geoff Dyer further discusses the novelistic essay and the essayistic novel in *Out of Sheer Rage: Wrestling with D.H. Lawrence* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997), p. 121.
4. See *FLW*, 85.
5. See Katharina Gänssbauer, '"Stay alive to everything": An Interview with John Fowles', in *'Do You Consider Yourself a Postmodern Author?': Interviews with Contemporary English Writers*, ed. Rudolf Freiburg and Jan Schnitker, Erlanger Studien zur Anglistik and Amerikanistik (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1999), p. 129.
6. John Fowles, *Shipwreck*, photography by the Gibson family (1974; rpt. London: Jonathan Cape, 1979); John Fowles, *Islands*, photography by Fay Godwin (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, 1978); John Fowles, *The Tree*, photography by Frank Horvat (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, 1979); John Fowles, *The Enigma of Stonehenge*, photography by Barry Brukoff (New York: Summit Books, 1980) and *Land*, photography by Fay Godwin with an essay by John Fowles and an introduction by Ian Jeffrey (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, 1985). All quotations are from these editions; page numbers are given parenthetically in the text, preceded by *S* in the case of *Shipwreck*, *I* in the case of *Islands*, *T* in the case of *The Tree*, *ES* in the case of *The Enigma of Stonehenge* and *L* in the case of *Land*. *Shipwreck* and *The Tree* have no page numbers, so these are indicated in the text by way of manual counting.
7. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, pp. 365–6, 399. Fowles gives the title of the Matthew Arnold poem he quotes on pp. 365–6 as 'To Marguerite', but in fact the correct title is 'To Marguerite – Continued'.
8. 'Swan Song of the European Wild', in *Venture: the Traveler's World* (Oct. 1965), 134–6, 138, 140–1. In this article Fowles describes his visit to the Finnmark of northern Norway. Besides offering advice for tourists, Fowles laments that an 'unbalanced ecology' is resulting from logging and hunting policies that are driving wildlife – including swans – out of the region and into Russia.
9. See *FLW*, 208.
10. William Anderson, *Green Man: the Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth* (London: HarperCollins, 1990).
11. John Fowles, 'On Being English But Not British' (1964), rpt. in *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings* (1998; London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 91–103. All quotations from *Wormholes* are from this edition; further references will be given parenthetically in the text, preceded by *W*. *Jaws*, directed by Steven Spielberg, Universal, 1975.

12. See *T*, 75–7.
13. John Fowles, 'I Write Therefore I Am' (1964; *W*, 5–13).
14. *The Collector* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963); *The Aristos* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964).
15. Elizabeth Fowles, University of Tulsa papers, Box 2, folder 4, cited by Eileen Warburton in *John Fowles: a Life in Two Worlds* (New York: Viking, 2004), p. 294.
16. John Fowles, 'The Nature of Nature', privately published in conjunction with the John Fowles Symposium, July 1995, Lyme Regis, UK; rpt. in *W*, 408–29, p. 412.
17. Fowles told Donald Hall in an interview, 'John Fowles's Gardens', *Esquire* (Oct. 1982), p. 92, that he had written *Mantissa* rapidly, then set it aside 'several years ago', a period of time that Eileen Warburton extends to 'a decade' in *John Fowles: A Life in Two Worlds* (New York: Viking, 2004), p. 334, making *Mantissa* largely an early 1970s composition. Similarly, aspects of the creation of *A Maggot* can be traced back to the early 1970s, when Fowles was writing some (to date unpublished) precursors to *A Maggot*, or as Warburton puts it, was 'imaginatively at work on that book more than a decade before publishing it' (Warburton, *John Fowles*, p. 361).
18. Fowles's ten curator's reports are catalogued in James R. Aubrey, *John Fowles: a Reference Companion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991); John Fowles, *A Short History of Lyme Regis* (Wimborne, UK: Dovecote Press, 1982), pp. 277–8; John Aubrey, *Monumenta Britannica*, ed. and intro. John Fowles, annotated by Rodney Legg (Sherborne, UK: Dorset Publishing Co., 1980–82), 2 vols. *Monumenta Britannica* had remained unpublished since the seventeenth century.
19. John Fowles, *Thomas Hardy's England*, ed. and intro. John Fowles, with Jo Draper (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984); John Fowles, 'Essay', in *Land*; John Fowles, 'Introduction', *Open Skies*, photos by Don McCullin (New York: Harmony Books, 1989); John Fowles, *Lyme Regis Camera* (Wimborne, UK: Dovecote Press, 1990).
20. John Fowles, *Coastline: Britain's Threatened Heritage* (London: Kingfisher Books, 1987). As Fowles points out in *Shipwreck*, the verb 'to wreck' can be used transitively to mean the deliberate luring of a ship onto the shore by local residents in order to plunder the contents.
21. Elaine Franks, *The Undercliff: a Naturalist's Sketchbook of the Devon to Dorset Coast* (London: Bulfinch Press, 1989).
22. Ibid., p. 9.
23. In *Fearful Symmetry: a Study of William Blake* (1947; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 149, Northrop Frye comments: 'To Blake, the "priest" is the central symbol of tyranny.' Cf. Blake's poem, 'The Garden of Love', where he says that 'Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds, / And binding with briars my joys and desires.' (In *English Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. Russell Noyes [New York: Oxford University Press, 1956], p. 206).

24. Fowles, *A Maggot*, p. 16; Stephen J. Gould's theory was first published in 1972, with Niles Eldredge, as 'Punctuated Equilibrium: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism', in *Models in Paleontology* (San Francisco, CA: Freeman Cooper), pp. 82–115.
25. For example, the 'graphic memoir' is a form discussed in *Creating Nonfiction: A Guide and Anthology*, ed. Becky Bradway and Doug Hesse (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009), p. 41.



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