



An afternoon celebrating the work of John Fowles

Sponsored by

The
Landmark
Trust

2pm Friday 22nd March 2013

An opportunity to spend an afternoon with the works of John Fowles, one of the most influential British novelists of the second half of the twentieth century, in the company of leading experts on his works. Born in 1926, John Fowles became the first post-war English writer to produce experimental literary fiction that reached the bestseller lists on both sides of the Atlantic: *The Magus* is in the BBC's Big Read list of the nation's 100 favourite novels. John Fowles, who died in 2005, wrote a wide variety of books including: *The Magus*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Ebony Tower*, *Daniel Martin*, *Mantissa*, *A Maggot*, *The Journals*

Photo: Carolyn Djanodly

Our afternoon starts at 2pm with a welcome from **Dr Anna Keay**, Director of Landmark Trust. Anna, a historian and curator with a specialist interest in 17th-century British history, will describe how the Trust plans to restore Fowles' Lyme Regis home, Belmont House, to its former Georgian character.

Setting the scene for the afternoon will be the chair, **John Mullan**, Professor of English University College. He says that Fowles established that: "A highly literary novel could also be a potential bestseller... he offered readers literary pleasure as well as the voltage they expected from contemporary fiction."

The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles' most famous novel, also became a popular film with the cloaked figure of Meryl Streep standing on the Cobb as an iconic image. **Robert Eaglestone**, Professor of Contemporary Literature and Thought at Royal Holloway whose work encompasses contemporary literature and theory, will explore Fowles's literary legacy.

The journals of John Fowles are described as great works in their own right, recording the private thoughts that gave rise to some of the greatest writing of our time. The editor of those journals is **Charles Drazin**, Queen Mary College, who will recall what it was like to work with Fowles in Lyme Regis and discuss the insight that the journals offer into his life and work.

Exploring the influences that worked upon John Fowles is **John Sutherland**, Emeritus Lord Northcliffe Professor of English Literature at University College London, author, columnist and critic, who believes that "literary life and work are inseparable and mutually illuminating."

The afternoon ends with a panel discussion and conversation with the audience to summarise the achievements of John Fowles and inspire us to return to his books with new insights.

“There are many reasons why novelists write, but they all have one thing in common – a need to create an alternative world.”

“The most important questions in life can never be answered by anyone except oneself.”

“Our accepting what we are must always inhibit our being what we ought to be.”

“An answer is always a form of death.”

“There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accept yourself. It is not anymore what you will become. It is what you are and always will be.”

THE SUNDAY TIMES OXFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

The John Fowles afternoon is part of the Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival (March 16th – 24th). Tickets for the half day event are £38 (including tea) and it takes place at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. More details and booking at: oxfordliteraryfestival.org



John Fowles loved Lyme Regis and Belmont, the Georgian sea-side villa where he lived for nearly 40 years. As his legacy to the town, he wanted his home to remain available as an inspiration to others as it had been for him. Now The Landmark Trust is raising funds to restore his old home, with views over the Cobb and a history centre to tell the stories of John Fowles and its other former residents, which include Eleanor Coade, the remarkable eighteenth-century inventor of Coade stone.

Since acquiring the house, Landmark has commissioned extensive research by a team of experts to establish the history, development and current state of the building and draw up the plans for its restoration. Once restored, the building will have a secure future through self-catering holiday lets with the income supporting its ongoing maintenance. Landmark is also working with the Department of Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia to offer creative writing retreats for its students in Belmont once it is restored, to fulfill Fowles' wishes that it should continue to inspire other writers.

More about the Landmark Trust and Belmont House at: www.landmarktrust.org.uk/belmont